GREENING THE COMMONWEALTH:

THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY GOVERNMENT'S

MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

1983 - 1996

This thesis is submitted for the fulfilment of the Doctorate of Philosophy degree

Nicholas Michael Economou
July 1998
Department of Political Science
The University of Melbourne

produced on acid-free paper
I declare that this thesis comprises only original work except where due acknowledgment is made in the text to all other material used. I also declare that the text of this thesis (excluding footnotes, bibliography, tables and appendices) does not exceed 100,000 words in length.

Nicholas Michael Economou
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the Department of Political Science at the University of Melbourne for financial assistance in meeting travel costs incurred in researching this project. I would also like to thank the School of Social Science in the former Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education for financial assistance, and its former head, Dr Peter Harwood, for his support and encouragement at the beginning of this project. I am also indebted to the Institute of Public Administration Australia for its financial support of some of the research undertaken particularly on the Wesley Vale pulp mill dispute. The fellow post graduate students in the Politics Department were patient and helpful colleagues during seminars and colloquia, and I am greatly indebted to Lyle Munro and Sarah O’Brien for their efforts at proofreading and commenting on the final drafts. I owe a great debt to my supervisor, Dr Mark Considine, for his help, direction and encouragement, although I hasten to add that the shortcomings in this thesis are purely my responsibility. Finally, I thank my wife, Sarah, and my children Sam and Jane, for their support, patience and understanding especially during the trying times.
ABSTRACT

Between 1983 and 1996, the environment emerged to become a major political issue in Australia to which a series of national public policy decisions was directed. In examining these policies, this thesis argues that the association of environmentalism with the politics of policy-making reflected the primary role played by the Australian Labor Party as the major political party in Government at that time. It reflected the Labor Government's primary role in determining the nature and direction of the debate between 1983 and 1996. Of particular importance was a period in which the Labor Government sought to undertake institutional innovation in order to contain the environmental debate within the institutionalised policy-making process - a period described here as the 'Accordist' phase of Labor's management of the environmental debate. The thesis challenges theoretical approaches that argue that relations between social democratic trade union based parties and the environmental movement have the potential to tend toward mutual antagonism. It also challenges the argument that environmentalism, as a manifestation of the 'new politics', necessarily involves a qualitative transformation of politics associated with new social movements. Rather, the thesis argues that the debate in Australia went beyond simply addressing controversial specific issues when they arose, to instead become an examination of the capacity for agencies and departments to incorporate environmental values into their decision-making, and about ways in which competing interest group demands could be reconciled through newly created government-led forums. Consequently, the state, rather than the environmental movement, established an ascendancy over the national debate, and the Federal Labor Government dominated the Labor-environmental relationship that had emerged since 1983. Thus the ALP, as the party of Federal Government, played a critical role as a conduit by which the environmentalist agenda was conveyed on to, and addressed by, that institutionalised process.
CONTENTS

List of Tables iii
List of Acronyms iv

Introduction 1

Chapter 1
Labor, ‘Green’ Politics and Environmental Policy in Australia 11
1.1 What is environmentalism? 15
1.2 Environmentalism and policy politics 25
1.3 Environmentalism in Australia 34
1.4 Greening the Commonwealth? 41
1.5 Conclusion and overview 49

Chapter 2
From Incrementalism to Crisis Orientation 55
2.1 Setting the context 59
2.2 Extending the national agenda 66
2.3 The Queensland forests dispute 73
2.4 The limits of old solutions to new problems 79
2.5 The difference and election makes 89
2.6 The debate transformed 98
2.7 Conclusion and overview 103

Chapter 3
The Crisis Oriented Approach 108
3.1 Pulp mills and forests 110
3.2 Not in my backyard 118
3.3 The politics of environmental guidelines 123
3.4 Greening the polls 132
3.5 Conclusion and overview 152

Chapter 4
The Institutional Fix 158
4.1 Origins of environmental politics in transition 162
4.2 Towards a long-term perspective 178
4.3 Institutional design as the lynch-pin of reform 186
4.4 Conclusion and overview 197
Chapter 5
Ascendancy of the Institutional Fix? 202
5.1 ‘Better’ decision-making in practice? 205
5.2 Reform under pressure 216
5.3 Return to short-term politics 222
5.4 From Hawke to Keating 231
5.5 Conclusion and overview 234

Chapter 6
New Processes, Old Problems 241
6.1 Unfinished business 243
6.2 RSL, the 1990 election, and the death of the RAC 249
6.3 Return of the woodchip crisis 257
6.4 The end of an era: the 1996 election 264
6.5 After Accordism: down with the environment? 270
6.6 Conclusion and overview 275

Chapter 7
Social Movement, Institutions, Party and Policy: 279
Analysing the Politics of Labor’s Management of National Environmental Politics 282
7.1 Environmentalism and the politics of land-use 289
7.2 Qualifying the ‘red-green’ alliance 289
7.3 The critical role of party 299
7.4 Harbingers of the new, or the pragmatism of old politics? 307
7.5 Conclusion and overview 316

Conclusion 319

Bibliography 329


**LIST OF TABLES**

| Table 2.1: | Federal Role in Nature Conservation Issues 1983-1987 | 57 |
| Table 2.2: | The 1987 Federal Election Result | 91 |
| Table 3.1: | Tasmanian State Election Result: 1989 | 133 |
| Table 3.2: | The 1990 Federal Election Result | 146 |
| Table 3.3: | Green-Australian Democrat Electoral Performance Compared | 148 |
| Table 4.1: | ESD Working Groups: Types and Participation | 184 |
| Table 5.1: | National Unemployment Rate | 224 |
| Table 5.2: | Cabinet Alliances and the RSL Debate | 228 |
| Table 6.1: | The 1993 Federal Election Result | 253 |
| Table 6.2: | The 1996 Federal Election Result | 268 |
| Table 7.1: | Labor's Environment Ministers - National | 301 |
## ACRONYMS USED IN THIS THESIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABARE</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACF</td>
<td>Australian Conservation Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTU</td>
<td>Australian Council of Trades Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADA</td>
<td>Abalone Divers Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHC</td>
<td>Australian Heritage Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMIC</td>
<td>Australian Mining Industry Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANOP</td>
<td>Australian National Opinion Polls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APM</td>
<td>Australian Paper Mills Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPM</td>
<td>Australian Pulp and Paper Mills Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASETT</td>
<td>Arts, Sport, Environment, Tourism and Territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASTC</td>
<td>Australian Science and Technology Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BHP</td>
<td>Broken Hill Pty. Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALM</td>
<td>Conservation and Land Management Department of WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CREA</td>
<td>Centre for Regional Economic Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CROEG</td>
<td>Concerned Residents of East Gippsland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CROPS</td>
<td>Concerned Residents Opposing the Pulp Mill Siting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSIRO</td>
<td>Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVM</td>
<td>Contingent Valuation Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAHE</td>
<td>Department of Arts, Heritage and the Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DASETTE</td>
<td>Department of Arts, Sport, Environment, Tourism and Territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCFL</td>
<td>Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPI</td>
<td>Department of Primary Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPIE</td>
<td>Department of Primary Industry and Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPMC</td>
<td>Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIA</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIS</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>Environmental Protection Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPAC</td>
<td>Economic and Planning Advisory Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESD</td>
<td>Ecologically Sustainable Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESDWGS</td>
<td>Ecologically Sustainable Development Working Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCV</td>
<td>Forests Commission of Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIAT</td>
<td>Forest Industry Association of Tasmania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRB</td>
<td>Foreign Investment Review Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEC</td>
<td>Hydro Electricity Commission of Tasmania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HFP</td>
<td>Huon Forest Products Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOR</td>
<td>House of Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAC</td>
<td>Industries Assistance Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>Industries Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGAE</td>
<td>Inter-governmental Agreement on the Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for Nature Conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCC</td>
<td>Land Conservation Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHA</td>
<td>Member of the House of Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHR</td>
<td>Member of the House of Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLC</td>
<td>Member of the Legislative Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAFI</td>
<td>National Association of Forest Industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>Nuclear Disarmament Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFPS</td>
<td>National Forests Policy Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNBH</td>
<td>Noranda Inc. - North Broken Hill Pty. Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORMA</td>
<td>Northern Rainforest Management Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPA</td>
<td>National Party of Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSWC</td>
<td>National South West Coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QC</td>
<td>Queen’s Counsel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QRCS</td>
<td>Queensland Rainforest Conservation Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAC</td>
<td>Resource Assessment Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSL</td>
<td>Resource Security Legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWP</td>
<td>Socialist Workers Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCT</td>
<td>Tasmanian Conservation Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFGA</td>
<td>Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFIC</td>
<td>Tasmanian Fishing Industry Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIS</td>
<td>Timber Industry Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWS</td>
<td>The Wilderness Society (formerly Tasmanian Wilderness Society)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USERP</td>
<td>United Scientists for Environmental Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAUS</td>
<td>Value Added utilisation Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VNPA</td>
<td>Victorian National Parks Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAG</td>
<td>West Australian Greens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCED</td>
<td>World Commission on Environment and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWF</td>
<td>World Wildlife Fund for Nature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Between 1983 and 1996, the environment emerged as one of the more prominent issues on the Australian political agenda. Previously the concern of State Governments, the environment figured in a series of federal election campaigns and became the subject of major public policy initiatives. These policy decisions included the extension of federal protection to a number of significant world heritage land areas, the prevention of development projects considered to have an unacceptably high potential to cause environmental damage, and attempts to design national policy-making institutions that could work at integrating environmentalist perspectives into national land-use and resource policy-making. These were highly significant policy outcomes, made all the more noteworthy by the fact that this occurred despite the lack of direct constitutional authority available to the Commonwealth to legislate in this area.

How can this development in Australian politics be accounted for? The environment's rise to national prominence at this time was due to the way in which the environmental movement - the primary champions of the environmentalist cause - became a participant in a number of federal election campaigns, gained access to government in the policy-making process, and formed something of a political alliance with a major political party, the Australian Labor Party (ALP). These developments occurred as the result of three important factors - first, that, despite its emergence as a 'new social movement' seeking to achieve holistic social, cultural and
political change (see Eckersley 1991; Porritt 1984; Melucci 1989; Touraine 1984),
Australian 'green' politics was primarily concerned with matters pertaining to the
preservation and protection of the biosphere. Thus, Australian environmentalism's
primary raison d'etre involved struggles to protect wilderness from further
development and exploitation, and to oppose industrial development proposals viewed
as posing an unacceptable risk to the immediate environment. Whilst it is true that the
Australian environmental movement did spawn its own set of 'green' political parties
seeking to emulate the impact of similar parties in western Europe, the emergence of a
core of interest groups dedicated to championing the cause of nature conservation and,
later, biospheric protection, was the movement's most prominent feature during this
period (cf: Davis 1981).

Second, because the issue of nature conservation was the movement's primary
focus, and because governmental decisions through the land-use policy-making
process were so central to the fate of wilderness, the environmental movement's
organisational core was mobilised to achieve political outcomes from within the
conventional political process. This contrasts somewhat with the theoretical
identification of new social movements as harbingers of a 'new politics' that seeks to
transform debates dominated by party and interest group elites. The new politics also
questions debates that are dominated by a narrow set of materialistic outlooks in
literature examining the way movements seek to transform political culture (Touraine
1981; Offe 1985a; Bahro 1984; Spretnak and Capra 1986). This study identifies a
certain pragmatism in the Australian environmental movement's approach to the
conventional forms of politics such as interacting with major political parties in a bid
to influence their policy manifestoes; participating in electoral politics, and seeking to exert pressure on the public policy-making process. The reason for this lies in the importance the Australian environmental movement placed on the policy-making process, and on the task of pressuring that process to make conservation-oriented land-use policy.

Herein lies the third critical factor: primarily as the result of electoral expediency, the ALP sought to respond positively to the environmental movement's conservation agenda (a position whereby the conservation groups sought to reward the ALP by endorsing it for the House of Representatives in a series of federal electoral contests commencing with the 1983 election), thus establishing a basis upon which something of a loose alliance with the environmental movement's organisational core was established. This coming together of the environmental movement's organisational core and the ALP was the vital point at which the environmental issue was able to make the transition from being a fringe matter confined to localised State politics, to become a major policy issue requiring the attention of the policy-making institutions of the Commonwealth. The parliamentary leadership of the ALP played a critical role in this process, and, indeed, the dynamism of the environmental debate between 1983 and 1996 owed a great deal to the willingness of the various Labor Cabinets to embrace the environmental issue.

Indeed, this study finds that environmental politics in Australia between 1983 and 1996 was inextricably linked with the dynamics of public-policy making, and that the Labor Government played a critical role in this period. This was reflected in the
way in which four distinct phases in this politics occurred. These phases included an incrementalist period, in which the newly elected federal Labor Government sought to keep the environmental issue - and the environmental interest groups - at arm’s length from the national policy debate. This was followed by a period of crisis and controversy, where the environment emerged as a major issue requiring constant government attention, and which coincided with the ascendancy of Senator Graham Richardson as the Environment Minister. This, in turn, led the government to seek to create a process that could solve the political problems that the crisis-oriented phase had precipitated, and it was in this context there emerged an approach based on building new institutions to mediate competing interest group demands, and seeking ways to make careful, long-term decisions.

This period is labelled in this study as the ‘Accordist’ phase, by virtue of the way in which the Labor Government sought to apply the principles and practices of the neo-corporatism it had applied to industrial relations to the environment field. This third phase lasted until the transition in Labor’s Federal leadership. With the transition in Labor’s leadership from Bob Hawke to Paul Keating, the Labor Government’s interest in consensus politics - and the way decision-making was geared to try to achieve consensus - was modified. The changes to the environmental debate brought about by the Hawke Government - particularly through its development of the Resource Assessment Commission (RAC) - were not to survive the leadership transition, and the debate soon revisited the problems and conflicts that the reformed process was supposed to have resolved.
Thus the issue of institutional innovation and design figures prominently in this study, for, as will be argued below, the development of the RAC, the government’s interest in developing the idea of ‘Ecologically Sustainable Development’ (ESD) as a principle by which future land-use and resource decisions could be created, and its attempt to alter the way the Commonwealth and the States dealt with environmental matters, were major reforms of environmental policy-making undertaken by the Hawke Labor Government. The formation of bodies such as the RAC and the ESD Working Groups (ESDWGs), the direction of additional resources to the Australian Heritage Commission, and the development of an Inter-Governmental Agreement on the Environment (IGAE) were all the product of a recasting of the national environmental debate that occurred at the hands of a Labor Government interested in neo-corporatist approaches to managing the policy-making process (see Schmitter 1979; Schmitter 1982; Stillwell 1986; Loveday 1984; cf: West 1984).

The development of these institutional innovations represented a significant period in environmental politics. They provided the opportunity for the environmental movement’s core interest groups to gain access to the policy-making process and become proactive participants in debates over how land-use and resource policy should be made. This contrasted with the previous status of these groups as outsiders to the decision-making process. But, as this study shows, this opportunity was something of a double-edged sword; in accepting the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process through these new agencies and policies, the environmental interest groups were subjected to state control of the environmental debate. This
became the basis upon which the Hawke Government successfully steered the environmental debate away from its preoccupation with specific land-use disputes, to become, instead, a much more complex, technical debate over how the concepts of ecological sustainability could be applied to a wide range of policy issues. Under the Accordist model, environmental politics in Australia underwent a qualitative change, and the environmental movement’s ability to mount short-term, reactive campaigns on specific land-use matters, was severely curtailed.

Herein lay another important feature of the Hawke Government’s utilisation of institutional design and development to alter the nature of the national environmental debate. Finding ways of making policy that could make a legitimate claim to broad political consensus (usually achieved through incorporating the key interest groups in the policy debate and finding ways of mediating their demands) was a central task to which the Hawke Government’s development of neo-corporatist institutional processes was geared. The institutional innovation undertaken by the Hawke Government attempted to tie the core environmental interest groups to decisions made by neo-corporatist processes. Herein lay the strengths and, paradoxically, the weaknesses of the Accordist phase in environmental politics. The new agencies and forums created by the Hawke Government succeeded in transforming the national debate, yet failed to survive the Labor leadership transition from Hawke to Keating. The irony for the environmental movement was that the recasting of the Commonwealth’s approach to addressing long-term matters did not suit it, particularly in the face of the re-occurrence of specific short-term disputes over forestry matters in 1995 and 1996. This period, it will be argued here, was the fourth phase - a period in
which specific land-use disputes re-emerged and contributed to a souring of relations between the Keating Government and the environmental movement. In a very real sense, this period marked the end of an era, as the opportunities for the environmental movement to impact on the Federal Government’s approach to land-use and resource matters were closed off by the 1996 federal election which resulted in Labor’s defeat by the Liberal and National Coalition.

This thesis pursues the following arguments: first, that environmentalism in Australia between 1983 and 1996 was predominantly concerned with land-use and resource public policy rather than precipitating a qualitative change in Australia’s political and social culture. The conservation-oriented interest groups at the core of the movement sought to achieve conservation-oriented land-use outcomes through the process by which government makes public policy. Indeed, these groups were eager to participate in any state-initiated attempt to design institutions that would allow environmentalist input into future policy-making, and this is precisely the direction that national environmental politics took under a neo-corporatist tending national Labor Government. Thus, secondly, the national ALP, as the party of government during this period, played a critical role in environmental politics at this time by providing the conduit by which the nature conservation agenda could make the transition from a localised fringe issue in Australian State politics, to become a major national issue. Labor’s role in this process was due to more than just a happy coincidence when it was the opposition party that could align itself with growing public support for the anti-Franklin dam cause in Tasmania in time for the 1983 federal election. Whilst it was true that an electoral relationship between the nature
conservation groups and the ALP emerged during the 1983 election campaign that was to underpin Labor-environmental relations during this period, Labor's social democratic traditions were also important considerations to the evolution of a co-operative relationship. The environmental movement required the intervention of the state in order to realise its conservationist objectives. In the aftermath of its role in the Tasmanian dams dispute, it was the Labor Party which was able to respond to this demand at this time.

Third, the extent to which the Labor party, as the party in government, was able to establish an ascendancy over the environmental issue once it broached the matter of public policy creation was revealed in the way the nature and direction of the debate underwent qualitative transitions between 1983 and 1996. The four distinct periods of management of the environmental debate identified in this study may be accounted for by referring to the important debates that went on between the pro-development and pro-environment blocks within the Labor Cabinets. Indeed, some of the most important outcomes in national environmental politics occurred as the result of the Labor Government's actions, including, in one period, a number of major conservation-oriented land-use decisions, and, in another phase, the design of new semi-autonomous government bodies to improve the Commonwealth's ability to make longer-term land-use decisions in which environmental inputs would be incorporated. These policies were all the product of politics occurring within the governing party - and especially within the Cabinet. This leads to a fourth major argument: specifically, that the Federal bureaucracy was to also play a major role in the environmental debate particularly as the government looked to developing new institutions, and reforming
some others, as a way of solving a series of procedural and political problems that had confronted it when trying to find a 'balance' between developer and environmentalist interests.

This study of Australian environmental politics examines the four distinct phases that occurred during the years that the Labor Government was in power, and in which the environment became such an important issue. During these phases, the issues of native forest conservation in Tasmania and Queensland, the proposal to construct a major pulp mill in northern Tasmania, the issue of whether mining should proceed at Coronation Hill in the Northern Territory, and the particularly important matter of institutional design involving the Resource Assessment Commission, the Ecologically Sustainable Development process, and a raft of outcomes designed to achieve Federal-State co-operation, all arose as major national issues. These phases were distinguishable by the way in which the Labor Governments of the time sought to manage the environmental issue. This study demonstrates the importance of party governance to Australian politics, for it will be argued that it was only really the ALP - with its centralist tradition and its interest in undertaking institutional innovation in a bid to achieve ‘consensus’ politics - that was capable of responding to the environmental issue and making it into a matter to which the policy-making process could be geared. In Australian environmentalism, the state can and does play a critical role particularly in determining land-use outcomes. In its bid to impact on that process, the environmental movement needed to find a means by which its conservation-oriented agenda could influence institutional decision-making. This was precisely the role that the ALP, as the party of national government between 1983 and
1996, filled, thus making the post-1983 Labor Governments the more important influence on the nature and direction of the environmental debate in Australia.
CHAPTER 1

LABOR, 'GREEN' POLITICS AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

IN AUSTRALIA:

NEW PARADIGM OR OLD POLICY POLITICS?

The ascendency of the environment to the national debate was the result of a complex interaction of relationships within the political process in which a specific sub-set of the environmental movement (in the form of its core nature conservation-oriented interest groups), a major political party, and elements of the Commonwealth bureaucracy were to engage with each other. Not only did this engagement assist in the process by which the environment was transformed from a fringe matter to become an integral part of the mainstream political debate. It also contributed to the variation in the form, nature and direction national environmental politics was to take.

This chapter establishes the theoretical framework by which the politics underpinning Australian environmentalism between 1983 and 1996 is to be analysed. This study argues that the Australian Labor Party, as the party of national government, acted as a conduit by which the nature conservation agenda of the environmental movement was able to impact upon the institutionalised policy-making process. This chapter highlights some of the key theoretical approaches to the major component parts of this study - specifically, how the environmental movement might be viewed as a manifestation of a new social movement; how environmentalism might be viewed
as an example of the 'new politics' challenging the assumptions, values and operation of a more conventional form of politics; and how a social democratic, trade-union based political party might relate to an emerging new social movement that also seeks to utilise state intervention to achieve particular political outcomes. It also sets out the characteristics of the terrain of environmental politics in Australia by examining the emergence of the organisational core of the environmental movement (dominated particularly by the Wilderness Society and Australian Conservation Foundation interest groups), and the development of institutions and agencies through which national environmental policy (such as it was) was created prior to the commencement point of this study.

This chapter argues that, when viewed as a theory of contemporary politics, environmentalism has emerged from being a romantic reaction to industrialisation (see Stretton 1976; Papadakis 1983), to become, instead, a matter of great scientific and political importance. Moreover, its contemporary manifestation is closely linked in theoretical literature to the emergence of new social movement politics, which, in turn, represents an alternative to the institution-dominated nature of conventional or 'old' politics. However, the fact that liberal democratic states do make environmental policy means that environmental politics that seeks to influence policy outcomes must also replicate the form and nature of that conventional form of politics. This is particularly true of Australian environmentalism, which, it is argued here, is dominated by nature conservation-oriented interest groups and their conservation agendas seeking to influence the public policy-making process. Thus environmentalism, in seeking to engage the policy-making state in addition to trying
to achieve a transformation in social attitudes to ecology, has the capacity to display the characteristics of both the ‘new politics’ associated with new social movements, and a much more conventional, interest group-oriented form.

Because Australian environmentalism seeks to impact upon the land-use decision-making that Australian State and, later, Federal governments undertake, environmental politics necessarily involves quite conventional activities focused on pressuring governments to recognise environmental values in their policy-making. The existence of a very strong electoral theme to Australian environmental politics between 1983 and 1996 - examined as a major theme in this study - is an important expression of this orientation. This study also argues that the way the ALP and the environmental movement related to each other during the period of national Labor Government was another important manifestation of this. Analysis of this relationship is thus an important part of this study, and this chapter explores the theoretical approaches to labour-environmental relations. It argues that theoretical approaches, consistent with the emphasis they place on the importance of the emerging ‘new politics’ tend to emphasise the basis on which adversarial or competitive labour-environmental relations exist. This is a problem in the theoretical material that this study seeks to address, for co-operative relations between the ALP (and particularly its national parliamentary leadership) and the nature conservation element of the environmental movement was a major feature of the Australian environmental debate and certainly contributed much to the conventional, or ‘old political’ nature of Australian environmental politics during the period of national Labor Government.
This thesis also identifies the importance of the debate that went on within the Federal Labor Cabinets between 1983 and 1996 about the way in which the Government should respond to this issue. As will be argued below, the rivalry between Labor ministers to achieve ascendency over the land-use and resource debate was an important factor that contributed to the nature and direction environmental politics took. The co-operative relationship that emerged between the ALP and the core environmental interest groups precipitated its own set of strains and tensions within the Hawke and, later, Keating Cabinets where pro-development ministers sought to re-establish what they saw as the need for a more economically rational approach to land-use matters. It was in this context that the Hawke Government in particular developed some new agencies (the Resource Assessment Commission and the ESD Working Groups), and poured additional resources into the Australian Heritage Commission, all with the intention of developing a qualitatively different approach to making land-use and resource policy decisions. These decisions were the product of quite fierce internal politics within the Labor Cabinet, and, by virtue of the party’s means and rules of operation (see Parkin 1983), debates within the Caucus itself. Internal politics within the Cabinet was as critical to the constant recasting of the nature and direction of the national environmental debate as any of the actions undertaken by environmental interest groups - a reminder of the ubiquity of party (especially when it is the party of government) in the Australian political process.

It will be argued in this study that, at this particular in time where the national ALP had committed itself to preventing the construction of the Franklin River hydro-electric scheme, it was Labor that was really the only major party capable of
responding to the environmental agenda. That Labor was able to engage with the environmental movement was due to three other major considerations: first, because the environmental movement was seeking to achieve its agenda through state intervention, it was Labor, rather than the conservative parties, that had the social democratic tradition of state interventionism that could accommodate the environmental demands. Second, as the environmental movement sought to transform environmental matters from localised disputes into national debates, Labor, rather than the conservative parties, had the necessary credentials as the party with the centralist tradition in Federal-State affairs that could respond. Finally, it was the Hawke Government that had developed a general approach to managing the politics of policy-making along neo-corporatist lines to which the incorporation of key sectoral interest groups into a consensus-oriented approach was central. Thus Labor’s ‘consensus politics’ offered environmentalists the opportunity to gain access to the decision-making process in the event of a corporatist model being applied. Here, too, lay an important reason why the environmental movement’s core interest groups were able to set aside their suspicion of major party politics in order to join in the alliance with Federal Labor - and thus blurring the divisions between ‘old’ and ‘new’ politics.

1.1: What is 'environmentalism'? The state, environment and the social movement challenge

The idea of nature conservation has underpinned environmentalism from its emergence as a critique of industrial society. Early examples of 'nature conservation' in the emerging industrial states, particularly in the so-called 'new world' of Canada,
the United States and Australasia, were primarily associated with romantic movements - particularly those that sought to preserve notions of the natural world in the face of rampant industrialisation (Bolton 1981; Papadakis 1993:58-60; Smil 1989). The linkage between preservation of natural areas and an anti-industrial romanticism was particularly strong in the United States, which was one of the first states to create large national parks designed expressly to preserve the remaining vestiges of 'wilderness' in the face of westward expansion by the nation's white settlers, and an interest association - the Sierra Club - that would champion this cause in the corridors of policy-making power. The notion of 'nature' or 'wilderness' conservation being the expression of anti-industrial romanticism has persisted right up until the most recent times (Bolton 1981; Figgis 1984). Indeed, the linkage between environmentalism and romanticism has sometimes been used by critics and opponents in their denigration of the conservation agenda (see Beresford 1977 cf: Kellow 1980).

From the late 1960s a growing interest in, and relevance of environmentalist critiques of industrial society's capacity to consume natural resources and generate industrial pollution emerged as an important part of the environment debate. In 1972, the United Nations held one of the first international meetings to discuss the problem of environmental damage and resource exploitation in the form of the Conference on Human Environment, convened in Stockholm. This meeting concluded with broad agreement about the need for policy-makers to address the idea of natural resource conservation - an approach that received added impetus in the wake of the 1976 'Energy Crisis' caused by the oil embargo imposed by the Oil and Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) (Lowe and Goyder 1983; O'Riordan 1981). Thus the
environment emerged from its previous incarnation as a romantic movement to now involve serious ecological, political and scientific debates about humanity’s relationship to the biosphere.

Smil (1989) has pointed to the linkage between the writings of an emerging group of critics of the environmental impact of industrialisation - a group that might well be thought of as 'ecologists' - and an increasing receptiveness to their warnings of immanent environmental disaster on the part of the political mainstream particularly in the industrialised nations. The convening of international forums to discuss these matters in the 1960s - forerunners to more contemporary international meetings such as the Montreal protocols on climate changes, the Brundlandt Commission on Ecologically Sustainable Development, and the World Environmental Summit held in Rio de Janiero - indicated the extent to which nation states were beginning to question their previous approach to development and resource exploitation (Smil 1989:5-6). The argument that humanity had to find ways of living within the environment's capacity to sustain development, existence, and species diversity was emerging from the mainstream political debate, and the process of 'environmentalism' breaking out of its confines as a romantic movement had begun.

In the light of the urgent warnings from scientifically-based arguments about the need to achieve resource conservation and solve the problem of industrial pollution, environmentalism began to take on a particular urgency. The notion that humanity's consumption of resources was outstripping the environment's ability to sustain society became the basis for the emergence of the concept of 'ecology' (see
Stretton 1976:10; Odum 1971; Cotgrove 1987; Porritt 1984). If the failure of humanity to live in balance with the biosphere comprised the critical environmental problem, as far as environmentalists were concerned, then the need to achieve 'balance' represented the panacea that the environmental movement would seek to pursue. Thus one of the fundamental themes of ecology emerges: an ecological viewpoint seeks to see humanity as part of the rich matrix of the biosphere within which all species need to live in balance with each other. The failure to achieve ecological balance ultimately risks extinction, even of the human species, for everything in the physical environment is interconnected (see Dryzek 1983:67; Dryzek 1987:10-25; Bartlett 1986:230; Cotgrove 1982; Ekersley 1989:220). The ecological approach criticises the view that humanity is the dominator or 'master' of the physical environment, and that other species are resources at humanity's disposal and are valued simply for the economic return payable on their exploitation (Ekersely 1991; O'Riordan 1976:11). Thus complex philosophical arguments about the survival rights of non-human species accompany the ecological argument about the need to achieve 'balance'. In this way, environmentalism has emerged as a broad social critique, and the range of issues that could be subjected to an environmental, or 'green', perspective becomes limitless.

The perception of environmentalism as a manifestation of the 'new social movement' phenomenon was an important part of the process by which the issue emerged from being simply viewed as the preserve of either the selfish, the extreme, or those with little better to do than to romanticise the past (see Eckerlse 1989). The emergence of quite complex critiques about humanity's relationship to the physical
environment, and the linkage made between such critiques and arguments about the need for more equitable distribution of resources between nations and classes within societies (and, in the process, establishing a link between environmentalism and more conventional debates about the need for social reform, social justice and equity), were only part of environmentalism's transformation. The increasingly social-progressive dimension to environmentalism has been enhanced by its capacity to link in with other social movements also seeking to bring about social reform and addressing social justice issues and demands for state intervention to achieve political (ecological) outcomes (Stretton 1976; Porritt 1984; Bahro 1986; Spretnak and Capra 1986; Hutton 1987:22-23). This focus on state intervention as a means of addressing social problems, including humanity’s ecological imbalance with the biosphere, is an important point at which this form of ‘new politics’ and rather conventional ‘old’ political forms such as labour party-based social democracy converge.

The close proximity of non-conventional political activism to the emerging new social movement phenomenon is a major point at which a distinction is made between the 'new politics' these movements seek to achieve, and the 'old politics' that they seek to transform (including, of course, conventional labour-based, social democratic party politics). It has been this combination of non-institutional political activity, along with the articulation of a set of values and outlooks designed to provide a fundamental alternative to the hegemony of materialist outlooks typically underpinning institutional approaches to managing the biosphere, that has characterised contemporary environmentalism as a social movement phenomenon. It has associated it with a political and social anti-systemism critical of conventional
politics dominated by traditional parties, interest groups and existing state structures
(Dalton et al. 1984: 451-456, and see Betz 1993: 413; Ignazi 1992: 4; von Byrne
1985: 133; Offe 1985a: 826). The utilisation of extra- or non-institutional political
activity - and particularly the utilisation of mass activism and protest activity - are
central to the perceptions of both that which constitutes a social movement, and how
social movements impact upon the political process. So, too, is the association of
social movements with the pursuit of political and social issues either disregarded, or
inadequately addressed, by institutional political actors.²

The linkage between violent protest action with movements associated
particularly with Civil Rights and the youth counter-culture in the United States by
functionalist analyses resulted in the assumption that social movement politics was
the product of dysfunctionalism in the mainstream political process. Such movements,
it was argued, arose where the institutional process failed to address the broader social
issues that, in turn, became the causes around which the movements formed (see
Lipsky 1968; Wilson 1973: 5; McCarthy and Zald 1977: 1214). In time, it was further
argued, the movements' impact on the institutionalised process would be reflected in
the adoption of their broad social agenda into the mainstream political debate, which,
in turn, would be reflected in the direction public policy programs would take (Wilson
theory on social movements particularly from the European perspective (Touraine
1981, Melucci 1989), whilst rejecting the idea that social movements were either
temporary phenomena or simply the reflection of political society under stress, also
found a causal link between the impact movements have on the social values that
underpin the political debate, and the nature of public policy-making (and see Cohen 1982).

The argument here was that a 'new social movement' phenomenon had emerged in which movements, viewed as permanent components of political society, acted as a viable alternative to the oligarchic tendencies of both party politics and conventional interest group activity (see Touraine 1981; Dalton et.al 1984:3-10; Frank and Fuentes 1987; Meutzelfedlt 1984, Lawson and Merkl 1988). The notion of new social movements having the capacity to qualitatively transform the policy debate is integral to Offe's argument (1985a:821-824), for example, about their role in the transition to a 'new paradigm' approach to politics. This involves a recasting of political behaviour and the policy debate in order to overcome the problems associated with the 'old paradigmatic' politics which Offe characterises as a narrow debate confined to economic, welfare and labour policies to which a somewhat more limited struggle between labour and capital for greater shares of economic wealth is central. Again, the notion of a certain consensus between the key actors - government, capital and labour - is at the heart of the old paradigm.

Yet, as Offe has argued (1985a:836; 1985b:224), the ascendancy of the welfare state, and the institutionalising of a proactive role for organised labour in corporatist-tending policy-making states, where a high value is placed on achieving social consensus in a bid to preserve social cohesion, have all impacted upon the nature and direction of mainstream politics (see also Schmitter 1979; Cawson 1986; Cawson 1985; Duncan 1989). The narrowing of the policy debate has been one of the
consequences of the evolution of an 'old paradigmatic' politics. The significance of new social movements rests on the way in which theorists view the phenomenon as something that seeks to challenge both the method of politics, and the values, outlooks, attitudes and assumptions upon which political society is based (Kivisto 1984). Indeed, new social movement theory views social movements as the primary vehicle for fundamental political cultural transformation, particularly where those movements seek to impact upon an existing political process dominated by elites and their policy agendas.3

There is much about contemporary environmentalism that corresponds with the new social movement typology (see Touraine 1981:19; Feher and Heller 1984; Eder 1982:6). In a simple structural sense, it is only a social movement model that can accommodate a phenomenon of great breadth and diversity in outlooks and ideologies, and in the collection of organisations such as interest groups and political parties that emerge from it. It is the commonality of a core commitment to the principles of ecology - the notion that humanity needs to live in balance with its physical environment (Dryzek 1983:8) - that provides the cohesion for the movement, however. With its critique of humanity's traditionally exploitative approach to the physical environment, and of the anthropocentric assumption of human supremacy over other species, environmentalism is one of the foremost examples of a new social movement seeking to achieve holistic change. Significantly, this pursuit of change embraces the need to transform social values and attitudes, and, through them, social behaviour. This is in addition to pursuing more overtly political objectives relating to influencing the policy decision-making of the state.
Indeed, Dryzek (1987; 1983:121-126) has argued, the two activities are related. Dryzek highlights how the politics of environmentalism may be viewed as the interaction of competing, if not opposed, rationalities. The development-oriented state's approach to land-use matters is dominated by what Dryzek terms as an 'economic rationality'. Put simply, this rationality views development and economic growth as vital to the achievement of social progress through material progress (and see Bartlett 1986:236). Under such an approach, development (including exploitation of natural resources) is equated with social utility and human advancement, rather than just a manifestation of the entrepreneurial skills of the individual developer seeking to maximise profits (Dryzek 1983:56-68). In this way, the commitment to development takes on an ideological dimension.

The high value placed by the state on the link between social utility and material advancement means that the tendency in most land-use policy decisions is for natural resources to be viewed as economic commodities. Altering, or, at least, mitigating the dominance with which an overtly materialistic or economic rationality prevails in land-use decision-making becomes one of the major tasks that environmentalists undertake in their role in political struggles to determine the fate particularly of natural resources coveted by developer interests. This might be done in at least two ways: first, environmentalists might try to construct an economic or market rationalist argument for considering a non-material environmental good such as clean air, clean water or the preservation of an aesthetically pleasing land area as economic commodities to which monetary values can be assigned (Rosenbaum
1984:22; Forsund and Strom 1988; Chisholm and Anderson 1991). Alternatively, environmentalists might seek to have included in the decision-making process a different set of evaluative criteria by which the aesthetic, scientific, cultural, and even spiritual significance of natural resources might be assessed. Herein lies an important aspect of what environmentalists view as their rather urgent political work as a social movement seeking to alter political behaviour (including policy-making) through the transformation of social norms and values (Buhrs 1991; Young 1982:5).

Here the concept of ‘ecology’ takes on a particular salience as it relates to the environmentalist notion of the ‘balance’ that humanity needs to achieve with the biosphere in order to prevent an ecological crisis. As Dryzek, for example, argued in relation to his argument that an ‘ecological rationality’ needs to displace the predominance of economics and materialism in planning and policy-making:

Ecological rationality is a still more fundamental form of reason than political rationality. The preservation of the life-support system upon which human beings depend is a precondition of the continued existence of society itself and its institutional forms, such as political systems. The pursuit of any human value is predicated upon the avoidance of ecological catastrophe ... (Dryzek 1983:8)

Here, then, lies the essence of the normative and behavioural transformation of society that environmentalism, as a social movement, seeks to achieve in its political activism in defence of the environment, even right down to seemingly minor, local land-use skirmishes. If the counter-position to the dominance of an economic rationality in decision-making is, as Dryzek suggests, an ecological rationality based on an urgent critique of the anthropocentric view of the biosphere as an economic resource at humanity’s disposal, the issue of achieving ‘balance’ in land-use matters takes on a
complex meaning. Given that the environmentalist approach is one couched in notions of ecological balance, with humanity living in harmony or balance with the biosphere, the struggle conducted by environmentalists to achieve ‘balance’ in land-use disputes must be understood from this ecological position (and see Young 1982:7; Young 1981:3).

1.2: Environmentalism and policy politics: an alternative approach

It is precisely at this point where a major complexity in the liberal democratic industrial state's response to the issue of 'the environment' arises. Environmentalism does not have a monopoly on the term 'balance' as a concept underpinning its world view and acting as a basis for political response to particular issues that may arise. The notion of 'balance' figures prominently in the liberal democratic state, too, particularly with regards to the politics of policy-making. The perception that policy-making can be the product of the state's ability to balance competing interests seeking to influence governmental output is a theme central to pluralist perceptions of policy-making politics in the liberal democratic state (Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987; Duncan 1989:8-9; Cawson 1985:6; Hogwood and Peters 1983:137-147; and cf: Offe 1981).

This is particularly true of liberal democratic governments that seek to incorporate key or peak interest groups into proactive policy-making forums as part of a neo-corporatist approach to creating policies to which the notion of broad social consensus may be attached (Schmitter 1974; Schmitter 1982:6; Wilson 1983; Cawson 1986).

The recognition that organisation is a political tool that can be used by the citizenry to influence the policy debate has been well recognised (Michels 1915; Olson 1965;
Wildavsky 1979:6). A political system that has institutional space for extra-institutional actors to influence the debate - particularly in the regular electoral process - simply invites interest group activity to occur in which the potential for interest organisations to impact on the agenda may be tested.

Notwithstanding the association of environmentalism with new social movement politics seeking to displace the predominant 'economic' rationality with an ecological ideology, the fact that the industrial state can and does make environmental policy is an important reality. So, too, is the fact that environmentalism can be discharged as a rather conventional form of interest group politics. For, as Mann (1986:3) has argued:

... it is at least arguable that the character and vitality of public policy-making in all sectors of the economy - including environmental policy - are the product of the overall institutional structure, ie: the manner in which private interests relate to government, the channels of communication, the resources they bring to bear, the access to leadership positions of various groups within society, the internal relations of groups having power within the government, the capacity to generate information, and strategic opportunities to advance initiatives or to veto the initiatives of others...

Such activity is entirely consistent with the typically pragmatic nature of a movement as broad as the environmental movement, and activists within the movement are capable of rationalising this contradiction as integral to the ethos that holistic, broad change is achieved through specific campaigns. Rather, the key issue here relates to the conflicting normative assumptions about crucial matters arising from attempts to reconcile the fundamentally opposed economic and ecological rationalities within a political process that assumes that policy can be the product of short-term response to immediate problems.
Associated with this is the view that groups of fundamentally different outlooks and perspectives can come together and interact with the policy-making agencies of the state and that, above all else, policy can emerge as the product of bargaining, negotiation and compromise (Eberhard 1986:74-76, O'Riordan 1976:230-235; Buhrs 1991; Mann 1986; Young 1981; Young 1982; Davis 1981). The state can, and does, intervene in land-use matters to make environmental policy - usually in the form of the conservation of significant areas, and/or the passage of regulations designed to protect the biosphere. Notwithstanding the development of theories about the ability of the market to provide for environmental protection, the act of making environmental policy reflects the capacity state intervention has to address matters on the environmental agenda, and to mitigate the crude materialism of a market rationalist approach.

These factors serve to highlight two points. First, they are a reminder that whilst it is true that the ecological rationality upon which the environmental movement is mobilised may constitute something extraneous to the normative underpinning of the dominant materialist paradigm, vestiges of a successful intrusion of environmental issues into the mainstream of institutional politics do exist. This suggests that there is scope for environmentalists to successfully traverse the boundaries between mainstream, or 'old' politics, and radical, or 'new' politics. Secondly, the existence of just such an institutionalised dimension to environmental politics hints strongly, once again, to a divide within the broader environmental movement itself. In the Australian context, Doyle's (1989) distinction between
movement-oriented activists and oligarchic leaders within the movement is one hint of this; so, too, were Peres' (1970 p.4) and St.Johns' (Australia 1974a) differentiation between 'environmentalists' and 'conservationists' with the latter representing the pragmatic 'coolmen' capable of participating in dialogue and negotiation with governmental actors in the search for policy compromises contrasting with the emergent 'visionaries' seeking more widespread change and prepared to use more confrontationist politics to achieve this. Again, it is important to stress that the significance of the strains and tensions that emanate from the diverse nature of the movement lies not so much in internal quarrels over tactics and strategies but rather in the overarching question of what environmentalism's relationship to the state should be.

Here, then, is to be found a major tension underpinning environmental politics in Australia - especially in a period following the rise of an environmental movement having experienced a period of enhanced impact upon the land-use debate. An environmentalism that rallies in the pursuit of specific land-use dispute objectives to which decisions made by state actors in policy-making institutions are critical, has the potential to work within the very institutional, or 'old paradigmatic', politics that social movements seek to transform. The degree to which environmentalism manifests itself as an example of an alternative protest- or massed-activist oriented politics may well be influenced by the attitude the state has towards the movement. Protest activity might well represent an expression of frustration at being denied a proactive, incorporated role in the policy-making process. So much Australian environmental policy-making, Bruce Davis once argued (1985), has been made as something of an
afterthought where institutional actors were forced to address environmental inputs well after a general policy decision had been made, and usually as the result of a major oppositional campaign having been waged by environmental activists. Indeed, the demand for a proactive, pre-emptive role for environmental inputs in the decision-making process has been a major demand of Australian environmentalists.

This tension within environmentalism as both an example of new social movement politics on the one hand, and a rather conventional form of interest group politics seeking to take its place in the institutional decision-making process on the other, underpins this study of national environmental policy politics in Australia after 1983. This is particularly so when Australian environmental politics is examined during the period of national Labor governments in which neo-corporatist tendencies were present in those governments’ approach to managing the politics of policy-making. As this study will show, the Hawke Government in particular developed new agencies designed to incorporate environmental interest groups into government-sanctioned forums in which broad, long-term policy principles were debated alongside organised business and labour interest groups. As a result of this approach, a differentiation between the chief component parts of Australian environmental movement was discernible after the environmental movement’s success in preventing the development of a hydro-electric scheme on Tasmania’s Franklin River - the so-called ‘Tasmanian dams case’ (see Thompson 1981; Economou 1991). On the one hand, a component of the movement that was very impatient with existing political parties and conventional forms of politics was discernible, first, in the protest-oriented actions that occurred at or in disputed land-areas, and, later, by the evolution of
alternative 'green' political parties (see Hutton 1987; Brown and Singer 1996). Yet, by the same token, a core of interest groups dedicated to championing specific environmental causes in relations to land-use and resource policy were also present - and it was this component that worked most closely with the neo-corporatist approach being developed by the Hawke Government.

The role of the Federal Government was crucial to all of this, for the potential for environmentalists to become institutional actors depended in no small way on the willingness of the institutional process to allow this to happen. The fact that environmental politics in the post-Franklin period would take an institutional form relied not only on the environmental movement's enhanced political competence as a result of the Franklin campaign. It also depended upon the election of a national Labor Government whose overarching approach to policy politics had a strong corporatist feel to it, and whose response to the potential for environmental movement politics to fragment the politics of the broad social-reformist left was to pursue ways in which the 'environmental lobby' could be incorporated as allies.

Here, then, is a theoretical problem in assessing the politics of environmentalism in Australia where an environmental social movement is present in a political culture otherwise dominated by two major political parties - one of which is a trade-union based social democratic party. A division of opinion exists in the theoretical literature on just how environmental movements and labour parties should, and do relate to each other. On the one side there is the literature that sees scope for a convergence of environmentalism and social democracy based primarily on the shared
view about the need for state intervention to address serious social problems associated with the unregulated operation of capital (Bahro 1986; Burgmann 1993; Spretnak and Capra 1986). Indeed, Bahro (1984) has theorised that the notion that environmentalism, social democracy and democratic socialism share values about the need for equitable distribution of wealth through the restraining of the unfettered market place provides the basis upon which a ‘red-green’ alliance between green and labour politics can, and should, emerge as a major challenge to the capitalist system. So, too, does the perception of environmentalism as an expression of humanitarianism link the movement with other movements that seek to achieve greater social equality, the need for cultural and political liberation of oppressed minorities, the need to achieve peace-oriented outcomes in foreign relations, and so on. In short, environmentalism, like social democracy, is viewed as the politics of the left (Stretton 1976). It has also been argued that environmentalism’s interest in enhancing the quality of the biosphere (clean water, clean air, pleasant living environment, and so on) serves to improve the quality of life for all members in society, including the working class constituency of social democratic politics (Seigmann 1985). On the basis of this, relations between environmental movements and social democratic parties should be positive.

Against this view, however, is an argument that views environmentalism and social democracy as potential competitors, including where both phenomena spawn party organisations that compete with each other to gain parliamentary representation (see Papadakis 1984:74-75; Hay 1987; and especially Seigmann 1985). Similarly, the spawning of organised interest groups from within both the environmental and labour
movements also leads to competitive strain where these groups seek to influence government and policy-making. The potential for green and social democratic parties to be pitted against each other is not the only area of rivalry. The existence of trade unions, with their very materialistic outlooks, is an important feature of labour politics in the liberal democratic state, as, indeed, is the existence of other interest groups seeking to influence government decision-making. Despite the odd example of trade union-environmental unity on specific environmental matters, the general rule is for unions and environmental groups to be pitted against each other as rivals in their attempt to influence government policy. Seigmann (1985:8) reiterates a point made by Offe and others: simply, that the new politics and the politics of traditional labourism means that

...labour-environmentalist conflicts are rooted not merely in differences over policy, but are centred in the more normative question of how present and future generations want to organise their physical and political environment.

By examining the politics of environmental policy-making in Australia between 1983 and 1996 - the period in which the ALP was in government - this thesis broaches the issue of labour-environmental relations. As important as these two theoretical approaches are to outlining the broad reasons why social democracy and environmentalism should converge, and the practical political reasons why this rarely happens in reality, neither model is totally adequate in explaining the nature of Labor’s relationship to the environmental movement during the period of Labor Government. This study identifies the existence of an alliance between the ALP and the environmental movement - an alliance that was even able to overcome the union movement’s reticence about the Labor Government’s approach to environmental matters up until a major turning point in the Labor-environmental relationship in
1995. Yet this was a particular type of alliance, defined by the Labor Government’s willingness to address some of the major issues on the environmental agenda, and - perhaps more significantly - its willingness to apply neo-corporatist principles to the development of new institutions and forums within which a national, as distinct from State-based, environmental debate could occur. In this process, the Australian environmental movement’s core interest groups emerged as the primary vehicles by which this state-directed discourse with the movement took place. In this way, it will be argued, the Labor Government shaped the nature and direction of the environmental debate, and did so by extending to the environmental movement’s core interest groups the opportunity to become “insider” interest groups in this debate.

Indeed, when the fact that it was the ALP, rather than the conservative parties, that was willing to utilise the Commonwealth’s constitutional authority to intervene in land-use matters involving ‘national’ or ‘world’ heritage, the environmental movement had little choice but to look towards the Labor party as the party in national government to address the environmental agenda - an agenda which included demands for the sort of public policy outcomes that only a government could undertake. Thus the ‘red-green’ alliance in Australian environmental politics was something of a one-sided affair, dominated by the Labor Government as it sought to maintain its links with the main environmental interest groups whilst attempting to recast the way in which environmental policy might be made at the national level. This situation would be acceptable for the environmental interest groups presumably for as long as they felt that the advantages of being so closely aligned with electoral and
institutional politics outweighed the difficulties associated with acting in a conventional interest group, rather than new social movement, type politics.

1.3: Environmentalism in Australia - the interest group core of the broader movement

It was from the combined impact of concerns about environmental degradation from industrialisation, fears of environmental catastrophes occurring from Europe's nuclear energy industry, and the fears of nuclear war being the consequence of the East-West arms race, that European 'green' politics emerged. The dimensions this phenomenon took on were particularly illuminating of the qualitative change to political methods that the social movement approach - or, perhaps more accurately, the 'new' social movement approach - was seen to be seeking (Bahro 1984; Spretnak and Capra 1986; Porritt 1984:216-217). In a number of west European nations, a strong link existed between environmentalists and peace and nuclear disarmament activists. The utilisation of direct protest action to, first, express political opposition to a particular policy and, second, to try to heighten broader community awareness of the social movement's position was a strategy common to all of these movements. Similarly, the various movements attempted to use the electoral process to exert pressure on the political process. Here lay the origins of green party politics in Europe.
Significantly, an example of this 'green' social-movement type politics in evidence in western Europe could be found in Australian State politics, although, again, the fact that this phenomenon was oriented to addressing matters to do with nature conservation was - and remains - an important distinction (Hay and Haward 1988:434). With its relatively small population, along with its substantial amount of land area that could be considered 'wilderness' by even the harshest set of evaluative criteria, Tasmania has figured prominently in the recent history of Australian environmental politics. Indeed, Hay and Haward (1988) have argued, Australian green politics can be differentiated from its western European counterpart precisely because of the way Tasmanian land-use disputes (as distinct from peace and nuclear issues) have acted as the guiding issue by which Australian green politics evolved. Disputes about the State's policy of 'hydro-industrialisation' - a policy of government-funded construction of major hydro-electricity schemes to exploit the State's abundant rivers in a bid to generate cheap power to attract manufacturing industry (see Tighe 1992:126-140; Davis 1985:212) - have been at the forefront of Tasmanian environmental politics. Commencing with the dispute over the inundation of Lake Pedder in the State's disputed south-west wilderness region (see Australia 1974a; McKenry 1972; Davis 1972), the primacy of environmental issues to Tasmania's public policy debate occurred with the Franklin River dispute, which was, in essence, a re-run of the Lake Pedder dispute (see Green 1981; Thompson 1981; Davis 1984).

Thus, even before the election of the Federal Labor Government in 1983, green social movement politics in Australia had already undergone a substantial evolution to the point of comprising clearly identifiable organisations and personnel
who had already impacted upon the mainstream political debate particularly in pursuit of nature conservation (Davis 1981:112-113). The Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS) emerged as the primary vehicle by which Tasmanian environmentalists sought to co-ordinate the campaign to prevent the Franklin dam. TWS was the direct descendant of the Lake Pedder Action Committee (LPAC) which, as a Commonwealth inquiry into the Lake Pedder dispute that described the LPAC as ‘visionaries’ pointed out, sought to utilise direct action in a bid to highlight the ecological issues behind the campaign to prevent further hydro-development in Tasmania's disputed south-west. As such, LPAC differed from the ‘cool men’ found amongst those who had tried to quietly exert pressure particularly on politicians and bureaucrats by behind-the-scenes lobbying and persuasion (see Australia 1974a:181; Peres 1970:3-4). This observation of the qualitative shift in the way environmental values were being advocated reflected the high political value an emerging generation of environmental activists were placing on direct activism. This tendency, evident in LPAC, was carried through to the TWS, with a number of anti-Franklin campaigners having actually experienced the protest-oriented politics of the latter stages of the Lake Pedder campaign. In the aftermath of its defeat over Lake Pedder, but with the prospect of further hydro-development about to occur elsewhere in the south-west region, LPAC was recast as, first, the South West Tasmanian Action Committee with branches in Hobart, Melbourne and Sydney. In 1976, the Tasmanian and interstate branches of this group agreed to change its name to the Tasmanian Wilderness Society (Green 1981:83-99; Lowe 1984:73; Thompson 1984:55).
The loose organisational structures that had characterised the old LPAC, plus the firm commitment to an activist-oriented politics in the pursuit of conservation-oriented outcomes in land-use politics, were carried over into the TWS. As Holloway (1986) described it, the TWS was primarily a volunteer body, with a minimal hierarchical structure whose primary function was to co-ordinate the secretariat in the Society's head office in Hobart. Holloway's study paints a picture of a group with a fluid organisational centre, where even those who were co-opted into its management structure - such as it was - were very suspicious of the politics of oligarchy and hierarchy. In particular, the ethos of being an activist-oriented, as distinct from a bureaucratically-oriented body, was a central part of the Society's internal value-system. It was precisely this fact that the TWS was so activism-oriented that became a source of appeal to those who literally drifted into and out of its aegis during the anti-Franklin dam campaign (see Holloway 1986:26). The Society's pivotal role in the blockade of the Franklin dam site - and the success that this strategy had in heightening community awareness of the wilderness issue beyond Tasmania - simply served to enforce the high value placed on activism.

Because of its loose organisational structure, its attempt to avoid bureaucratic politics in either its internal affairs or in its relationship to institutional policy-making actors, and because of the centrality of activism to its perception of the political, Holloway viewed the TWS as a social movement in its own right. An alternative approach might view the Society as one organisation amongst a number of other groups that comprised the anti-Franklin dam campaign, and which later formed the National South West Coalition (NSWC) as an umbrella body co-ordinating the "Vote
for the Wilderness" campaign that endorsed the ALP in the 1983 election (McQueen 1983:80; Martin 1984:114-115; Warhurst 1983:30-31). The status of the TWS became even more problematic in the aftermath of the Franklin dam campaign, when the Society made two major decisions: first, it declared its intention to fight similar wilderness conservation campaigns in States other than Tasmania; and, secondly, it announced that it would be changing the organisation's name to 'The Wilderness Society' - the deletion of the word 'Tasmania' being an integral part of the Society's reorientation towards national campaigning. Notwithstanding the view held either by analysts or members of the Society itself, by the conclusion of the anti-Franklin dam campaign TWS had emerged as a major interest group in the political arena of land-use decision-making where matters pertaining to wilderness conservation arose.

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) was the second important environmental organisation to evolve as a major actor in the land-use arena during this period. Although a much older organisation than TWS, and with a much stronger self perception of its role as a body capable of 'lobbying' the institutional decision-making process in the way of the 'coolmen' identified by the Lake Pedder inquiry (and see Davis 1981:218), the ACF also experienced some significant reinvention as a result of the Tasmanian dams disputes. Like the TWS, the ACF's approach to environmental politics in the 1980s and beyond was profoundly influenced by its extensive role in the Tasmanian dams dispute, and, indeed, the tensions between activist-oriented and 'lobby' oriented approaches emerged during this period (see Warhurst 1994:78). The ACF's ability to view behind-the-scenes negotiations with decision-makers, attempts to put pressure on politicians, and to use a network of associations to impress
environmental values on those in a position to influence the debate reflected the original nature of the organisation.

Yet the Tasmanian dams dispute appeared, on the surface at least, to be a triumph for activist-oriented politics. In these disputes, unanimity about the need to preserve the Franklin River (and, presumably, to atone for the loss of Lake Pedder) overcame any serious divisions within the ACF, and between the ACF and the TWS. Personal reflections written by TWS and ACF activists post-Franklin are striking for the sense of unity of purpose and outlook that characterised the long and complex anti-dams campaign (see especially Green 1984; Thompson 1981; Thompson 1984). The diversity of campaign initiatives were also a striking feature, and reflected not only the environmental movement's developing prowess in protest action, but also its ability to utilise quite conventional political activity to good effect.

The development of an environmentalist electoral strategy during the Franklin dam dispute - the significance of which would stretch well in to the 1990s - was very much the product of TWS-ACF co-operation, and provided an insight into how these groups could find forms of unconventional political behaviour that were applicable in otherwise quite conventional activity. For example, in a referendum held in 1981 by the Tasmanian Labor Government forced by the environmental opposition to the Franklin dam, TWS and ACF activists successfully circumnavigated the Government's attempt to marginalise them. The Government's referendum excluded a 'no dams' option, to which environmental activists responded by encouraging sympathisers to either leave their ballots blank, or write the slogan ‘No Dams'. In the
ensuring result, over a third of the Tasmanian electorate lodged informal votes, and the Government's attempt to clear the way for the Franklin dam on the basis of clear community consent failed (see Newman 1982). Then, in 1982, a by-election for the federal seat of Flinders, covering the outer southern suburbs of Melbourne, provided another opportunity for environmental activists to seek to impact on the electoral process. Of even greater significance was a report from scrutineers that 41 percent of the voters in Flinders had written 'No Dams' on their ballot papers (Age 6.12.1982).

This thesis commences its examination of Australian environmental politics in 1983, when the ALP won national government and legislated to prevent the Franklin dam. By this time, the Australian environmental movement had already demonstrated its considerable ability to impact upon the mainstream political process by utilising both effective protest action at the site of the disputed project, and by its involvement in a 'Vote for the Wilderness' campaign in the 1983 federal election (Warhurst 1984). Central to this campaign was the endorsement of the ALP candidates for the House of Representatives - a position based on expectation that Labor would legislate to prevent the dam if elected to office. Herein lay the basis of the electoral relationship between Labor and the environmental interest groups that underpinned national environmental politics until 1996.

By the time of the election of the Hawke Government, and the commencement of a long period of Labor administration of national policy-making, the chief characteristics of the politics of environmentalism were already in place. 'Green' politics in Australia had evolved to be dominated by the politics of nature
conservation. Environmentalism had sought to articulate an ecological view of wilderness, and had used protest action and non-institutional political activity to project that view. Yet, notwithstanding the extra-institutional nature of this politics, the objective of pressuring the Commonwealth to make land-use policy that would prevent State-sanctioned development of wilderness areas in particular was a very significant part of this campaign. So, too, was a longer standing objective - specifically, to find ways in which environmentalists could have their perspectives, outlooks and land-use arguments incorporated into the decision-making process, thereby overcoming the traditional pattern where governments would only address environmental concerns as an afterthought. Australian environmentalism thus presented challenges to the institutionalised political process in its incarnation as a new social movement, but one that had spawned some highly politically competent interest groups capable of discharging conventional political activity.

1.4: Greening the Commonwealth? Labor, institutions and the environment as a matter of policy-making

Because the environmental debate in Australia revolved primarily around matters pertaining to nature conservation, and because nature conservation could be achieved through the public policy-making process, institutional considerations were, and continued to be, of central importance to national environmental politics. The development of new processes by which national environmental policy could be made - a process which involved the redesigning of some existing federal policy-making institutions, and the creation of new institutions - thus represents a third major theme
underpinning this study of Labor's management of national environmental policy politics. In so doing, the post-1983 Labor Governments had to deal with the structural and institutional impediments to making truly national policy in this field. The problems confronting national institutional policy-makers seeking to grapple with environmental matters fell basically under two categories - first, the constraints on national policy-making provided by Australia's federal system, and, second, the Commonwealth's lack of institutional infrastructure to undertake environmental policy design compared with that held by the States. Underpinning both of these issues was the historical assumption that land-use matters (and, by implication, the question of environmental protection in the form of nature conservation) were the responsibility of the States (Davis 1985b). This meant that not only were Commonwealth incursions into land-use matters in the name of environmental protection a comparatively recent phenomenon, but also that, in the main, the infrastructure to undertake the management and administration of land and resource-use had been built up over time at the State level. Up until the Whitlam Government established its inquiry into the flooding of Lake Pedder, partly in response to its 1972 election campaign promise to do something about this dispute, land-use politics had been very much a localised issue.

Environmental activists were acutely aware of this federalist division, and reasoned that the fact that land-use decision-making was occurring at the local level was one of the reasons why ecological value inputs were not being addressed in the decision-making process (see Davis 1981a; Davis 1985a). The argument here was that State Governments were almost ideologically welded to the view that social utility is
best served by development and economic growth - a classical example, indeed, of Dryzek's 'economic rationality'. Consequently, it was felt by environmentalists that relations between State Government and development capital were so close as to be almost impregnable by a set of different outlooks and attitudes. In response to this, environmental campaigns sought to agitate at the national level in a bid to, first, break the close nexus between State Governments and their major developer clientele, and, second, to appeal to a broader appreciation of the land-use debate by seeking to convert it from being a localised dispute to, instead, take on the mantle of being a debate about national environmental, scientific and cultural heritage (Tighe and Taplin 1985 cf: Galligan 1986:246). In so doing, these environmental campaigns sought to exploit a feature of federal systems where aggrieved parties in a political dispute seek to appeal to the next level of government in a bid to have reversed decisions made at the lower level (Gerritsen 1990:231-234).

This dynamic was a critical part of the federal pretext of national environmental policy-making under the post-1983 Labor Governments. Quite simply, the Hawke Government in particular sought to utilise the Commonwealth's power over land-use matters that had been developed as a result of the actions of the previous Whitlam (Labor) and Fraser (Liberal-National) Federal Governments. The Lake Pedder dispute, for example, resulted in two Federal inquiries and a legislative program that resulted in the formation of a national Environmental Impact Assessment regime, and the creation of the Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) (Australia 1974a; Australia 1974b). There was much to suggest that these initiatives undertaken by the Whitlam Labor Government (1972-1975) were responses of the
incremental type designed to give environmentalists a minimalist indication of federal interest in their cause whilst simultaneously avoiding any action that might stop the HEC from going ahead with the Lake Pedder scheme. These national institutional responses were to be of some importance in future disputes, however. The formation of the AHC, resulting from a national inquiry into the status of Australia's 'national estate', represented the creation of a national agency designed, amongst other things, to define what was meant by the concept of 'national estate' and how it might be preserved (Australia 1974b). The 1974 inquiry also made critically important recommendations that the Federal Government should become a signatory to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) covenant on the protection of sites of 'world heritage' value. In duly becoming a signatory, the Australian Government undertook a commitment to legislate to protect world heritage value properties from degradation or destruction. Whilst the Whitlam Government had little time to actually apply this covenant in domestic land-use politics beyond having a number of sites included on UNESCO's world heritage list, it's agreement to sign the covenant established an important administrative beachhead that would be at the disposal of future national governments.

This notion was reinforced in the latter stages of the Liberal-Country/National Coalition Government from 1975 to 1983. Whilst anxious to avoid direct conflict with the States, the Coalition Government found itself in dispute with the Queensland Government over the proposal to allow mineral exploration on Fraser Island and the Great Barrier Reef. The extension of Federal protection to the Great Barrier Reef in the form of a national marine park was justified by the Fraser Government on the
grounds that the area was a national and world heritage estate, thus using the very normative concepts that the Whitlam Government, through the AHC, had sought to bring into the policy debate at the national level. The protection of Fraser Island, meanwhile, was achieved through the Federal Government's refusal to sign licenses for the export of ores mined from the island's mineral sands (Davis 1981:448-451). Quite apart from the significance of the decision to preserve a land area from mining interests, the Fraser Island decision was also noteworthy for its insight into how Federal actors could and would seek to use existing constitutional power in their bid to make national environmental policy. Fraser Island's preservation exploited the Commonwealth's power over export licensing, thereby allowing Canberra to create policy without requiring constitutional change to overturn the arrangement whereby land-use remained a State matter. This example served to underscore that there has emerged a deal of uncertainty over the nature of the division of land-use and resource policy-making power, notwithstanding the historical view that land-use was a residual State responsibility.

This study commences at the point at which arguably the most significant suggestion of an alteration of the traditional balance of power of land-use occurs. This, of course, is the High Court's validation of the Commonwealth's *World Heritage Properties Protection Act (1983)* which prevented the Tasmanian Government from proceeding with its hydro-electric scheme on the Franklin River (Coper 1983). In this case, the High Court found in the External Affairs provisions of the Australian constitution legal authority for the Commonwealth to legislate to fulfil its obligations to protect world heritage sites as per the UNESCO covenant to which Australia is a
signatory. Whilst the Court canvassed other heads of powers in the constitution that were also relevant to this case, its findings vis a vis the UNESCO covenant and the External Affairs power was by far the most significant acknowledgment of an alteration to the balance of land-use power that had hitherto been in favour of the States. It is important to remember that this finding did not mean that a dramatic reversal of the balance of power had occurred; rather, the case indicated that, in certain circumstances, the Commonwealth had at its disposal, in the form of the UNESCO covenant on world heritage properties, a policy instrument capable of overcoming the States' supposed dominance in this policy arena.

This was the critical starting point for an era of unprecedented Commonwealth output in environmental policy. The realisation that the Commonwealth could exercise such power was a critical catalyst for the resurgence of activity by the environmental movement, too. As this study shows, however, this was only part of the environmental policy story between 1983 and 1996. The Hawke and Keating Governments' institutional development in a bid to enhance the Commonwealth's ability to make 'good' policy in this arena was just as important as the enhanced activity of environmentalists in the pursuit of spectacular specific land-use objectives. Indeed, this thesis seeks to demonstrate that the success of the Federal Government's attempt to assert managerial control over the debate was reflected in how central institutional development and design became to the national environmental debate during this period. This was due in no small part to the general lack of policy-intelligence gathering ability on environmental matters at the Commonwealth level. The Commonwealth was, in effect, a comparative newcomer to environmental policy-
making, and, as the Federal Labor Government became ever more embroiled in land-use and resource disputes as a result of the impact of environmentalist inputs, it perceived the need to enhance its institutional capacity to deal with the complex array of technical, scientific and economic issues that arose with the incursion of an 'ecological rationality' into the debate.

Thus institutions, and the politics that goes on between and within them, played a critical role in national environmental politics in the post-Franklin dam period. This was particularly true in the context of there being a recently elected Federal Labor Government whose policy manifesto was heavily overlayed with notions of the need to achieve consensus politics through the interaction of government and peak interest organisations, and whose approach to policy-making became ever more interested in reforming the methods and institutional mechanisms by which better decisions could be made in the future. Dror has argued that this interest in reforming decision-making processes - and addressing the manner in which institutions may be recast or redesigned to achieve the goal of making better decisions - reflects the propensity for governments to seek to learn from past policy-making experiences and find ways of improving on the way decisions have been made (Dror 1971; Dror 1964:155-156; Dror 1968:260; and see March and Olsen 1989:53ff).

Dror's argument that governments seek to undertake what he terms 'normative optimum' reform of decision-making in a bid to incorporate things which have been learned from past policy debates in a bid to improve the decision-making process, serves to underscore the view that institutions are critically important actors in the political process - even in political debate in which seemingly anti-systemic
phenomena such as new social movements are relevant. After all, as Weaver and Rockman (1993:6) have pointed out, institutional actors play a critical role in the political process by virtue of their command of the policy-making process. They argue that it is up to government to set policy priorities, to undertake the necessary recreation or reformation of institutions in response to changing political environments, to make decisions and to ensure that these decisions are effectively implemented, and ‘...above all, to manage political cleavages to ensure that the society does not degenerate into civil war.’

As important as the search for holistic, paradigmatic change might be to environmentalism as a social movement manifestation, it is also true that environmentalism, in Australia at least, also seeks to impact upon the policy-making process - especially with regards to land and resource-use. In addition to the philosophical debates about humanity’s relationship to the biosphere, Australian environmentalism has also demanded a meaningful role in the institutionalised decision-making process. And, as a part of that role, environmentalism has demanded that its normative input be considered as part of the decision-making process, rather than as an afterthought once the decision-making process has been completed. Because policy-making institutions have the power to impact upon the integrity of land areas, Australian environmentalism has sought to have an impact on the institutionalised policy-making process. Herein lies the linkage between institutional politics and environmentalism in the Australian context - a link that underpinned the approach of the post-1983 Labor governments when responding to environmentalist demands with regard to land-use and resource policy decisions.
1.5: Conclusion and overview

With its values and outlooks based on an ecological perspective of the need for humanity to be in balance with the environment, and with its association with mass activist-oriented political behaviour, contemporary environmentalism is closely aligned with the new policies of the new social movements. Like its international counterparts, Australian 'green' politics corresponds with a new social movement typology, although its orientation towards undertaking campaigns to achieve nature, or wilderness conservation, assists in defining Australian environmentalism and helps differentiate it from overseas varieties. As has been argued in this chapter, the fact that such a strong nature conservation dimension exists in Australian environmentalism assists in making the movement quite pragmatic in its attitude towards engaging the state. This is particularly true where the nature conservation agenda seeks to achieve conservation-oriented outcomes through the public policy process. In the Australian situation in particular, pursuit of specific nature conservation objectives were the primary concern of the environmental movement to which other, broader social, cultural and political objectives were of secondary importance to all but a few activists and sympathisers. In this case, the Australian environmental movement sought political outcomes that could be achieved through the making of public policy, particularly with regards to governmental policies on land-use and resource development.
It was precisely because of this pursuit of specific land-use policy outcomes that the Australian environmental movement sought to engage aspects of the Australian political process, including the political parties. And, in turn, it was the willingness of the ALP to so engage with the movement's major conservation demands (initially, a commitment to prevent the hydro-development of Tasmania's Franklin River) that established the basis for positive Labor-environmental relations which, in turn, became the conduit by which the nature conservation element of the movement was able to impact upon the mainstream debate. This chapter has highlighted the reasons why Labor was willing and able to embrace the nature conservation cause, albeit within the context of an overarching interest in bringing 'consensus' to the political process and by seeking to assert a governmental management of the major policy issues. Herein lay the basis on which the environment was to become a major issue in the national debate. Moreover, this was also the basis upon which the form, nature and direction of national environmental politics would be determined.

Thus, in the politics of policy-making, the governing party and the interest groups that operate within a particular policy arenas are very important actors. This is particularly so where the debate focuses on policy outcomes, methods by which policy outcomes are arrived at, or - as in the case of Australian environmentalism in the 1980s - a combination of both. As the subsequent chapters in this thesis will show, Australian environmental politics between 1983 and 1996 operated at levels beyond simply the on-going campaign by the environmental movement to have as much of the nation's significant natural environment protected as possible. Debates arose over
the methods by which the Commonwealth might make policies with longer-term outlooks than simply responding to specific land-use disputes as they arose. They also sought to address broader concepts such as ecologically sustainable development, and how competing demands between sets of interests might be resolved through careful discussion, mediation and long-term planning. Such approaches reflect the importance of governance to the policy-making process - a situation that serves to remind of the significant role that political parties and interest groups play in the politics that is associated with decision-making.

1. Included amongst these have been the women's and indigenous peoples movements, although arguably the most important link has been between environmentalism and the peace and nuclear disarmament movements (Kelly 1984:104-107; Camilleri 1978). This has been particularly true in what was referred to as 'western' Europe during the later stages of East-West bipolarity, when the matter of nuclear deterrence (and its flip-side of possible nuclear destruction in the advent of a European conflict) was particularly pertinent (Feher and Heller 1984).

2. Commonly, these issues tend to resonate in the realm of broad social policy debates, as distinct from a narrow set of debates over seemingly prosaic or specific matters such as economic debates between governmental and economic elites. The rise of 'counter movement' politics in Australia in the 1960s, with its ability to broaden the political agenda beyond that determined by major party politics (Jupp 1982:19), is a case in point. Debates about the plight of Australia's indigenous people, debates about Australia's involvement in the Indo-Chinese wars during the 1960s and 1970s, and even debates about the environment, all depended on the 'counter movement' dynamic in order to force their way on to the mainstream political agenda. In nearly all instances, massed protest action politicising citizens otherwise alienated from or by the institutionalised political process, was central to the emergence of that movement, and its impact upon the political debate (Lipsky 1968:1156-1157; Wilson 1973:89-91; Rootes 1984).

3. The new social movements, Touraine has argued, are the dynamic by which the struggle for control of 'historicity', with its attendant implications of the battle to achieve ascendancy over debates about culture, values, ethics and outlooks, is discharged (Touraine 1981:60; Touraine 1984:7). In particular, it is discharged by those who are mobilised on the basis of social issues, rather than the pursuit of institutional power - a characteristic more usually associated with the more mainstream party, interest group and/or institutional politics. The broader scope of the social and political critique provided by the new social movements is encapsulated in Frank and Fuentes' view that:
Social movements display much variety and changeability, but have in common individual mobilisation through a sense of morality and injustice, and social power through social mobilisation against deprivation and for survival and identity (Frank and Fuentes 1987:143)

It is precisely the notion of holistic and cultural change that Feher and Heller attribute to the potential for social movement politics to act as an alternative to the politics of institutions and party when they refer to the capacity for movements to seek to transform, rather than 'capture', civil society (1984:45). The political battle for the new social movements resonates in the search for attitudinal and behavioural change as a way of altering the very culture within political action occurs - an activism that includes even the seemingly 'old paradigmatic activity of debating and formulating public policy. Political action, it is argued, is based on values and outlooks, and the transition of any form of political action - including that undertaken by the state - must be based on changes in value, attitudes and culture.

The neo-classical liberal hypothesis that the unfettered market-place can satisfy demands for environmental protection and nature conservation through the operation of market-determined pricing mechanisms, and that there is consequently no need for state intervention, is itself a manifestation of a radical or at least non-mainstream position (Chisholm and Anderson 1991:113, Young 1981:2). The axiomatic approach, outlined by Forgund and Strom (1988:8) as

... wide agreement that the state should protect the interests of the future in some degree against the effects of our irrational discounting of our preference for ourselves over our descendants ... It is the clear duty of government, which is the trustee for the unborn generations as well as for its present citizens, to watch over and, if need be, by legislative enactment to defend exhaustible natural resources of the country from rash and reckless spoilation ...

is reflected in the fact that many liberal-industrial states comprise departments and agencies dedicated to environmental protection and nature conservation, that the policy-making process may contain mechanisms such as Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) designed to take environmental issues into account in land-use decision-making, and that laws designed to prevent or seek community restitution for environmental damage may be found on the statute books (Eberhard 1986:42, Gilpin 1980)

In the Australian literature, the 'Green Bans' movement in Sydney in the 1970s - when the Builders Labourers Federation and various local residential and environmental interest groups coalesced to prevent the development of Sydney's Rocks area - is often cited as a practical example of the 'red-green' alliance in practice. Whilst there have been sporadic instances of unions and environmentalists coalescing on other (usually urban planning) controversies, these examples of union-environmental unity tend to be rare (Jakubowicz 1984; Mundey 1987).

The existence of what Seigmann (1985:7) calls "labour-environmental relations (LER)" thus involves a range of relations across both organised labour and the environmental movement which, in turn, may involve a myriad of party, interest group, and trade union organisations. Notwithstanding the theoretical capacity for the 'red-green alliance', Siegmann argues that there are five realms in which great potential for problematic, if not conflictual, LER can arise. These five realms include: first, that there is a strong perception of an inherent conflict in interest between developer interests who see development and growth as vital to employment growth, and their view that environmental policies are inherently anti-growth and anti-employment; second, that the development of separate organisation within the environmental movement is perceived to be in competition with existing labour organisations; third, that existing political and social institutions designed to create or arbitrate over land-use disputes in an adversarial culture; fourth, that a major sociological difference exists between
the constituency of the labour movement, and that of the environmental movement; and, finally, that, as a result of this sociological difference, a wide gulf in values, outlooks and ideologies exists between the two movements.

7. Of the European green parties, West Germany’s Greens, or *Die Grünen*, was the most significant due to its ability to win representation to the federal German legislature (see Papadakis 1984; Siegmann 1985; Bahro 1986; Kelly 1984b). If nothing else, the electoral success of *Die Grünen* confirmed at least three critical points about green movement politics. First, success at this form of institutional politics undermined the notion that this was fringe politics. On the contrary, through the use of massed political action and mainstream political activity such as electioneering, the Greens had demonstrated an ability to impact on mainstream politics (Papadakis 1986:447; Hay and Haward 1988:434). Second, *Die Grünen*’s electoral success had occurred primarily at the expense of the voting support for the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the FDR’s mainstream trade-union based, centrist social-democratic party. Here the Greens’ success appeared to resonate as a shifting alignment within the social-progressive side of the political spectrum. In terms of voting alignments at least, the Greens had to be placed amongst the other political parties on the left of the political spectrum (see especially Papadakis 1984:187-199; Siegmann 1985). Finally, *Die Grünen*’s success acted as something of a model by which green social movement politics could be understood, and to which green movements in other countries would look for their own strategies. The green movement in the FDR, therefore, provided real evidence of the capacity for its political agenda to impact upon the political mainstream - including the electoral and parliamentary processes.

8. It has been argued by Walker (1989) that the United Tasmania Group - formed to contest the Tasmanian State election in 1972 on the Lake Pedder issue - was the world’s first ‘green’ political party.

9. In the period prior to the issue breaking on to the national agenda, the Franklin dam dispute had a major impact on Tasmanian politics. Within three years of winning one of the largest majorities in any Tasmanian election in 1979 (Bennett 1983:80), the Tasmanian Labor Government headed by Doug Lowe collapsed as it failed to deal with a well-run and well supported environmental campaign to prevent the construction of the Franklin River hydro-electric scheme (Lowe 1984; Thompson 1981). In addition to contributing to the fall of the Lowe Government, subsequent electoral contests (using Tasmania’s system of Hare-Clark proportional representation (see Townsley 1976:22; O’Connell 1983)) confirmed the environmental movement’s impact on the voting alignment particularly of the left-of-centre of the political spectrum in a manner concomitant with the western European pattern. The development of a substantial organisation with political skills, and the ability to become a major part of the political mainstream by achieving relevance to the electoral process were the critical legacies of the development of the environmental movement through the Tasmanian dam dispute. As Hay (1987) pointed out, the foundations for environmentalism’s capacity to significantly impact national politics had been laid in the Tasmanian dams dispute.

10. The TWS was also involved in fund-raising which later resulted in the creation of ‘The Wilderness Shop’ - a retail outlet selling wilderness-oriented products and paraphernalia that proved to be a major source of revenue (*National Times* 15-21/11/1981). Because there were few paid staff in TWS, the bulk of this revenue was dedicated to funding its environmental activism.

11. This by-election was won by the Liberal’s Peter Reith, who had declared his support for the anti-dams position as part of his campaign (*Commonwealth Record* 29 November-5 December 1982:1772).
This result in Flinders was, in fact, the latest in a number of electoral achievements that the Tasmanian environmental movement had attained in its anti-dams campaign. Inter-environmental interest group co-operation - particularly between the ACF and TWS - was pivotal to this strategy. By 1983, the anti-dams campaign had formed the NSWC specifically to co-ordinate the environmental movement's campaign to endorse the Australian Labor Party in the 1983 federal election on the basis that it would use federal powers to prevent the Tasmanian Government from proceeding with the Franklin dam. Here lay the origins of a critical electoral quid pro quo in which endorsement of the ALP in various federal elections by these key environmental organisations was made on the belief, if not understanding, of some sympathy towards the environmental agenda should Labor have control of national public policy-making. Perhaps the national branch of the Labor party had already taken the initiative in this arrangement. In its Biennial Conference in July 1982, a firm 'No Dams' policy had been included in the party's national policy manifesto. Whatever the reason, the development of an electoral alliance between the national ALP and the core environmental interest groups was, in itself, a critical foundation stone upon which national environmental politics in the 1980s and 1990s rested.
CHAPTER 2

FROM INCREMENTALISM TO CRISIS-ORIENTATION:
ENTRENCHEING THE LABOR-ENVIRONMENTAL
RELATIONSHIP IN THE POST-FRANKLIN PERIOD

The argument that a very definite style of national environmental politics, characterised by the application of a neo-corporatist approach to managing a controversial policy debate, evolved during the years of national Labor Government is one of the central claims of this study. This chapter traces the way national environmental politics in Australia became entwined with debates about how environmental policy should be made at the national level, and how ecological values might be infused into decision-making in other arenas. The period under review in this chapter - commencing with the High Court’s validation of the Hawke Government’s *World Heritage Properties Protection Act (1983)* which effectively prevented the Tasmanian Government from proceeding with the Franklin River hydro-electric dam, and finishing with the 1987 federal election - marks the beginning of the evolutionary process that would lead to the Hawke Government undertaking the institutional design that was to transform the nature of the national environmental debate. This was also a very important period that eventually resulted in the solidification of the
political alliance that had emerged between the Hawke leadership of the ALP and the core environmental interest groups that were at the heart of the anti-Franklin dam campaign.

At the moment at which the High Court validated the Hawke Government’s legislation preventing the construction of the Tasmanian dam, the question arose as to whether this outcome would be simply a single instance of nature conservation policy emanating from Canberra to fulfil an election promise. Alternatively, this decision may have represented the starting point for more national policy in this arena. The High Court’s validation of the Hawke Government’s use of External Affairs powers to extend Commonwealth protection to World Heritage areas represented a significant expansion of Commonwealth influence in an area hitherto considered the domain of the States. The question of whether this would set a precedent for a further testing of Commonwealth powers in this area was a political one. It would involve testing the parameters of the relationship that had been constructed between the ALP and the core environmental interest groups during the Tasmanian dams dispute. This chapter argues that, after a brief period in which the Hawke Government attempted to place some distance between itself and environmentalists on a land-use dispute in Queensland, the co-operative Labor-environmental relationship was re-confirmed and established as a major foundation on which national environmental politics would rest right up until the cooling of this relationship in 1996.
Table 2.1: Federal role in Nature Conservation issues 1983-1987

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Federal Environment Minister</th>
<th>dispute</th>
<th>outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>Cohen</td>
<td>hydro-development of Franklin River</td>
<td>Franklin River protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>Cohen</td>
<td>Daintree River Road</td>
<td>road constructed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>Cohen</td>
<td>Logging in Southern and Lemonthyme forests</td>
<td>logging stopped Helsham Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>Richardson</td>
<td>Logging at Jackeys Marsh</td>
<td>logging stopped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>Richardson</td>
<td>Daintree Wet Tropic Forest logging</td>
<td>Daintree Forest protected as World Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>Richardson</td>
<td>Logging in Southern and Lemonthyme Forests</td>
<td>forest areas protected as World Heritage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The process by which the Hawke Government, first, reconfirmed the importance it was prepared to place on the environmental issue in both its electoral strategies and its policy-making, and then, later, sought to establish its control over the debate through institutional design, begins in the immediate post-Franklin period as an exercise in incrementalism. In this
immediate post-Franklin period, the environmental movement sought to bring a host of other nature conservation issues to the attention of the Hawke Government. These major issues - a list of which may be found in table 2.1 - became the arena in which the Hawke Government and the environmental movement manoeuvred around the question of to what extent Federal actors would become involved in State-based land-use disputes over significant wilderness areas. The reconfirmation of the co-operative Labor-environmental relationship, and the emergence of a pattern in which the Commonwealth was prepared to exercise its constitutional power to intervene in land-use matters in Queensland and Tasmania despite the opposition of the respective State governments, gradually evolved during this period.

The notion of the post-Franklin period being a time in which important political dynamics evolved that would later influence the nature and direction of national environmental politics is further enhanced by reference to one particularly important change that occurred. This chapter argues that the perception of a distinctive incrementalist stage in the debate, followed by a qualitative transformation in which the environment emerged as a major recurring theme in the Hawke Government’s policy agenda, is intimately associated with the change in personnel responsible for the Environment portfolio in the Hawke Ministry. In short, the incrementalist phase in the Hawke Government’s response to environmentalist demands for Federal action on agenda items after the Franklin was associated with the tenure of Mr Barry Cohen, MHR, as the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Environment. With Mr Cohen’s demotion from the ministry, and his replacement with
Senator Graham Richardson (and, later, Senator Richardson’s promotion to the Cabinet), the whole environmental debate underwent a major transformation in which incrementalism was replaced by a much more politicised, if not crisis-driven approach, and in which the Labor-environmental relationship based on electoral support in exchange for policy output was entrenched. Herein lay the genesis of the environment’s prominence on the national political agenda after the Franklin dispute, which, in turn, reflected the extent to which the national Labor Government was prepared to allow space for the environmental issue in the national policy debate.

2.1: Setting the context: Labor, ‘consensus politics’ and the environment

Of the election manifesto developed by Labor for the 1983 election campaign, two policy themes in particular predominated - namely, the achievement of ‘reconstruction’ and ‘reconciliation’ of the Australian society through the utilisation of political mechanisms designed to allow for the realisation of social ‘consensus’ in the pursuit of this reconstruction, and a commitment to prevent the construction of the hydro-electric scheme on the Franklin River in Tasmania’s disputed south-west wilderness area (Hughes 1983:299-300). Thus the environment was a major issue in the 1983 election campaign. This situation had been achieved partly by the very public nature of the anti-dam campaign being waged by the TWS, the ACF and others at the construction site on the banks of the disputed river. The causal link between the nature of this activist-oriented campaign of civil disobedience and the Federal
ALP’s adoption of the ‘no dams’ position has been thoroughly canvassed elsewhere, and doesn’t require re-telling here (see Lowe 1984; Thompson 1981; Economou 1991; Davis 1984). It is interesting to note, however, that the pressure to adopt an anti-dams position within the national ALP had predated the major blockade, for a ‘no dams’ position had been agreed upon at the July Biennial National Conference of the party, and an anti-dams policy was included in the party’s policy platform as a result (Canberra Times 9/11/82; Australian 9/7/82). Upon his ascendancy to the leadership, and as part of the party’s overhaul of its policies in preparation for the 1983 election campaign, Bob Hawke was able to pick up the policy previously agreed to at the party’s national policy-making body, and project it more forcefully during the 1983 campaign. The pressure the issue placed on the Tasmanian ALP, along with Tasmanian Labor’s decimation at the general Tasmanian election in 1982, served to provide Hawke with more political latitude to project the Federal ALP’s ‘no dams’ position. Thus the anti-Franklin dam policy became a major plank in Labor’s 1983 election platform, and Hawke himself went to great lengths to appear with Dr Bob Brown - the most publicly recognised leader of the anti-dams movement (Kelly 1984:302-303; Haupt and Grattan 1983:55-62).1

Herein lay the basis of an important electoral alliance that would underpin Labor-environmental relations across the period of Labor national government. Labor’s projection of a firm anti-dams position was designed to oppose the Liberal-National Coalition Government headed by Malcolm Fraser which, despite the Prime Minister’s sympathy for environmental issues, had failed in its attempt to cajole the newly elected Tasmanian Liberal
Government to abandon the Franklin dam in exchange for $500 million in Federal compensation (*Bulletin* 1/2/83; *Mercury* 20/1/83). Labor’s manoeuvring on the Franklin issue in 1983 had another important electoral effect, however. The Australian Democrats had also emerged as a very willing supporter of the anti-dam cause, and, indeed, its parliamentary leader - Senator Don Chipp - was one of the first Federal politicians to visit the disputed area (Thompson 1984:124). His Senate colleague, Senator Mason, was later to introduce a private member’s bill designed to give Commonwealth protection to World Heritage-designated properties. The empathy between the Democrats and the environmental opposition also indicated the extent to which the Democrats themselves appeared to be a part of the general sweep of ‘green’ politics (see Sawyer 1997; Macklin 1996).

The Democrats and the environmental movement enjoyed a close relationship. However, the need identified by the core nature conservation interest groups to be able to obtain an anti-dams outcome through the public policy-making process meant that seeking to influence one of the major parties to commit themselves to a no-dams position was a primary strategic objective. To this end, pressure was exerted on the ALP. In the lead-up to the 1983 election, these environmental groups formed the National South West Coalition (NSWC) to enable national co-ordination of the anti-dams campaign. That the NSWC should have endorsed the Democrats for the Senate was not surprising. The decision to vigorously campaign on behalf of the ALP for the House of Representatives was a major development, however. The primary objective in this strategy was to assist the election of Labor to government, and a major press advertising campaign was undertaken. Despite the difficulty to
validate the claim, environmentalists and some Labor machine people concurred that its ability to win the ‘green vote’ was of great assistance to Labor’s 1983 victory (see Warhurst 1983; cf: McAllister 1994). Soon after, the Hawke Government resurrected Senator Mason’s *World Heritage Properties Protection Bill* as the centrepiece of its legislative attempt to prevent the Franklin dam, and the essential dynamic of the electoral alliance - that is, the exchange of environmental interest group endorsement of Labor in Federal election contests for Labor’s commitment to legislative programmes designed to achieve conservation outcomes - was put in place.

The Hawke Government’s programme to prevent the Franklin dam was one of the first policies pursued by the new Government, and the passage of the enabling legislation - which precipitated a legal challenge in the High Court by Tasmania and Queensland (Coper 1983) - had the immediate effect of taking the environmental issue off the agenda. The issue’s re-emergence occurred in the aftermath of the High Court’s validation of the Commonwealth’s legislation to prevent the dam, for environmentalists were now made aware of the great potential Canberra had to intervene in State-based land-use disputes. In between these events, the Hawke Government turned its attention to the reconstruction and reconciliation themes of its manifesto and, in the process, sought to entrench its Accord concept - that agreement between the Labor Government and the Australian Council of Trades Union (ACTU) on coordinated approaches to critical industrial relations and economic policy - as a centrepiece of the new Government’s approach to politics and policy-making. It was precisely this issue of the Accord representing a mechanistic approach to
policy which made it so important to the general policy debate, for the process soon emerged as a prism through which the Government would view the broader policy terrain. Having acquired the Accord as a legacy bequeathed by former Labor leader Bill Hayden and the then shadow Treasurer, Ralph Willis (see Boreham 1990:45), Hawke's contribution to the process was to seek the participation of business interests. Soon after its election, the Hawke Government convened its Economic Summit where interest group leaders from organised labour, business and the welfare lobby participated in discussions about the future direction Australian economic and industrial relations policy should take, and which resulted in the formation of a joint communiqué in which the participants committed themselves to an agreement to pursue prices and incomes restraint (Byrt 1985:191-204; McEachern 1991:19-35; Mills 1993:9-12; Hawke 1994).

Superficially, these developments in the Hawke Government's policy approach appeared to be totally unrelated to environmental politics. This would change over the long run, however. The patterns and approach set by the new Government in this period in which the Accord (as both a set of policy objectives and a process by which policy politics would be managed) was entrenched as pivotal to Labor's institutional approach to policy-making. It established a number of important principles which would profoundly influence the political environment in which environmental policy politics would be played out. First, the emergence of 'summitry' as a mechanism by which consensus could be achieved by otherwise antagonistic interest groups reflected the importance the Hawke Government placed on the mechanics of inter-interest group dialogue as a means of achieving political
consensus in public policy-making. Government would have a coordinating role in this process, which would endeavour to produce outcomes capable of enjoying broad consensus, and remaining within the parameters of its definition of 'the national interest'. It was precisely this aspect of the Hawke Government’s approach that was identified by commentators as neo-corporatist (West 1984; Loveday 1984; Gerritsen 1986; Stilwell 1986; Emy and Hughes 1988:473-475; McEachern 1991).

Secondly, the policy mechanisms being put in place under the Accord model were accompanied by a very important strategic assumption as to how government could best deal with those interest groups whose presence in the debate was so significant as to make them influential members of that particular policy community. Their participation in the decision-making process would be required to make any policy initiative a success. Clearly, the Accord processes indicated that incorporation of key interest groups into the institutionalised decision-making process was preferable, not only as a means of seeking to achieve outcomes that could be realised, but also as a means of allowing the state to exercise management, if not control, over the politics of policy-making. Indeed, such an approach also had the potential to convert interest groups from their previous role as subverters or critics of Government policy, to instead become stakeholders in the decision-making process.

This was the point where the Hawke Government’s approach to managing the policy debate took on neo-corporatist characteristics, whereby the Government sought to incorporate the leading protagonist interest groups in the land-use debate in voluntary forums and
mechanisms through which consensus-oriented land-use policy could be made (see Schmitter 1982). The Hawke Government’s major objectives in applying such principles included the depoliticisation of conflicts over policy issues in which powerful interest groups were at work, and the completion of a special relationship with these interest groups in a bid to tie their interests in with those of government. The institutionalisation of policy debates would allow the government greater scope to define the nature and direction of the debate, whilst simultaneously seeking ways in which the seemingly opposed outlooks and objectives of protagonist groups might be mediated, if not reconciled. If reconciliation could not be achieved, the process of finding ways in which these groups could be incorporated into forums designed to allow for the debate of broader principles might be enough to at least remove a controversial matter from direct public scrutiny.

Electoral considerations also lay at the heart of this approach. If interest groups could be encouraged to view themselves as stakeholders in the policy-making process, they might also become allies in the Government’s defence of its approach, particularly during election campaigns. Jupp and Sawer (1994) have argued that the attempt to form alliances with constituencies viewed by the Government as having some electoral importance, by working through their peak interest groups representing the interests of those constituencies, was a major part of Labor’s re-election strategy during the 1980s and 1990s. This was certainly an important consideration, they argue, in the way the Government responded to groups emanating from social movements such as environmentalism.
The Accord, then, was of critical importance to policy politics under Labor, not only for the policies that were pursued under its auspices, but also for the model it provided by which mechanisms for dealing with policy politics could be managed. The importance of this aspect of Labor’s policy approach would inevitably influence policy arenas other than those for which the Accord had been explicitly designed. One of the fascinating aspects of environmental politics in Australia during the Labor period was that the way in which this debate, for so long considered to be of marginal importance to the political mainstream, became important to national politics in the aftermath of the outcome of the Tasmanian dams dispute. In the first few years of the new Federal Labor Government, economic policy matters were of paramount consideration, and the matter of the environment had, for all intents and purpose, been dealt with under the auspices of the World Heritage Properties Protection Act (1983). The environment had receded somewhat as a major issue, particularly when compared with its role in the 1983 election campaign. The High Court of Australia, however, would soon resurrect the importance of the environmental debate to national politics.

2.2 Extending the national environmental agenda: the forests

The High Court’s finding in favour of the Commonwealth in the Tasmanian dams case represented an important moment in Australian environmental politics. The ruling now confirmed the Commonwealth’s power to participate in environmental policy creation. For
Governmental and environmental interest-group actors, however, the outcome indicated the arrival of a new era in land-use politics in which the critical questions about the extent to which national political actors would be involved in land-use matters, and whether or not these actors would be pressured (or enticed) into accepting some or all of the environmentalist agenda, were posed (see Davis 1992). Clearly the success with which environmentalists had transferred the Tasmanian dams dispute onto the national political agenda, and the subsequent success they had in pressuring national political actors to intervene over the Franklin was viewed by environmental leaders as a major strategic achievement not only for that which was won in the south-west, but also for what might be won in future land-use disputes.

The enormity of the Franklin dispute tended to obscure two very important points: first, that the anti-Franklin dam campaign was viewed by the TWS and ACF as part of a broader campaign to protect as much of the Tasmanian south-west as possible, and this broached opposition to mining and forestry as well as hydro-industrialisation in the region; and, secondly, that the Franklin was one of a range of land-use matters that had also threatened to move onto the national arena where the matter of forestry policy was an urgent issue. As Watson (1990) has argued, some of the strategies and activities utilised by the TWS, particularly on the ground at the blockade of the Franklin dam-site, were developed in previous campaigns in the south-eastern forests of NSW. But for the decision of the then Labor premier, Neville Wran, to embrace parts of the environmental movement's preservationist agenda in these battles, forestry matters may well have preceded the Franklin
dispute onto the national agenda (and see Bulletin 13/3/84; Steketee and Cockburn 1986:189).

As it was, forestry matters continued to comprise a major part of land-use disputation in all of
the eastern seaboard States and, upon the seemingly successful realisation of the
preservationist agenda at the national level following the hydro-industrialisation dispute, the
forestry issue was inevitably the next land-use issue to be guided towards the national agenda.

The two major core nature conservation groups - the ACF and TWS - viewed the
Franklin dam outcome as an opportunity to bring other major issues onto the national
political agenda. Organisational restructuring of both groups occurred in the light of this.
Although, as Warhurst (1994:79-80) has argued, the post-Franklin period did not really
produce the definite sense of coup that accompanied the elevation of Dr Geoffrey Mosley to
the directorship of the ACF in the post-Pedder internecine politics in 1973, qualitative change
in the ACF's organisational modus operandi occurred nonetheless. Significant amongst these
was a tendency towards greater 'professionalisation' of its approach to exerting pressure on
institutional actors, with particular emphasis on seeking to have a greater presence in
Canberra closer to critical ministerial and bureaucratic decision makers. Some time later, this
was reflected in the ACF's decision in 1986 to appoint Phillip Toyne as director in place of Dr
Mosley, whereupon Mr Toyne spent most of his time in Canberra and was renowned for
having excellent relations with and access to key members of the Federal cabinet including
Senator Richardson, primary industries and energy minister John Kerin and Bob Hawke
himself (Richardson 1994:214; Canberra Times 20/10/90).
Whilst continuing to be influenced by its commitment to mass-activism ahead of institutional and/or bureaucratised politics, the TWS also underwent a significant alteration in the wake of the High Court resolution of the Tasmanian dams dispute. As Easthope and Holloway (1989) have argued, a perceived need to be able to tackle environmental matters on a national rather than simply Tasmanian basis constituted the primary focus of the reorganisation. This was in fact reflected by the TWS's decision to drop reference to Tasmania from its nomenclature; thus, from 1984, the organisation was now referred to as 'The Wilderness Society' (TWS) (and see Holloway 1986). In addition to altering its name to reflect this, there were also reports of a substantial growth in the number of TWS branches located on the mainland, and of the appointment of additional full-time professional staff to assist in coordinating the national office of the organisation - all of which occurred on an income reported to be in the vicinity of $1.3 million in 1983-84 (Sunday Tasmanian 12 August 1984).

The administrative reorganisation was also influenced by what Warhurst (1994:79) outlines as allegations that TWS was attempting a take-over of the ACF. Certainly the notion of internecine pressure within the organisational core of the environmental movement was perceptible during this period and reflected, in no small part, the reluctance of TWS to fully embrace the type of 'professionalism' that characterised 'insider' interest group politics that the ACF was clearly pursuing. Activism and the commitment to addressing specific land-use disputes involving the remnants of Australia's wilderness resource continued to be the critical raison d'etre for TWS, and it was indeed the organisation's decision to involve itself in an
emerging battle over land-use in the wet-tropic forests of far-north Queensland that mobilised the Society towards internal restructuring (see Independent Monthly July, 1994).

Whilst the core environmental organisations sought to re-gear themselves to conduct national environmental campaigns over disputed land-areas in any State that should arise, the outcome of the High Court's determination over the Franklin dam case left Governmental actors in something of a quandary as to how to administer the Commonwealth's newly enhanced role in environment protection. The newly elected Federal Labor Government was faced with two immediate political and administrative problems: first, for a Government whose election platform had included a strong commitment to consensus politics, the High Court challenge to the Tasmanian dams legislative program set the scene for unco-operative Federal-State relations - potentially, a major challenge to the preferred consensus approach. Given the strength of the commitment to developmentalism and large-scale natural resource exploitation to the economic policies of the non-Labor states of Tasmania and Queensland in particular, the prospect of any further Federal action on land-use matters in those states would inevitably involve conflict.

In the meantime, the immediate problem of how the Commonwealth was to follow up the question of administering the protection to be bestowed upon that part of the Tasmanian south-west that had been given World Heritage status now arose. Here the Commonwealth had really only one institutional option - specifically, use of a ministerial council involving the Tasmanian Government convened at regular intervals to discuss basic administrative
questions such as how many rangers would be provided for the new wilderness park, what economic activities would be permitted to take place within the park, and so on (Tasmanian World Heritage Area Council Minute MC85/2, 14/5/85). The poverty of the Commonwealth's administrative capacity to follow up a major policy decision with the intricacies of actually administering the World Heritage area it had deigned to protect made itself particularly apparent as Tasmania indicated its unwillingness to fund the new park (Mercury 23/6/83).

At the point at which the High Court found in favour of the Commonwealth in the Tasmanian dams dispute, then, Australian environmental politics stood on the threshold of a new era. In the aftermath of the dominance of the hydro-industrialisation debate, the very real pressures that had been building up as a result of controversies and disputes over forestry came to the surface. This was assisted by two important land-use realities. First, the very nature of the outcome of the Tasmanian dams dispute in terms of actual land-areas being either incorporated into the World Heritage list and then accorded Federal protection, compared with those land-areas still subject to State Governmental decision-making, virtually ensured that the battle over the Tasmanian south-west would go beyond the hydro-industrialisation debate. A range of competing developer and State Governmental demands on other parts of the region continued beyond this outcome, and some of those areas that had neither Federal nor state protection were either adjacent to highly sensitive parks, or were subject to environmentalist claims that they comprised significant national and World Heritage values in their own right. Along with hydro-development and, to a lesser extent,
mining and mineral exploration, forestry comprised the most significant of the developer
demands upon these disputed regions (Tasmania 1978; Davis 1986).

No set of disputed land areas were at the center of so much controversy and were so
central to changes in the Federal Government's approach to resolving such disputes as were
the Southern and Lemonythme forests in Tasmania. These disputed forest areas were adjacent
to the World Heritage areas created as result of the Lake Pedder and Franklin River
campaigns. These forests were in dispute because the resources contained within these areas,
described as comprising

...extensive tracts of eucalypti forests, as well as other vegetation [containing]
substantial amounts of very tall trees - including one species commonly
claimed to be the tallest flowering plant in the world ... (Australia 1988:v)

and thus were considered to have very high conservation value. The competing demand on
these areas was, again, an example of polar opposites in terms of outlook and values. For the
forestry industry (and the supporting State governments), these forests represented important
raw resources for the pulp and paper, woodchip and sawlog industries. The environmentalist:
position, on the other hand, was based on seeing these forests as an integral part of the
wilderness resource that the movement had been seeking to preserve since the Lake Pedder
disputes. As the ecologist Jamie Kirkpatrick later put it in an article entitled 'Why the crown
jewels of the Earth's forests must be guarded':

What makes the Southern Forests convincingly world heritage is that the tall
eucalypti forests are large, varied (in age, class, species and altitude) in
pristine natural condition and, most importantly, they are largely in a
wilderness setting, which greatly enhances their very long-term chance of
survival. (Sydney Morning Herald 27/7/88)
Whilst the application of World Heritage listing to such a sensitive area of the Tasmanian south-west was bound to result in the emergence of new land-use disputes, the question of the future use of Tasmania's forests was held at bay in the immediate post-Franklin period as a result of the inter-Governmental (and, it should be noted, inter-interest group) dialogue being undertaken in the South West Ministerial Council. Furthermore, the Tasmanian Legislative Council initiated a Select Committee of Inquiry into the timber industry, ostensibly on the grounds of investigating the State's timber concession system, to which the opponents of the forestry industry directed their efforts (Mercury 25/9/84). The abeyance of Tasmanian land-use disputation from the national agenda during this period provided space for significant land-use disputes in other states to test their applicability to the national agenda. During the same period in which the Franklin dam dispute occurred and major protests against logging operations were instigated in Victoria and southern New South Wales, environmentalists were also involved in protracted anti-logging disputes in northern New South Wales and far north Queensland.

2.3: The Queensland forest dispute

The proximity of large tracts of wet tropic wilderness to the major tourism and ecological resources of the Great Barrier Reef National Park was cited by environmental groups such as the Queensland Rainforest Conservation Society (QRCS) as justification for
seeking to convert anti-timber campaigns into national conservation issues (Courier Mail 3/8/82). Environmentalist concern about forestry in the wet tropics concentrated particularly on the fate of the Daintree wet-tropic forest, described as a

...350,000 hectare region - placed on the register of the National Estate in October 1980 - contain[ing] remnants of our rarest and most endangered rainforest communities, [and adjacent to] one of the most unusual coral reefs in the world, and the largest wilderness to be found in the Australian wet tropics ... (Age 21/7/84)

This long-standing campaign to protect the Daintree and the adjacent Great Barrier Reef Marine Park suddenly burst onto the national political agenda as a result of a decision by a local government authority to construct a 34 kilometre-long four-wheel drive access road through the Cape Tribulation National Park towards the settlement of Bloomfield. The road was variously justified by the Douglas Shire and the supportive Queensland Government on the grounds of assisting the development of the local tourism industry, to assist in opening up previously inaccessible forestry coups, and for the purposes of drugs policing (Age 21/7/84). Whatever its rationale, the proposed road brought an added sense of urgency to the environmentalist campaign to protect forests in the Daintree area. Thus the QRCS was enjoined in its opposition to the Daintree Road by the ACF and the TWS, and the Queensland wet tropic duly became the next major environmental issue to dominate the national environmental politics agenda.

In a sense, the Daintree Road issue displayed characteristics that were very similar to those of the Franklin dam dispute. The land-use area under competitive demand between developers and conservationist was vast - and by considering the ecological link between the
rainforest hinterland and the proximity of the Great Barrier Reef, this area was of some national economic as well as aesthetic importance. The development proposed for the region was, as in the case of the Franklin dam project, essentially a public works project (although, admittedly, of much smaller scale and expense) to which the Commonwealth, through its Federal roads funding program, was expected to make a financial contribution. And, again like the Franklin dam dispute, the development enjoyed the fulsome support of the State Government - which was, at this time, the National Government headed by the then Premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Both the Government and the Premier himself were renowned supporters of development and, simultaneously, trenchant critics of the encroachment of environmentalists and ecological ethics into the land-use decision-making process - a position reflected in the Queensland Government's decision to join Tasmania in opposing the Federal Government's *World Properties Protection Act (1983)* before the High Court in 1984. As part of its political strategy of exploiting regional parochialism (Lunn 1984:148), the Queensland Government strenuously resisted any Federal attempt at intervention in the name of defending States' rights.

By February 1984 pressure began to mount on the Federal Government to intervene on the Daintree Road proposal. The person to whom environmentalists and members of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority directed their appeals for intervention was the newly-installed Environment Minister, Mr Barry Cohen. Notwithstanding his role in parliamentary debates on the *World Heritage Properties Protection Bill* in the post-election Franklin dam debate, Mr Cohen - a member of the dominant NSW Right-wing faction in the
ALP and a junior minister - was perceived by environmentalists to be somewhat luke-warm on environmental issues (Age 1/11/85). This was the period in which the Hawke Government’s approach was dominated by, first, anxiety over Australia’s rising unemployment rate and, secondly, a desire to institute the mechanisms by which consensual economic and industrial relations policy-making could be discharged. The primary administrative objective for ministers whose portfolios fell outside of the ambit of the key economic and industrial-relations responsibilities was one of attempting to ensure that the Government’s commitment to consensus, order and stability in policy management would not be undermined by extraneous political controversies.

With the environmental movement’s expectations raised by Federal Labor's response to the Franklin dam campaign, Mr Cohen and the Federal Government found themselves, somewhat reluctantly, embroiled in the Daintree Road issue. The Minister’s response to this dispute was the convening of a broad-based meeting with environment groups, the Douglas Shire, timber industry interests and unions, and the Queensland Government presumably in a bid to find some way around the growing intractability the dispute was beginning to take on, particularly in the light of environmentalist actions towards undertaking a blockade of the construction site (Sydney Morning Herald 29/2/84). Indeed, by August, environmental activists had established a ‘Greater Daintree Action Center’ in the disputed area and individual protesters were in the process of literally burying themselves in path of construction vehicles (Australian 13/8/84).
By this stage, then, the Hawke Government was caught between two quite significant yet contradictory forces in the form of a highly mobilised environmental movement with raised political expectations on the one hand, and a State Government determined not to bow to either Canberra or environmentalists over the Douglas Shire road on the other (Bulletin 13/3/84). The Federal Government's position in this dispute was made more difficult by the total lack of any mechanism by which the Commonwealth could involve itself in the pre-decision processes. And when the Commonwealth did eventually mobilise itself to look into this issue, the construction was already underway. Indeed, as Mr Cohen's multi-lateral discussion meetings were convened the Douglas Shire continued to push ahead with what, in the opinion of the interstate press, was a poor quality construction of the Daintree Road (see Weekend Australian 25-6/8/84).

Quite apart from exposing the limitations of the Federal Government's ability to involve itself in decision-making at the local level, Mr Cohen's actions were interpreted as indications of the way in which the Federal Government was loathe to become embroiled in a localised land-use dispute with the Bjelke-Petersen Queensland Government (Age 1/11/85). Indeed, Mr Cohen was later reported to have explicitly stated that he would not seek to intervene directly in Queensland land-use affairs, nor seek to have the Daintree area registered as World Heritage without the cooperation of the Queensland Government (Sydney Morning Herald 19/10/85). Rather, the Federal Minister's attempts to induce cooperation from the State with offers of $10 million funding for assessments of the economic sustainability of the region's timber industry, acquisition of private land containing important
parts of the Daintree forest, assistance in the preparation of a comprehensive and long-term management plan for the area, and the establishment of a national rainforest institute (Courier Mail 25/10/85). Federal intervention to prevent the Daintree Road, however, was not to be forthcoming.

As Tighe and Taplin (1990:104) have argued, the outcome of the Daintree Road dispute represented a significant victory for developer interests almost immediately in the wake of the environmentalist victory in the Franklin dam dispute. This provided an interesting contrast to actors from both the environmentalist and developer (and associated 'States' rights' advocates) interest groups who tended to see the Franklin dam outcome as a harbinger of a radical new era in land-use politics in which the Commonwealth would play a much greater role in land-use (Sydney Morning Herald 19/10/85). The reality at the conclusion of both the Franklin dam and, later, the Daintree Road disputes was that whilst it was clear the Commonwealth did have some constitutional scope to expand its land-use role if it so wanted, the Federal Government's decision to so exploit this scope would always be a political one.

So whilst the Franklin dam dispute was indeed a significant moment in Australian environmental political history, the ascendancy of the environment as a major issue on the national political agenda had really not yet been achieved. Clearly the Government preferred to pursue other policy objectives, which kept the environmental issue - and, by extension, environmental interest groups - at arm's length from decision-making. The dissatisfaction
environmental leaders felt with Mr Cohen crystallised upon what they saw as the Minister’s unwillingness to address to the Daintree Road issue, and the lack of headway over Ministerial Council discussions over management of the Tasmanian south-west World Heritage areas. Significantly, the Government's approach did not alleviate the imbroglios over Tasmanian and Queensland forest usage and the last stage of Mr Cohen's ministerial overseeing of these matters were to be dominated particularly by a major dispute with the Tasmanian Government over the fate of the Southern and Lemonyhme forests in that State.

2.4: The limits of old solutions to new problems: the Helsham Inquiry

The failure of the Wild Rivers and South West national parks that were created under the auspices of the anti-Franklin dam campaign to cover the entirety of a zone of high environmental value outlined by Tasmanian South West Advisory Committee in 1974 meant that further conflict over the region would be inevitable. The significant variation to the major themes of the Franklin dam dispute in the forestry debate were that it was the Tasmanian timber industry generally - and its pulp and paper woodchip producers in particular - that displaced the HEC as the primary developmental interest opposed by the Wilderness Society, the ACF and the State-based Tasmanian Conservation Trust (TCT), and that the State Liberal Government headed by Premier Robin Gray did not have the same, almost symbiotic, relationship with the timber industry that the ALP had with the HEC. On the other hand, the
Gray Government's successful 1982 election campaign had been based on a fulsome commitment to natural resource development, and the Government's inclination in the Tasmanian forestry debate was to provide complete support for the woodchip industry. In the New Year of 1985, for example, the Tasmanian Forestry Commission released a discussion paper outlining what it perceived as the critical importance of woodchipping to the Tasmanian economy (*Mercury* 23/2/85). The Tasmanian Parliament, meanwhile, put in place a series of regulations designating timber harvesting areas as 'forbidden zones' for the general public, thereby attempting to prohibit protesters from entering forest areas set aside as timber concessions, particularly for the major woodchipping companies (*Mercury* 11/1/85). These regulations were specifically designed to pre-empt an escalation of direct non-violent protest activity that had already been underway in the Farmhouse Creek area in the Southern Forest, and in the Jackeys Marsh region in the State's north.

If the Tasmanian Government's fulsome support for the forestry industry was entirely consistent with past practice, the role of the Federal Government was much more ambiguous, not least because of the lack of certainty over the direction Federal policy would take on forestry matters. In a very real sense, the Tasmanian Government's policy of encouraging primary exports was entirely consistent with that of the Federal Government, particularly in the light of concerns over the state of Australia's balance of payments deficit. As the Hobart *Mercury* pointed out in a review article as the Southern Forest dispute began to escalate (28/4/86), Federal agreements with Tasmania over the rate at which native forests would be harvested underpinned the granting of licenses for the harvesting of some 2,889 million
tonnes of forest for woodchipping. However, in the aftermath of the Franklin dam dispute and the subsequent south-west ministerial council, the Commonwealth was under increasing pressure to be proactive in the management of the very areas that Federal power had been used to declare as being of World and National Heritage value. The ambiguity was arguably at its starkest in the contribution of the relevant Federal ministerial departments such as Primary Industry (DPI) and Arts, Heritage and the Environment (DAHE) and the AHC to evaluation of the issues pertinent to Tasmania's native forests. Whilst the pro-development DPI was supportive of the Tasmanian timber industry, both the AHC and the DAHE supplied their Minister with advice as to the environmental importance of some of the disputed areas - particularly those timber blocks adjacent to World Heritage or Conservation Zone areas. In essence, these agencies were supportive of the environmentalist claims that the harvest of these areas would have a detrimental impact on the Tasmanian World Heritage area. Subsequently, Minister Cohen compiled a list of forest areas - referred to as 'Schedule A' blocks - subject to timber industry demands but deemed by the Minister to be of great environmental significance and referred to the Primary Industry Minister for the purposes of preservation (Mercury 27/11/85).

Here, then, lay the basis of conflicting outlooks on the value of the disputed Tasmanian forest resource from within the bureaucratic arm of the Federal Government, and which was to have its corollary within the Federal Cabinet. The Federal Government had an opportunity to reflect on its position on the disputed forests with the onset of the Tasmanian winter, which forced a lull on both logging operations and protests. However, according to a
newspaper report, the Cabinet's mood was one of preference for the Tasmanian Government to take care of its own forestry affairs (Mercury 11/8/86). Certainly this lack of Federal urgency reflected not only the ambivalence of Mr Cohen, but also the ascendancy of an alliance between the pro-resource exploitation ministers, and those ministers from economic portfolios who queried the cost to Australia's balance of payments position of pursuing environmental policy options in Tasmania (Canberra Times 20/10/90).

By the spring of 1986, however, a major shift occurred in the Federal Government's attitude, and this owed a great deal to the effectiveness of the protest action being conducted on the ground in the disputed areas. As in the Franklin dam dispute, the Government tried to adjust its response to the dispute in the light of high media coverage being given to the non-violent blockades. As logging (and the subsequent protest activity) recommenced at Jackey's Marsh, the Prime Minister's office announced that an end to logging in the area now constituted Federal Governmental policy (Mercury 13/11/86). Weeks later, a Federal Governmental advisory committee comprising industry and environmental interest groups as well as political actors established to look into logging in the Lemanthyme forest, recommended a ban in that area (although it argued that logging could proceed at Jackey's Marsh) (Mercury 2/12/86). The imbroglio over Jackey's Marsh thus became a prelude for a serious deterioration in Federal-Tasmanian relations over both the Southern and Lemanthyme forests, with the Tasmanian Liberal Government prepared to hasten approvals for timber felling in both regions in defiance of the Federal Government's call for a moratorium to allow further negotiation on the matter. Indeed, the Federal Government's call for dialogue came
soon after it had threatened - at the behest of environmental leaders - to use the World Heritage Properties Protection Act (1983) to gazette the forest areas as World Heritage properties, thereby allowing Federal protection of the area (Australian 9/12/86, Australian Financial Review 30/12/86, Mercury 31/12/86). The Federal Government's rediscovery of negotiation and dialogue may well have been caused in no small part by the re-opening of the Queensland wet-tropics dispute as the Queensland Government also began the process of extending logging licenses in that area (Courier-Mail 18/12/86).

By the end of 1986, then, the forest disputes in Tasmania and Queensland were well and truly back on the national agenda - a marked contrast to the previous twelve months in which ambivalence had been the chief characteristic of the Federal Government's approach to environmental matters after the Franklin dam. The main reason for the Government's renewed interest in the environment lay, as it had done in the Franklin dam period, in electoral considerations. By the end of 1986 significant strains were emerging from within the Liberal and National parties as a result of the so-called 'Joh for PM' movement emanating from the Queensland National party. Beginning with the re-election of the Bjelke-Petersen National Government in the Queensland election of July 1986, the campaign to have the Queensland Premier enter Federal politics undertook a deliberate decision to, as Coadrake (1987:14) put it,

...satrate the media with reports and speculation about [Joh's] Canberra plans during the normally quiet news period over the Christmas/New Year holiday.

This campaign served to fundamentally undermine the incumbent Federal Coalition leadership of John Howard and Ian Sinclair and certainly caused major divisions within the
anti-Labor parties (Woodward and Costar 1988). Politically the ‘Joh For PM’ campaign provided the Labor Government with a perfect context within which it could go to an early election. In the context of preparing for this, issues which appeared to have electoral appeal but had hitherto been kept at arms length as the Government focussed on economic policy were now back on the agenda. Rather like the lead-up to the 1983 election, the environment re-emerged as a major issue.

A significant indicator of the reasons behind the Government’s apparent turn-around on environmental matters could be found in a pre-Christmas statement by a back-bencher, Senator Graham Richardson, indicating that he believed it would be in the Government's best electoral interest to re-establish its credentials with the environmental movement (Australian 9/12/86). The fact that Senator Richardson could make an utterance such as this was significant not only as an indication of his potential power in policy matters as a result of his role as an organiser in a powerful formal faction, but also what this meant about the cohesion of the Right on land-use matters. Senator Richardson’s view, indeed, reflected the fact that sympathy for the environmental position - particularly where it was expressed in relation to matters of flora and fauna protection rather than the uranium issue - could be found within the ALP Right. Senator Richardson was clearly convinced of the validity of the claims to electoral significance made by environmental leaders. Additionally, Senator Richardson’s comments on the environment foreshadowed his interest in the portfolio area which was, in turn, an indication of his expectation of a ministerial position in the next cabinet reshuffle.
Thus Barry Cohen was under siege not only from the interest group protagonists that constituted the forest debate, but also from within his own faction.

A change in the leadership of the ACF also made an important contribution to the alteration in the prevailing political environment. During 1986 the ACF appointed Phillip Toyne as its director, and, in so doing, according to Warhurst (1994:79-80), replaced a veteran of the anti-hydro electric campaigns with a former legal advocate for Aboriginal interest groups in their dealings with Federal authorities and whose experience in this area made him more favourably disposed towards the consensus-oriented style of interest group politics pursued by the Hawke Government. This is an important point, for the Toyne leadership of the ACF led to three important changes in the way the ACF approached environmental matters which, in turn, would have important implications for how the Labor Government would respond to the ACF agenda. First, Mr Toyne's preference for lobbying and pressuring institutional decision-makers confirmed the impression that the ACF was prepared to work with institutional actors in a bid to achieve its agenda. Second, as a former indigenous peoples' activist, Mr Toyne was well versed in the practice of lobbying Federal institutional actors - both bureaucratic and representational - and it was known that Mr Toyne himself was very well respected within the Hawke Government by both pro-environmental and pro-development Ministers. Finally, and of particular significance for the 1987 period, Mr Toyne was much more prepared to participate in electoral politics and seek to align the ACF more explicitly with the ALP than any of his predecessors (see Age 16/6/87). Here an interesting division began to appear within the environmental movement. The ACF’s
willingness to work with institutional actors contrasted with TWS, where there remained a strong commitment to activism and a suspicion of being too close to the institutional process. The broader environment movement also harboured those who wished to form a 'green' political party as an alternative to major party politics, and, again, the ACF approach was criticised.

For Mr Cohen the changing political environment was made all the more difficult by the presence of Senator Richardson. With the environmental issue now enjoying greater respect within the party machine and the parliamentary leadership, and with Senator Richardson breathing down his neck, Mr Cohen sought to find a policy decision that would provide the immediate halt to logging in the short-term but not necessarily close off the possibility of further development - in short, a compromise position. It was in this context that the Government announced its intention to convene a Commission of Inquiry into the question of World Heritage listing of the Southern and Lemonthyme forests. To be headed by a retired justice from the NSW Equity Court, Mr Michael Helsham QC, the Helsham Inquiry was convened to deal with assessing the validity of the competing demands on the disputed Tasmanian forest areas (Age 16/4/87). The inquiry was to take submissions from the relevant interest groups and from expert witnesses in a bid to determine how much, if any, of the disputed areas should be granted protection by way of World Heritage listing. In theory, the inquiry's findings were to then be passed on to Cabinet who would use the information as the basis for determining what parts of the disputed areas would be given Federal protection.
The terms of reference for the inquiry were contained within the *Southern and Lemonthyme Forests Commission of Inquiry* bill which also imposed a Federal moratorium on timber-felling activity in the areas subject to the inquiry. The Tasmanian Government's initial response to the proposal of a twelve-month moratorium on logging during the inquiry period was a threat to ignore the Federal legislation and permit harvesting to continue under the protection of State authorities (*Australian* 11/4/87). The State Forest Minister, Ray Groom, promised that logging would recommence in the area by June, and said that it would be up to the Commonwealth to seek ways of enforcing its laws and preventing Tasmania from allowing logging to precede (*Age* 16 April 1987). When the enabling legislation for both the inquiry and the moratorium was passed on 8 May 1987, the Tasmanian Government again declared its intention to refuse to co-operate, suggesting that it might order Tasmanian police to arrest Federal police who, according to Tasmanian legislation, would be trespassing in the disputed forest areas, and declaring that state Government agencies would not provide information to the Helsham Inquiry (see *Age* 9/5/87).  

In a sense, the Government's utilisation of a commission of inquiry into the seemingly intractable Tasmanian forests issue represented something of a traditional response to difficult policy issues, particularly where the Government was unable to decide conclusively between competing sets of interest groups. For environmental policy-making, the period between the High Court's validation of the Federal Government's intervention in the Tasmanian dams dispute and the calling of the 1987 general election was really one in which the Government attempted to keep environmentalists at arms length and respond only
minimally to the environmentalist agenda. That there was Governmental ambivalence towards (as distinct from rejection of) the environmentalist agenda was due mainly to the ambiguous attitude of the ALP's machine men to environmentalist claims of a significant 'green' vote that could be directed towards the ALP on the basis of its record on environmental matters.

Thus the logging moratorium and the Helsham inquiry were short-term compromise measures designed to immediately clear the disputed forests of protagonists, give an immediate impression of being sensitive to the environmentalist cause (in which the Government was assisted by the Coalition's position that land-use matters were the affairs of the States, and that a Liberal-National Government would dismantle the act and the inquiry) whilst at the same time not completely denying access to the timber industry. The fact that an inquiry such as Helsham was required also suggested that, despite having the power to influence land-use matters by way of its UN obligations, the Federal bureaucracy had precious little evaluative infrastructure capable of dealing with the scientific and technical issues underpinning evaluation of sites and being of World Heritage value. Such matters remained the concern primarily of personnel within the departments at both the State and Federal levels, however, for the primary motivation of the politicians was that of electoral expediency. Indeed, the 1987 election was to be a quite significant turning point in the way in which the Hawke Government would deal with the environment in the future and the main victims of the transition would be the Helsham Inquiry and its ministerial overseer, Mr Cohen.
2.5: The difference an election makes: Labor, the environment and the 1987 election

As a campaign issue in the 1987 federal election, the environment was somewhat overshadowed by the political implications of the ‘Joh For PM’ campaign (Maddox 1988). Having said this, however, it was clear that the Federal Labor Government’s sympathy towards the environmentalist agenda was enhanced as part of its preparations for the 1987 campaign. It was certainly true that the ALP made reference to its environmental policy position to differentiate itself from the Liberal-National Coalition. The relative marginalisation of the environment at this time was assisted in no small way by the fact that the Government’s logging moratorium had temporarily denied the environmental movement an issue with which to go into the campaign. This is not to say that the environment was completely absent from the terrain of electoral politics in the 1987 contest, however. As part of its Daintree forest campaign, the ACF urged electors to vote for the ALP in the House of Representatives and the Democrats in the Senate through a series of glossy press advertisements (see Christoff 1994:131). There were also some examples of environmental groups targeting specific marginal seats. This tended to operate at a State or local level where environmental groups provided some campaign assistance to Australian Democrat or even Labor candidates for the House of Representatives, including a fairly widely publicised campaign by TWS to unseat the sitting Liberal member, the virulently anti-environmental Michael Hodgman, in the Hobart-based seat of Denison (Age 1/7/87). By the same token,
there were also some instances of timber industry interests conducting campaigns against sitting Labor members (see *Australian* 20/8/88).

As the results outlined in table 2.2 show, the ALP won this election, notwithstanding a decline in its national primary vote and a 1 per cent two-party preferred swing to the Liberal-National Coalition. As Mackerras (1993:208) has shown, something of a regional variation occurred within the swing, with the ALP suffering its biggest swings in New South Wales but offsetting this by winning its largest two-party preferred gains in Queensland and, significantly, the Hobart-based Tasmanian seat of Denison. Unlike the Coalition gains that occurred primarily in safe Labor seats, many of the Labor swings actually translated into gains in seats. The success in Queensland and Tasmania was particularly noteworthy from the point of view of environmental activists, for these were the very States in which the anti-logging debate had been at its most prolonged and contentious. Labor’s success in Denison also reinforced this perception. So, even though they had not been as active campaigners as they had been in the 1983 contest, environmental leaders were willing to seize on to these features of the result to at least indicate that the Labor Government had not been adversely effected by its intervention in land-use matters in Tasmania and Queensland.

Moreover, the nature of the result in the Senate also provided evidence of a ‘greening’ of the electorate. In addition to the presence of the Australian Democrats (whose primary national Senate vote rose from 7.6 percent in 1984 to 8.5 percent in 1987), two other new Senators were elected whom the green movement was prepared to claim as being part of its
own (Christoff 1994:130-131). In NSW, the Nuclear Disarmament Party's (NDP) Chris Woods won the final Senate spot in that state, whilst in Western Australia the former NDP-Senator Jo Valentine won the final seat in that State. Notwithstanding the fissures that ran

| Table 2.2: The 1987 Federal Election result |

**House of Representatives**  
**National**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALP</th>
<th>LIB</th>
<th>NPA</th>
<th>AD</th>
<th>others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary vote</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swing</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
<td>+0.2</td>
<td>+0.9</td>
<td>+0.6</td>
<td>+0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gains</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Senate**  
**National**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALP</th>
<th>L/NP</th>
<th>AD</th>
<th>GRN</th>
<th>others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary vote</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swing</td>
<td>+0.6</td>
<td>+2.5</td>
<td>+0.9</td>
<td>+2.0</td>
<td>-4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gains</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

source: Australian electoral system  
* - GREEN vote includes NDP, Valentine Group (WA), and Greens

across the various peace and nuclear disarmament parties at this time (see Quigley 1986), the broader ‘green’ movement counted the NDP and other groups as part of its broad aegis. In the Senate, then, green politics appeared to be having an electoral impact of sufficient strength to result in representation. Another important point arises here. Implied in the ‘green’
performance in the 1987 Senate contest was the emergence of something of a division of ‘green’ politics into its nature-conservation interest group wing on the one hand, and a more overtly party-political manifestation on the other. In this apparent division, the party-political wing of green politics indicated that it was much less willing to enter into the sort of electoral alliance that had occurred between the ALP and the conservation interest groups.

This Senate result, then, provided more useful reference points for environmental leaders who sought to impress upon the Federal Labor Government the existence of an environmental constituency in the national electorate. This, however, was not the critical catalytic element that would herald a new era in which the environmentalist agenda would take on significantly enhanced importance. Rather, the critical moment was to occur a short time after the election when Prime Minister Hawke undertook a post-election Cabinet reshuffle in which the incumbent Environment Minister, Barry Cohen, was to be replaced by Senator Richardson. Cohen, quite bitter at his demise, blamed the Party's factional system for its failure to support him and for being the mechanism by which a former State secretary and faction organiser could find a way into the junior ministry. Without denying the centrality of factional politics to Cohen's demise, it was also clear that the environmental movement leadership were unhappy with Cohen and were not displeased by his departure. Senator Richardson was widely regarded by the interest group leaders as more sympathetic to the environmental cause, and as a potentially dynamic ‘can-do’ minister (Age 14/7/87). Senator Richardson's appointment coincided with a major administrative reorganisation of both the ministry and the bureaucracy, in which the old system of an inner- and outer-ministry, with
its concomitant implication of a division between departments of primary and secondary importance, was replaced by the move to super ministries. Under this reform, the 27 ministerial departments that existed under the old system were reorganised into 16 ‘super departments’ for which there would a senior or super minister sitting in cabinet, and a junior or ‘assisting’ minister responsible for a sub-set of the responsibilities within the larger department (Thompson 1990:50-51).

Under this new arrangement, the former DAHE was incorporated into the super-ministry of Arts, Sport, Environment, Tourism and Territories (DASET). This reform was important to the dynamics of the national environmental policy debate in two ways. First, by ensuring that all of the Commonwealth’s policy-making activities could be represented in Cabinet, this reform assisted in lifting the environment from the rather secondary status it historically enjoyed under the old model. Secondly, the inclusion of the environment with tourism had its own set of significant implications. Tourism was emerging in the Government’s planning as an important economic activity with enormous potential for providing employment and earning export income in the post-industrial Australian economy (Business Review Weekly 16/12/88). There was also the implied link between tourism and environment in which proponents of environmental preservation argued that the value of a land-area for its tourism potential could outstrip the economic value of the area as a mined or harvested natural resource.
Senator Richardson's initial appointment after the 1987 election was as the Minister for Arts and the Environment assisting the senior Minister, John Brown, whose primary area of interest was tourism. However, Mr Brown's involvement in a personal scandal in the Christmas-New Year period of 1987-88 forced his resignation, and Senator Richardson was duly appointed as Brown's replacement. The first signs of the qualitative transition in national environmental politics brought about by Senator Richardson's ascendancy to the environment portfolio were made quite clear with respect to the Helsham Inquiry. The inquiry began its deliberations after the 1987 election and an interesting change in the dynamics of the participation of the various interests was immediately perceivable. After its initial refusal to co-operate with the inquiry, the Tasmanian Government became enthusiastic participants. At the same time, the environmental movement's enthusiasm for the inquiry began to wane (Canberra Times 11/3/88, cf: Mercury 19/6/87). These altering dynamics were a reflection of the way in which the protagonist interest groups perceived the inquiry to be progressing. As the inquiry proceeded it became clear that the position of the forestry industry was holding sway with the legal and economics-oriented commissioners. Indeed, at the tabling of the inquiry's report in the Parliament in May 1988 the press reported that

Instead of settling once and for all the claims of loggers and conservationists over Tasmania's Southern and Lemonthyme forests, the Helsham Inquiry report ... could well prove to be yet another headache for the Government. (Canberra Times 18/5/88)

The failure of the inquiry to provide unanimous recommendations was only the beginning of the Government's problems with the report. As the transition in the attitude of the protagonist interest groups had indicated, the commissioners could agree on a small part
of the area referred to the inquiry for investigation (the area being estimated as some 8 per cent) as satisfying evaluative criteria for World Heritage listing (see Australia 1988:422-423). Significantly, the report found that, whilst the denial of the timber resources contained within the areas outlined by the report as being of World Heritage value represented the removal of only a small percentage of timber resources for harvesting purposes, such losses would adversely effect the economic viability of the timber industry (Australia 1988:423). On the other hand, the dissenting commissioner - the ecologist Peter Hitchcock - found that the area referred to by the terms of reference plus additional areas outside of the investigated area were worthy of World Heritage listing. Hitchcock's approach, as outlined in his dissenting report explaining his evaluative methodology, rested on a more holistic view of both the evaluative procedure and of the land-areas under investigation. Basically, this approach rejected the delineation of the disputed area as outlined by the act in favour of incorporating areas on the basis of their ecological coherence. Hitchcock argued that

... if a tract of land constitutes a part of the cultural or natural heritage (a world heritage area) in partly located in the existing world heritage area, then that part which intrudes into the inquiry area remains a part of the cultural or natural heritage ... accordingly, in reporting such areas I report them as qualifying areas which are a part of a world heritage area rather than report them as contributing areas. (Australia 1988:424).

Thus, by providing substantial amounts of material that both sides of the debate could use in their campaigns, the Helsham Inquiry did nothing to assist the Government in broking any sort of negotiated outcome. The fate of the Helsham Inquiry had been sealed by the transition in ministerial personnel that occurred after the 1987 election, however - a transition that had its corollary in a change in the Prime Minister's attitude towards environmental
matters. The changed attitude of the Federal Government was clearly conveyed by Senator Richardson's refusal to comment on the Inquiry's report once it reached the Parliament, and subsequent statements that the Government did not necessarily feel bound to follow the report's recommendations (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates: Senate vol. 126 May 1988:3143).

Senator Richardson's caution in his dealings with the Helsham report was interpreted by the media as a repudiation of the inquiry, and certainly much was made of the tensions between Senator Richardson and Mr Cohen over this issue (Canberra Times 18/5/88). In the meantime, the Federal Government had been involved in a series of legal disputes with the Tasmanian Government who continued to threaten to sanction logging in the disputed areas despite the Commonwealth's legislative ban to allow time for the inquiry to precede - a battle that the High Court resolved in the Commonwealth's favour in March 1988 (see Canberra Times 11/3/88). By taking up the cudgels against the Tasmanian Government in defence of the Southern and Lemonthyme Forests (Commission of Inquiry) Act (1987), the Federal Government established yet another beach-head in its preparedness to intervene in what were essentially State responsibilities in deciding on the form and nature of logging operations in crown land. This was clearly an impression that Senator Richardson was keen to cultivate, although it must be remembered that this was occurring against a forest industry policy backdrop than now included discussions with the Tasmanian Government about freeing additional timber resources to allow expansion of the state's pulp-milling industry.
This matter - which, as subsequent chapters will show, was to precipitate its own political problems - became the basis upon which Senator Richardson undertook a particularly brinkman-like negotiated outcome with the Tasmanian Government. In this context, the Helsham Inquiry was simply just not at all helpful. Indeed, soon after the report was tabled the Federal Attorney General's Department was reported to have furnished advice to DASETTE that the majority position in the Helsham report had erred on the question of defining that which constituted ‘world heritage values’ (Canberra Times 4/6/88). This opinion provided the new Environment Minister with the ammunition he had been seeking to attack an inquiry bequeathed by a former Minister motivated by political objectives than were no longer relevant. As it was, the Helsham Report was made redundant by the on-set of what would be referred to as the Wesley Vale pulp-mill dispute, the critical forerunner to which was a negotiated outcome between Tasmania and Canberra over timber harvest quotas. As part of the deal to allow an expansion of Tasmania's pulp-mill industry, some 70 percent of the disputed Southern and Lemonythyme forest area was nominated for World Heritage listing with Tasmania's consent. In exchange, the Commonwealth allowed for an increase in the amount of native forest that could be harvested for woodchips, and provided a $40 million compensation package for the State’s timber industry (Canberra Times 5/8/88). Thus the focus of the initial Southern and Lemonythyme forest dispute altered as the Tasmanian forestry debate moved on to the question of pulp-milling, and the Helsham Inquiry was now no longer relevant.
2.6: The debate transformed: the new Minister and the old Daintree forest dispute

The dispute over resource use in Queensland’s northern wet tropic forests - and particularly in the disputed Daintree area - occurred simultaneously with the Southern and Lemonyne dispute. In a sense, the Daintree forest issue was, like the Tasmanian dispute, a carry-over from previous land-use conflict. In the Daintree case, the Cape Tribulation Road had been the catalytic issue that had brought the Commonwealth into debates over managing competing land-use in the area. The problem for the Federal Government was that the Cohen approach was widely perceived as being inadequate, particularly on the part of environmental leaders for whom the construction of the offending road was perceived as a gross failure on the part of the Federal Government to meet its obligations under the United Nations World Heritage covenant (Australian 20/8/87). On the other hand, the Commonwealth’s position was strengthened by the disintegration of the Queensland National Party Government, particularly in the aftermath of the 1987 Federal election.

At issue in the wet tropics debate was the competing claim between environmentalists arguing that the area deserved World Heritage listing, and demands on the tropical timber resource by a long-established but repeatedly ailing sawmilling timber industry (see Courier Mail 2/11/87). Citing the recommendations that the area be recognised for its international environmental significance as a wet tropic forest area by the AHC and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Federal Government was quite convinced
of the significance of the disputed area. As Senator Cook, normally associated with the pro-forestry block within the Hawke Government, told the Senate:

In the Commonwealth Government's opinion, there is no doubt that this area ... will be an appropriate and deserving addition to the World Heritage list. Independent studies indicate that the rainforests conform to the definition of natural heritage in Article 2 of the Convention. (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates: Senate vol. 125 February 1988:619)

The process began with the announcement of boundaries for a proposed World Heritage listed area in August 1987 and invited interested parties to make comments. This was followed by legislation designed to prevent extractive activity in the region during the interim period in which the Commonwealth would finalise its recommendations. The Conservation Legislation Amendment Bill (1988) was designed as an adjunct to the World Heritage Properties Protection Act (1983) to prevent individuals or companies from removing timber in the area and to provide powers for Commonwealth inspectors to police this moratorium. Given the wide ranging support given to World Heritage listing by Federal and international agencies, and given that World Heritage listing duly followed in December 1988, this bill was, in effect, the beginning of the end for logging operations in this area.

This Federal intervention in Queensland's timber industry precipitated a significant reaction from the Queensland Government who threw its support behind the local timber interests. The Queensland Government sought to provide its own agency-based case against the World Heritage listing of the area. Consequently, the State Minister for the environment, Geoff Muntz, convened the Northern Rainforest Management Agency (NORMA) to undertake an investigation of state-based land-use activities in the region and to make its own
recommendations. Given the political context in which this strategy was adopted, NORMA was viewed by the Government as lacking credibility in the debate (see Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates: Senate vol. 125 February 1988:898). This dismissal of NORMA was probably unfair given, first, that the agency contained a component drawn from the scientific community who perceived their role as being analytical rather than political and, secondly, that the agency was able to draw upon the research and informational resources of the Queensland forestry agencies - a not insubstantial resource, particularly when compared with the rather limited expertise of the Federal agencies. Indeed, even though NORMA did strongly recommend that logging be permitted in some of the area earmarked for heritage listing, and that decisions about resource and land-use policy could and should remain with the State, Federal Labor spokespeople gleefully pointed out that the State agency found some 75 per cent of the area in question to be worthy of protection from logging (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates: Senate vol. 125 February 1988 p.831). The Queensland Government’s attempt to maintain leadership over the debate through NORMA was undermined by its own terminal decline in the aftermath of the Joh for PM and Fitzgerald Inquiry controversies (Coaldrake 1990:16-17). In this environment, it was the Hawke Government that set out to entrench perceptions that it was Labor that could best accommodate environmentalist concerns in the electorate.

The Federal Government’s establishment of its own Wet Tropics Management Authority under the chairmanship of Professor Ralph Buckley from Bond University represented a clear signal that the Commonwealth viewed the Queensland approach to
management of this area as being deficient. The inclusion of Dr Aila Keto, the secretary of the Queensland Rainforest Conservation Society - an interest group that had long been advocating preservation of the rainforest areas, and which had been at the forefront of protest and lobbying action to seek protection for the Daintree forest - implied a further critique of the Queensland approach, which had been characterised by its marginalising of environmental activists such as Dr Keto (Weekend Australian 4-5/11/89).

Unlike the relatively cohesive Tasmanian Government for whom the politics of fending off federal incursions into State-based land-use matters had become an integral part of that State’s political culture (Haward and Smith 1990), the nature of the Queensland’s Government response allowed scope for the Commonwealth to view the State as recalcitrant, and to apply a much more interventionist approach. The outward manifestations of this were in evidence in a visit made by Senator Richardson to Ravenshoe, a timber township in the midst of the disputed wet tropics area. Senator Richardson's visit to Ravenshoe was marred by violent confrontation, and at one point the Minister himself was jostled by a very angry crowd of pro-forestry protesters (see Sydney Morning Herald 5/9/87). If nothing else, the Ravenshoe incident indicated the extent to which the dynamics of environmental policy politics pertaining to the Queensland wet tropics had changed under the new Minister. Citing the Queensland Government's refusal to fulsomely participate in Mr Cohen’s National Rainforest Advisory Council as an example of intransigence, Senator Richardson made it clear from the outset that he would be undertaking a much more proactive role in using Commonwealth powers to have the Daintree registered as a World Heritage property.
(Australian 20/8/87, Courier Mail 2/11/87). This contrasted with his slightly more circumspect approach to the Tasmanian forest issue where, as the following chapters will show, the Federal environment Minister was willing to entertain agreements with the Tasmanian Government with regards to World Heritage and National Estate listings in exchange for commitments on forest harvest quotas in anticipation of expanding the State's pulp-milling industry.

This is not to suggest that the Queensland Government simply succumbed to the Commonwealth on this issue. Indeed, one of the significant consequences of this opposition was the spectacle at the World Heritage Committee meeting to decide the rainforest issue of two Australian Governments - from the Commonwealth and Queensland - presenting contradictory cases and lobbying for polemically different outcomes (Davis 1992:225). This in itself was an important point, for, apart from the embarrassment caused by the transferral of adversarial Australian Federal-State relations into the international arena, this incident, with all its ad hoc decision-making, stood as an example of one of the more problematic aspects of Australian resource policy-making for those who had an interest in reforming the process. In the meantime, the politics of the wet tropic issue were overtaken by a range of other matters on the Queensland agenda and, in 1989, the Queensland ALP won Government following a landslide victory in the State election of that year. Whilst the forestry dispute was not a major issue in the 1989 Queensland election, Labor's success in this contest, despite what had happened by way of Federal intervention in a State historically motivated by
regional parochialism, seemed also to suggest that fears of an electoral backlash against Labor over the forestry issue were without foundation.

2.7: Conclusion and overview: re-politicising the incremental

The period between the High Court’s validation of the Hawke Government’s legislative approach to the prevention of the Tasmanian hydro-electric scheme for the Franklin River area, and the 1987 federal election was of particular significance in Australian environmental politics. This was a period dominated by the overarching question as to whether or not the Hawke Government’s conservation-oriented approach to the matter of land-use in the Franklin River region would be an isolated example of national conservation policy-making. The Hawke Government’s passage of the *World Heritage Properties Protection Act (1983)*, and the Act’s subsequent validation by the High Court, established the fact that the Commonwealth now had the power to intervene in the land-use affairs of the States where disputed land areas were subjected to qualification as World Heritage estates. The matter of whether or not the Commonwealth would become involved in future disputes over the conservation of World Heritage properties would henceforth be a political matter - a situation of which the environmental movement was fully aware. Through its core interest groups who, at that time, were focused on the nature conservation debate, the environmental
movement sought to utilise the relationship forged with the national ALP during the 1983 federal election campaign to press forward with its nature conservation agenda.

It was the evolution of the Hawke Government’s response to this pressure to push the national nature conservation debate to address matters beyond the Franklin dam that marked the post-Franklin period as a definite, and important, phase in national Labor’s response to environmentalism. As has been argued in this chapter, the process began as an exercise in incrementalism, where the Government’s response to environmentalist pressure for more Federal action on State-based land-use disputes sought to avoid becoming too involved in the affairs of a problematic non-Labor State Government. Thus the Daintree Road was completed, despite the protest campaign waged by Queensland-based environmental groups, and the demands for Commonwealth action emanating from the ACF and TWS. Yet, despite this apparently unsatisfactory response to its agenda, the environmental movement continued to seek ways in which the Hawke Government could be mobilised to use its External Affairs-based powers over World Heritage lands to intervene in other on-going disputes over forest use in Tasmania and Queensland, and, importantly, the Government maintained its lines of communication with the movement. The electoral question was central to the Hawke Government’s response during this time: in short, Labor strategists remained convinced that being responsive to the environmental movement’s demands - particularly with regards to calls for the preservation of spectacular land areas - was beneficial to the Party’s electoral interests. In particular, such an approach would assist in having environmental interest groups
campaign on behalf of the Government in a future election, and, as a result, allow Labor to exploit any strategically important ‘green’ constituency in marginal urban electorates.

It was thus quite noteworthy that the shift in the Hawke Government’s attitude to the environmental debate away from the incrementalism practiced by the first Environment Minister in the post-1983 ministry occurred in the lead-up period to the 1987 Federal election. Change within the Government itself was central to this shift in attitude. The immediate post-Franklin period in Labor’s management of the national environmental debate was so critically important to national environmental politics because it was the period in which Senator Graham Richardson was to take his place in the Hawke Ministry as the immediate successor to the former Environment Minister, Mr Cohen. As was shown in this chapter, Senator Richardson’s appointment to the environment portfolio precipitated a change to the incrementalist style instituted during Mr Cohen’s tenure. The controversy surrounding the Government’s disregard for the Helsham Inquiry was a turning point in the debate, marking the beginning of a period of substantial Federal governmental activity in the creation of nature conservation-oriented environmental policy - based primarily on the notion that the areas the Commonwealth was seeking to preserve warranted inclusion in the World Heritage Estate.

Here a diverse range of factors came together to ensure that, in the post-Franklin period, the environment maintained its position as a major national agenda item. These included, first, the acceptance by Labor’s electoral strategists that the party’s anti-dam
position had been an important part of Labor’s success in the 1983 Federal election, and that long-term electoral strategic interests would be best served by maintaining the support of a ‘green’ electorate. Second, the threat of the environmental movement’s core interest groups being alienated from the Government as a result of the outcome of the Daintree Road controversy (and, later, in the direction that the Helsham Inquiry was to take) was averted by the political demise of then Environment Minister Cohen - ostensibly as the result of an internal factional manoeuvre that saw Mr Cohen lose factional support for remaining in the ministry. Here, then, lay the third important factor. Cohen’s departure from the ministry allowed room for Senator Richardson’s promotion, and, with his being allocated Cohen’s portfolio, the environmental policy arena now came under the auspices of a very powerful figure in both the Labor party, and the Hawke Government. The environment portfolio was now being managed by a leader of the party’s dominant faction, a major adviser on election strategy, and a personal confidant of the Prime Minister himself - in short, a very powerful, very ambitious, and very opportunistic minister. When the Hawke Government restructured the ministry system to provide for sixteen superministries (which allowed the environment to become a Cabinet, rather than outer ministry, portfolio), and Senator Richardson was later appointed the super Minister of ASETT, the transition was complete. With such a powerful and opportunistic member of the Government now presiding over environmental matters, the nature of the national environmental debate was about to change accordingly.

1. The question of Dr Brown’s status as a leader of the Australian environmental movement during the anti-dams campaign was a matter of some controversy amongst environmentalists. Associated with the emergence of hierarchy, leadership is one of the problematic manifestations of ‘old politics’ that new
social movements seek to transform. The anti-dams movement sought to de-emphasise leadership in pursuit of its agenda, yet Brown was continually viewed by the media, the political parties and the public as the prominent anti-dams campaigner.

2. In the dispute the Commonwealth’s only really effective potential administrative weapon was its refusal to co-fund the project which was undermined by the Queensland Government’s provision of funds in lieu.

3. In addition to Mr Michael Helsham, the Inquiry consisted of Dr Robert Wallace from the Economics Faculty of Flinders University in South Australia, and Mr Peter Hitchcock from the Policy and Planning Unit of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

4. Bitterness between the Federal Labor and Tasmanian Liberal Governments over the forest question found a second arena for expression with the retirement of Don Grimes as a Labor senator for Tasmania. The Tasmanian ALP nominated former Electrical Trades Union secretary John Devereux as the replacement for Grimes. This nomination upset the Tasmanian Government, however, as Devereux was a vocal critic of Tasmania’s woodchip industry and an advocate of protection for the state’s native forests. As Premier Gray put it, Devereux was an unacceptable choice for the Tasmanian Government on the grounds that the nominee’s approach to forestry policy fundamentally differed from that of the Tasmanian Government and that passage of this nomination would be contrary to the state interest. Gray thus threatened something of a constitutional crisis in April by demanding that the ALP provide a list of nominees for the Government to choose from - a demand flatly refused by the Tasmanian ALP who remained solidly behind Devereux. Significantly, the emergence of a constitutional dispute at this time dovetailed with the enormous strain on the Federal Liberal party as a result of the “Joh for PM” campaign (a campaign which the Tasmanian premier was known to support). Already under pressure due to threats from Bjelke-Petersen, Howard responded unenthusiastically to the Gray strategy and attempted to counsel a less confrontationist approach (Australian Financial Review 12/5/87). Whilst the matter was finally resolved in Howard’s favour, this matter added more weight to perceptions of weakness that dogged Howard’s leadership (see Age 9/5/87). The significance of all of this pressure on the Federal Liberal leadership emerged soon after; clearly influenced by the leadership problems in the anti-Labor parties, Prime Minister Bob Hawke sought an early Federal election on 27 May and was duly granted a general election for 11 July (Age 28/5/87).
CHAPTER 3

THE CRISIS-ORIENTED APPROACH:
LABOR, THE RISE OF THE ENVIRONMENT
AND THE RICHARDSON LEGACY

Following the Hawke Government’s abandonment of incrementalism as the preferred method of dealing with environmentalist demands, a second, distinct period occurred in which the environment became a constant source of attention and controversy. By virtue of the way in which the matter was a constant source of division for an otherwise highly functional Federal Cabinet, and because of the way in which land-use disputes generated substantial conflict (including an instance where Senator Richardson was actually assaulted during a public meeting), this second phase of Labor’s management of the national environmental debate is described here as a ‘crisis-oriented’ approach. This approach was characterised by a dominance of short-term political considerations, with a strong tendency towards decisions made on the basis of strategic electoral considerations in which maintaining Labor’s reputation as an environmentally sensitive government was of some importance.

The significance of this period to national environmental politics under Labor is twofold: first, this period of recurring controversy over the application of environmental considerations to land-use, resource and even industry policy during Senator Graham
Richardson’s tenure as Environment Minister served to reinforce the notion that the cooperative relationship that had emerged between the Hawke-led ALP and the core environmental interest groups during the anti-Tasmanian dams campaign had been reconfirmed in the post-Franklin period. Of particular significance here was the link between this relationship and perceptions of the impact the environmental issue was having on electoral outcomes. The uncertainty about the electoral benefits of being identified with a ‘green’ agenda that had underpinned the incrementalist period was now displaced by the view that the Government’s electoral position was assisted by being sensitive to the major issues on the environmentalist agenda. Indeed, as will be shown in this chapter, the consolidation of a Labor-environmental interest group electoral alliance was one of the major legacies of the period that was to affect the 1987 and especially the 1990 Federal elections. In other words, this was the period in which the Hawke Government and the environmental interest groups appeared to be acting together to achieve a significant ‘greening’ of the Australian political landscape (Bean et.al.1990:xiii)

So important was the environmental issue to become to the Hawke Government that the debate was to go beyond the question of nature conservation. In addition to tracing the ongoing disputes involving timber resource policy, this chapter examines the major controversy that emerged over the environmental impact of a proposed major export-pulp manufacturing mill in the north-western Tasmanian locality of Wesley Vale. Indeed, the Wesley Vale pulp mill dispute was to leave the second major legacy of the crisis-oriented period. As this chapter will show, the Wesley Vale dispute affected the Hawke Government by dividing the Cabinet into pro-development and pro-environment blocks. The success of the pro-
environment group - led by Senator Richardson - was to galvanise the defeated pro-
development ministers and their departments about the need to recast the national
environmental debate. Because the Wesley Vale pulp mill dispute was determined in no small
way by the ascendancy of short-term political considerations, the issue of how future policy
decisions could be made to incorporate environmental and economic values with a longer
term perspective was to be central to consideration of ways in which the environmental
debate could be altered. Thus the significance of the Wesley Vale pulp mill dispute went
beyond the fact that the project did not realise fruition. Rather, the dispute was to be a major
turning point in the national environmental debate where the pro-development block within
Cabinet would seek to reassert influence over the debate. In short, herein lay the origins of the
qualitative transformation of the debate in which the creation of new institutions to undertake
long-term consideration of how ecological values could be included in the policy-making
process.

3.1:  Pulp mills and forests: the first Wesley Vale dispute

The proposal by the North Broken Hill Ltd. Company, in conjunction with the major
Canadian pulp milling corporation Noranda Inc. to construct a major pulp mill at the north-
western Tasmanian hamlet of Wesley Vale provided the catalyst for a major environmental
dispute that was to dominate the environmental debate between the 1987 and 1990 Federal
elections. The proposed mill at Wesley Vale was intended to produce ‘kraft’ pulp for the
export market from eucalyptus trees harvested from Tasmanian public forests. As such, the proposed mill figured as part of the Tasmanian woodchip industry, and reflected a policy decision made in the 1970s when woodchipping was introduced to the State that, in the long term, down-stream processing of local eucalyptus would displace the practice of timber being chipped in Australia and then being exported for overseas conversion of the raw product into manufactured goods (see Tasmania 1989a:6).

The proposal was controversial in the context of Tasmanian politics for a number of reasons. First, the proposal to construct this mill had to occur within the context of an agreement between the Tasmanian Government and the Federal Department of Primary Industry and Energy (DPIE) over the quota of native forests that would be made available for the woodchip industry. In short, the Wesley Vale proposal could only go ahead if either the woodchip export quota was renegotiated and increased, or if woodchip and pulp operations in other parts of the State were closed to allow sufficient raw resources to be diverted to the new mill.¹ The notion that the Wesley Vale mill would be a boon to an otherwise economically depressed region of the State’s north led to another significant State Government decision that would trouble the project. Assuming that only ‘trouble-making greenies’ (Advocate 19/10/88) would oppose the project, the Liberal Government decided to suspend administrative appeals mechanisms thereby denying local land owners the opportunity to lodge objections against the development. This was part of a ‘fast track’ package put together by the Tasmanian Government to allow for speedy expedition of the project.
Local land owners were angered by this arrangement, and this, in turn, provided the basis upon which a local opposition group was mobilised to oppose the project. In a similar vein, local producer groups began to voice their concern about the project’s proposal for the dispersal of atmospheric and aquatic wastes. According to their interest organisations, local farmers feared atmospheric discharges from the mill would adversely affect meat and vegetable products from the region. The fishing industry, meanwhile, expressed concern that the proposal to build a two and a half kilometre pipeline into Bass Strait through which the mill’s effluent would be pumped and discharged at sea represented a threat to local fishing grounds. In the light of the foreshadowing of such localised concern, the EIA process that Noranda-North Broken Hill (NNBH) would have to undertake would be critical to the local politics of the project.

In the main, these matters were essentially localised issues that, in ordinary circumstances, would have remained within the confines of State politics. In this sense, the Wesley Vale dispute was not greatly different from localised disputes about pulp mills and woodchipping in Victoria and New South Wales. However, because the proposal involved a foreign corporation, the need for Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB) approval for Noranda’s investment in the project meant that the Commonwealth had a role to play in the decision-making process. Initially, the Commonwealth gave active encouragement to the project simply because it met major objectives in the Hawke Government’s industry and economic policies. These objectives included concern about the extent to which Australia’s balance of payments deficit had grown (a problem which the earning of more export income would assist in solving (Sutchbury 1990:62)), and a desire to see Australia’s manufacturing
sector undertake modernisation and reform. Identification of Australia's over-dependence
upon the primary sector as a source of export income capable of off-setting imports and
current account deficits was an essential part of the Hawke Government's critique of the
Australian economy. The new directions in economic policy aimed at reducing the balance
of payments deficit therefore involved commitments to encouraging not just a greater effort
in earning export income, but also policies designed to diversify Australia's export
performance away from dependence on primary products and towards an internationally
competitive export manufacturing (Davis 1989:74). As a project designed to produce pulp for
the export market, and to bring modern industrial technology to Australian manufacturing,
the Wesley Vale proposal met these Federal objectives.

The question of Australia's timber industry terms of trade was therefore of direct
relevance to the new thrust of economic policy. The deficit being run up in this sector was
due in no small part to the propensity of the timber industry to replicate the situation in other
primary industries; Australia had the raw materials which were being harvested and shipped
for off-shore down-stream processing which would then be returned to Australia by way of
imported timber products (see ABARE 1990). Given the woodchip industry's export
orientation, and given the imbalance in the pulp and paper terms of trade, these aspects of the
timber industry were prominent candidates for the application of policies designed to
encourage exports and replace imports. Running parallel with official concern about the size
of Australia's balance of payments deficit was an industry policy geared towards encouraging
efficiency and international competitiveness. Here the question of industry protection was of
some importance. The reduction of Australian tariffs for manufacturing occurred against the
backdrop of arguments that protectionism had been responsible for engendering an inefficient manufacturing sector the economy was no longer capable of sustaining (Castle 1991; Higgins 1991). As a national inquiry draft report later noted:

The data suggests that Australia has a comparative advantage in woodchips, but a comparative disadvantage in the production of some products such as paper and paperboards. It needs to be borne in mind that the present situation may be altered by further investment and other changes. The important point is that such changes must result in efficient production of further products vis-a-vis overseas producers to make a net contribution to the welfare of Australians. (RAC 1991:258)

In the face of growing disquiet amongst unions and industry advocates at the prospect of a major restructuring in manufacturing that could result in its virtual extinction, the Federal Government responded with industry policy based on a normative commitment to encouraging internationally competitive manufacturing. Encouragement of state-of-the-art manufacturing technology by way of pro-active policies designed to assist the flow of investment (or, to put it another way, finding ways of encouraging this sort of manufacturing without resorting to protection) became a central tenet of Federal industry policy (Stewart 1990:180). This was a particularly salient factor in the Federal Government's initial enthusiasm in principle for expansion of Australia's pulp-milling infrastructure. Mills designed to process and therefore add value to Australia's natural resources were looked upon with particular favour and state-of-the-art pulp mills of the type proposed for Wesley Vale satisfied key objectives in industry and economic policy.

The existence of the DPIE-Tasmanian Government agreement on the woodchip export harvest quota was, of course, the second major link between Canberra and the Tasmanian
forestry debate in this issue. For the core environmental interest groups such as the ACF, TWS and the Tasmanian Conservation Trust (TCT) at the forefront of wilderness protection campaigns, opposition to the Wesley Vale proposal was an integral part of the broader campaign for protection of as much of the Tasmanian south-west as possible. This campaign was also linked to the ongoing battle over the Helsham Inquiry, the conclusion of which coincided with the transition in the Federal environmental ministership from Mr Cohen to Senator Richardson. Senator Richardson’s efforts to distance the government from the Helsham Inquiry appeared to indicate that the new Environment Minister was more sympathetic to the environmental movement than his predecessor. The reality was more complex than this, however, because at the very moment at which Senator Richardson was repudiating the Helsham Inquiry report, the Environment Minister was participating in a process with the Tasmanian Government in which the increase in woodchip harvest quota necessary to allow the Wesley Vale mill without requiring the closure of a host of mills in the State’s south was being finalised.

The main impetus for Commonwealth support for Wesley Vale came from the Commonwealth department of Industry and Technology, and its minister, Senator John Button, for whom just such a proposal for investment in state-of-the-art manufacturing technology corresponded with his outlook for industry restructure in Australia. Thus, when the NNBH EIA was completed, and its Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was brought down, both the Tasmanian and Commonwealth Governments extended their approval of the process. In August 1988, Senator Button announced a major Federal assistance package for the project comprising of duty and depreciation allowances, Federal rail and road
construction assistance and a promise to raise Tasmania’s Loans Council borrowing limit (Examiner 19/8/1988). The question of the woodchip harvest quota was the final, albeit critical piece of the Commonwealth assistance package. The urgency of this issue was being enhanced by the development of opposition to the project by both the core environmental interest groups with their wilderness preservation agenda, and the growing local ‘not in my back yard’ opposition forming around a community-based opposition group known as the Concerned Residents Opposing the Pulp Mill Siting (CROPS).

It was precisely this final Commonwealth concession on the harvest quota that facilitated the initial approval for the project by the Tasmanian Government. Significantly, it was Senator Richardson who, in the immediate aftermath of the controversy over the Helsham Report, negotiated the so-called ‘Forest Peace Pact’ following a four-hour meeting with Tasmanian officials to decide on just exactly how much of Tasmania’s disputed forest area would be nominated for World Heritage listing (Mercury 29/11/1988). A ‘Forests Accord’ was agreed to based mainly on a deal on the question of joint Federal-Tasmanian nomination of an area for World Heritage listing well in excess of that recommended by the Helsham Inquiry in exchange for an increased timber harvest quota. To secure Tasmania's consent to the World Heritage nomination, the Commonwealth agreed to add 790,000 green tonnes per annum to the original 1986 DPI quota, thereby providing Premier Gray the luxury of allowing the NNBH and HFP mills to proceed with the closure of only one existing mill (Mercury 30/11/1988).
The reason for this outcome lay in a complex mix of political factors at work at the time. Mindful of the need to avoid fighting major battles on too many fronts, Senator Richardson was anxious to avoid the prospect of having both the Queensland and Tasmanian governments oppose the Commonwealth’s nomination of forest wilderness areas for World Heritage listing with UNESCO. Given the implacability of its opposition to any environmental-oriented outcome on the Daintree, the Queensland National Government was not disposed towards negotiation or bargaining with Senator Richardson. The situation in Tasmania was very different, however, particularly when the Commonwealth-State consensus about the desirability of a manufacturing project such as Wesley Vale is taken into account. The willingness of both sets of governments to bargain over critical policy objectives - enhanced pulp milling capacity for Tasmania on the one side, and the desire to achieve a joint Tasmania-Commonwealth World Heritage nomination for the areas subjected to the Helsham Inquiry review on the other - was a major consideration in this period. It also indicated the nature of the Federal Environment Minister’s approach to these issues.

Despite the claims about some form of conversion to the ‘green’ cause, or of a mutually respectful relationship between Senator Richardson and the leadership of the environmental movement, the way in which the first phase of the Wesley Vale dispute was resolved indicated the degree to which Senator Richardson was motivated by short-term political objectives. That this approach could lead to a highly volatile political environment in which policy would be debated, and from which quite contradictory outcomes could emerge, would become obvious as the dispute moved into its second stage. This was marked by the declaration of outrage at the Forest Accord by the core environmental interest groups, and
their promise to campaign against the ALP in any subsequent Federal or State election
(Sunday Tasmanian 4/12/1988). Like the Forest Accord, this threat was not to have any great
longevity.

3.2: Not in my backyard: the second Wesley Vale dispute

The failure of the Wesley Vale project to be realised was the result of controversy
over the environmental impact of the proposed mill on the immediate surrounds - an example
of the ‘not in my backyard’ phenomenon that tends to arise wherever potentially noxious
developments are proposed for local areas. The decision (or, as will be shown, the non-
decision) to prevent the progress of the project came from the Commonwealth, rather than the
Tasmanian Government, by virtue of the Federal Government’s power to determine the
participation of the Canadian joint venturer. The issue on which the project was ultimately
terminated related to problems with the EIA process, and the NNBH EIS that the system
spawned. The political reality, however, was that the efforts of localised opposition by
CROPS, and by producer interest groups such as the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers
Association (TFGA) and the Tasmanian Fishing Industries Council (TFIC) who feared the
adverse effect the mill would have on their material interests, were at the forefront of what
was essentially a series of reversals on previous decisions by both the Tasmanian and Federal
governments. This dovetailed with the anti-mill campaign being waged by CROPS - and an
appeal to the Federal Environment Minister to intervene on this matter was a central part of this campaign.

It was in this conflict between the State Government, producer groups, CROPS and the joint venturers over the discharging of organo-chlorine waste in Bass Strait that the controversy over dioxin emerged as a major political issue. Dioxin is a compound believed to be the by-product of manufacturing processes using, amongst other items, chloride-based chemicals and has been attributed to the causing of cancer, immune system disorders and birth defects (Henderson 1989:21). An essential part of the politics of dioxin as it was manifested in the Wesley Vale dispute was that environmentalists and pulp millers were in disagreement over what caused dioxin, at what level dioxin discharges were harmful, whether or not pulp-milling produced dioxin, and whether or not dilution of organo-chlorine waste (such as discharging into Bass Strait) removed whatever threat dioxin might pose to public health. The importance of the complex science of this debate was overshadowed by its total politicisation, as the raising of this matter served to heighten the concern of producer groups and intensify the joint venturer's publicity campaign to quell any community concern. For its part, the anti-mill movement obtained the support of a group of Tasmanian scientists formed to debate the Helsham Inquiry called the United Scientists for Environmental Responsibility and Protection (USERP). Public utterances on the organo-chlorine issue by USERP homed in on what they alleged was the inadequacy of the NNBH EIS in addressing the environmental impact of the proposed disposal of wastes at sea - a message that was aimed squarely at the already concerned fishing industry (Bulletin 10/1/1989).
This dimension of the campaign began to affect the project's proponents. The joint venturers, after initially denying that dioxin was produced by pulp-milling, claimed that the amount of dioxin that would be produced would be negligible (Examiner 8/10/1988). No less significantly, the CROPS-USERP line on organo-chlorine, supported by the TFGA and the TFIC, was having an impact on the community generally. The first signs of major strain emerged within the Tasmanian ALP - a party that, in the aftermath of serious drubbings in post-Franklin elections, had pursued a policy of support for development under its most recent leader Neil Batt. Certainly the party policy up to the release of the EIS gave support for Wesley Vale (ALP News Release 17/10/1988). Following the release of the EIS, however (and presumably in response to the Party's perception of growing community concern based on the industrial pollution issue), Labor reversed its position and opposed the mill on the grounds that the EIS was inadequate (Mercury 2/11/1988).

Seizing on the ALP's policy reversal as further evidence of Labor's uncertainty over how environmental considerations should be incorporated in development policies, and anxious to distance himself from rumours circulating in the media of his imminent retirement from politics (Mercury 10/11/1988), Premier Gray sought to reassert the Liberal Government's firm commitment to Wesley Vale. This took the form of a promise to introduce enabling legislation to allow an earlier-than-planned commencement on construction at the Wesley Vale site (Mercury 18/11/1988). Mr Gray's position was assisted enormously by the completion of the Forest Accord with the Federal Government. Yet right at this moment of triumph for the Tasmanian Premier in his dealings with the Commonwealth, a major political controversy broke out from an unsuspected source. As part of the inter-departmental co-
ordination process, relevant ministerial departments had undertaken a review of Wesley Vale's implications for their policy jurisdictions. There was an early sign that the Liberal Government's unanimity over Wesley Vale was under strain when the Tasmanian Environment Minister, Peter Hodgman MHA, was reported to have expressed concern over the organo-chlorine issue (*Mercury* 5/12/1988). Two days later, the Hobart *Mercury* was leaked a copy of a report by the Department of Sea Fisheries on its investigation into the Wesley Vale EIS that the Tasmanian Government had intended to keep secret. According to the report, the Deep Seas Fisheries commentary criticised the EIS for its failure to consider the effect of waste disposal on the marine environment, and failed to undertake a study of tide movements in Bass Strait and their effectiveness in dispersing harmful materials (*Mercury* 7/12/1988).

The leaking of the Deep Seas Fisheries critique of the NNBH EIS was a critical moment in the Wesley Vale dispute for four reasons. First, by emanating from within the Tasmanian bureaucracy, the report appeared to give official credence to the arguments against the mill based on concerns about dioxin and organo-chlorine wastes that had been the mainstay of the CROPS-USERP line. In the battle for public sympathy over the clean environment versus development debate, the Deep Seas Fisheries report gave the environmental case a significant fillip and this was reflected in no little way by the emergence of Christine Milne as a major political figure. Second, the critical report suddenly threw enormous doubt over the capacity of the Gray Government's decision-making process to make what could be considered 'good policy'. Up to this point, the Gray Government had assumed a fair degree of unanimity between the government and the community on the need
to encourage the Wesley Vale project. The report had, in effect, cast doubt over the integrity of the Government's 'fast track' procedure. This in turn exacerbated the unravelling of the Liberal party's cohesion. In the period after this report, Mr Gray found that the battle to get the mill project operational and an emerging fight to retain his leadership of the Party were becoming intertwined.

Third, the report tended to indicate that, quite apart from the highly visible conflict going on between environmentalists and developers and government, another important, but by no means as visible, conflict was occurring within the administrative arm of the state. The interesting connection to note here was the relationship between the ministerial departments designed specifically for the purpose of servicing the needs of specific developer clientele and those clientele operating in the policy arena. The critical Deep Seas Fisheries report in fact reflected the concerns of the department's clientele. The position of the Tasmanian Development Authority - an important arm of the Government's industry policy infrastructure - provided another interesting departmental response monitored by the Department of Environment that the mill should go ahead but only to the extent that Tasmania's reputation as a clean producer of export-oriented fisheries and vegetable products not be harmed (Tasmania 1989b:34). This theme, reflecting fishing industry concerns in particular, would later prove to be of crucial political significance at the Federal level.

Finally, the controversy arising over the Tasmanian Government's handling of the environmental issue by the leaking of this secret report provided environmentalists with just the opportunity they needed to again seek the intervention of the Commonwealth on the pulp-
mill matter. As the year drew to a close, the degree of uncertainty present about the mill's future reflected not only signs of strain emerging within the Tasmanian Government as some ministers - most notable amongst them, Peter Hodgman - began to consider environmental matters at the eleventh hour, and by the fact that no FIRB approval had been forthcoming. The delay in Canberra was due to the prevarication of DASETT and its Minister, Senator Richardson, for whom the stalling of the approval process provided scope for manoeuvre in his negotiations with leading environmental interest groups who had been so angered by the Forests Accord.

3.3: The politics of ‘environmental guidelines’: the Commonwealth intervenes

In its final weeks before the Christmas recess, the Tasmanian parliament became embroiled in a debate over the environmental guidelines drawn up by the Tasmanian Government by which the mill would operate. Although the provision of such guidelines had been previously discussed as part of the agreement between the Commonwealth and Tasmania to precede extension of FIRB approval, the introduction of Tasmanian legislation did not occur until the House of Assembly began to debate the Northern Pulp Mill Bill (1988) in November. The leaking of the Deep Seas Fisheries report on the NNBH EIS caused the bill and its attached environmental guidelines, which Premier Gray had previously flagged as urgent, to be delayed. Press reports at the time blamed this delay on an attempt by environmentalists to use sympathetic members of the Tasmanian Legislative Council to delay enabling legislation (Mercury 8/12/1988). A more accurate explanation (which, given the

123
minority status of ALP and independents in the Assembly, and the pro-development disposition of the vast majority of the Council, could hardly have been engineered from within the Parliament by the Government's opponents) was that the Government itself was being forced to consider the industrial pollution issue in a far more serious manner than previously. This was reflected in the emergence of Peter Hodgman as a key player in the subsequent debate over environmental guidelines during the Christmas-New Year holiday period where the government and NNBH began to re-negotiate the environmental guidelines.

Much to the chagrin of the joint venturers, the possibility of a renegotiation of the environmental guidelines emerged as the key issue in the new year of 1989, and within this debate the effectiveness of the CROPS-USERP campaign and of the influence of the TFIC was reflected by the predominance of governmental concern over dioxin and the disposal of organo-chlorine in Bass Strait. In the meantime, NNBH produced a second EIS - referred to as ‘the Addendum’ - in a bid to counter the claims made particularly by the Deep Seas Fisheries report. The thrust of the Addendum was made clear in the approach taken in response to the Deep Seas Fisheries report which stated, as part of its argument that there were political rather than scientific forces at work in the report's creation, that

The submission makes a series of complaints about the vagueness regarding the various levels of pollution control within the mill, but neglects the main point; that the net effect of all of these processes/interactions is specifically quantified in the effluent quality specification in EIS tables ... The approach taken by Sea Fisheries on these matters can be construed as being designed to create an impression rather than establish any matter of substance insofar as it quotes selectively and neglects to mention the salient point. (NNBH 1989:78)

The joint venturer's perception of a shift in the prevailing political currents on the mill proved to be accurate, although its attempt to redress the Deep Seas Fisheries report through the
Addendum failed to dissuade the Government from pursuing tougher environmental guidelines. This is not to suggest that the Government's revision of its position pertaining to matters environmental represented a dramatic *volte face*. Rather, the Tasmanian Government attempted a course of brinkmanship of its own in which it would try to appease community concern over industrial pollution by tampering with what, notwithstanding its voluble rhetoric about the dawning of a 'new era' in environmental awareness in Tasmania (*Saturday Mercury* 7/1/1989), it perceived to be the policy margins. This was where the environmental guidelines began to figure in the Government's response.

Amongst its fears of the economic consequences of further delays for the project, the joint venturers also had substantial political concerns that contributed to their public declarations of dismay at the Tasmanian Government's new-found concern over the environmental guidelines (*Mercury* 4/1/1989). Whilst the joint venturers felt that the apparent abatement in the State Government's enthusiasm for the project was worrying enough, NNBH's bigger problem lay in Canberra, where a change in the Federal Government's mood on the mill based on the re-emergence of the developer-environmentalist divide within the Cabinet was perceivable. Cabinet approval of the project was required prior to the extension of FIRB approval, and here the Hawke Government demurred on the question of the EIS. Once, again, Senator Richardson and DASET were pivotal to the manoeuvring, although an important new dimension to cabinet's deliberations emerged as a consequence of the Deep Seas Fisheries report. Seeking to exploit the political conditions created by the Deep Seas Fisheries critique of the EIS, CROPS and the associated environmental interest groups again sought to lobby the Federal Government to intervene in
the Tasmanian decision-making process which, by virtue of both the critical report and the
sudden revisionism of the environmental guidelines by Mr Peter Hodgman, was easily
depicted as slipshod and deficient (Mercury 26/1/1989). Reports of Senator Richardson's
intention to visit the Wesley Vale region and to conduct discussions with members of CROPS
and USERP indicated that the Minister was indeed willing to keep open the lines of
communication with these interest groups for as long as they demonstrated an ability to
impact upon public opinion on the project.

Divisions existed within the Hawke Cabinet as it debated the Wesley Vale issue.
From a position of fulsome support which, by virtue of the taxation and infrastructure
concessions and the re-negotiation of the native timber harvest quota, went beyond mere
rhetoric, Cabinet was now caught between the advocacy of pro-development ministers such
as John Button and the junior DPIE minister Senator Peter Cook supporting the mill, and the
pro-environment group led by Senator Richardson who were critical of the project. It is
important to note here that the ‘environment’ group within Cabinet was not necessarily made
up of committed environmentalists. Indeed, Senator Richardson's position on the mill was
based on the strategy of deferring approval of the mill rather than rejecting it on
environmental grounds. Also present was a group not particularly committed to the project or
to environmental protection, but anxious to avoid any issue that would either make the
Government dysfunctional and/or would alienate any of the major interest constituencies
whose support Labor had been nurturing for the purposes of electoral strategy. Included in
this third group was the Prime Minister to whom Senator Richardson had particularly good
access (Canberra Times 20/10/1990, Kelly 1992:440). The mill issue was thus one of great
technical and political complexity for Cabinet generally, and Mr Hawke in particular. The pursuit of economic growth through investment particularly in down-stream processing of raw materials was a cornerstone of the government's industry policy, yet the environmental constituency was clearly viewed as important especially with a general Federal election looming.

In an otherwise functional Cabinet, the environment issue was again proving to be an intractable problem. With the Prime Minister and the Cabinet caught between pro-development and pro-environment positions, the emergence of any additional element capable of altering the delicate balance could prove decisive. Just such an element emerged from a somewhat unlikely source in the form of the DPIE - or, more specifically, from within the Department's fisheries division. In addition to broadening the social base of the CROPS campaign, the opposition of the Tasmanian fishing industry to the mill instigated something of a political struggle within the bureaucratic arm of the Tasmanian state that eventually had its corollary at the national level. The fishing industry's opposition, as McEachern (1991:108-130) has demonstrated, was simple enough in its approach: fishermen dependent not so much on Bass Strait itself but on the entire marketing notion of Tasmanian fishing produce being the product of a 'clean' environment perceived the proposal to dispose of organo-chlorine as a direct threat to their vested interest in maintaining the 'clean environment' image. The proposal to discharge toxic waste into Bass Strait represented a competing demand on the marine resource from a different sector of development capital and the Tasmanian fishing industry responded by utilising whatever political armory it could muster (including an alliance with local environmentalists) to oppose this alternative utilisation of the marine

127
environment (Examiner 5/10/1988). Partly as a result of this mobilisation, and partly as an
extension of the department-clientele relationship present in development-oriented
departments, the fishing industry's opposition was relayed to the minister for Primary
Industry and Energy, John Kerin. Mr Kerin’s demurring on the matter tipped the balance in
Cabinet towards the Senator Richardson view that FIRB approval be withheld for the time
being.

The debate about the environmental guidelines intensified in early January when
environment minister Hodgman announced the Government's new minimum standards. These
guidelines required a total ban on the production of and emission of dioxin, a reduction in the
ratio of organo-chlorine waste per air-dried tonne of pulp from 1.3kg to 1.0kg, and the
requirement of the construction of a third effluent treatment plant to further reduce the
toxicity of the waste material. Minister Hodgman proudly declared that the Government's
guidelines were now so rigorous that effluent pumped into Bass Strait from the required
treatment process would be suitable enough for drinking, and that he would sooner resign
from the ministry than entertain any re-negotiation of these new guidelines (Mercury
6/1/1989). The joint venturers, under pressure from the Commonwealth's approach and
infuriated by what they perceived as a major reworking of what had hitherto been an
agreement on environmental guidelines, threatened to shelve the entire project (Mercury
26/1/1989).

The Gray Government was now caught between two irreconcilable constituencies.
The attempt to construct an ‘environmental-friendly’ aura around the government in the post-
EIS period had patently failed, whilst the brinkmanship utilised in the environmental guideline manoeuvrings threatened to result in the project's collapse, with its potential to alienate the substantial pro-mill constituency that had, up until this point, been the government's primary supporter base. In a bid to circumvent this, Premier Gray returned from holiday and announced that the Government would proceed with the mill on the basis of the original environmental guidelines, thereby reversing Mr Hodgman's pledge for tougher operational standards (the minister did not resign). Mr Gray returned to the rhetoric of 'fast track' administration by announcing that enabling legislation containing the relaxed environmental guidelines would be pushed through the parliament through the Northern Pulp Mill (Doubts Removal) Bill in a specially called session and, for its part, the company moved its earth contractors onto the Wesley Vale site days before the Doubts Removal Bill had been passed (Mercury 23/2/1989).

The prevarication over the guidelines issue provided ammunition for environmental opponents who were treading the well-worn path to Canberra in a bid to lobby for Federal intervention. Combined with the cases put by Senator Richardson and, to a lesser extent, Mr Kerin, the balance in the Federal Cabinet clearly tipped towards the Richardson argument that FIRB approval be withheld pending a more thorough investigation into the industrial pollution and EIS issues - this time by a Federal agency in the form of the CSIRO (Age 6/2/1989, 15/3/1989). The terminating effect of this decision upon the project was completed by the joint venturers' decision to shelve the project on the grounds that further delays in anticipation of another EIA rendered the project uneconomic. Interestingly, this outcome led to a major outcry from business, the ACTU and even some environmental leaders about the
uncertainty, if not fundamental inadequacies, of a decision-making process dealing with a multi-million dollar development project involving extremely complex scientific and technical inputs and involving the two main levels of government whose support for the project had, at one stage, been unanimously extended (*Age* 16/3/1989).

The importance of the Wesley Vale dispute lay in the way it had highlighted the problems and uncertainties of Australia’s environmental policy-making process in a period of heightened community awareness of, and support for, ecological inputs into land-use matters. The lack of certainty over official environmental guidelines for the mill had been a major problem for the project throughout the process - a situation exacerbated by the fragmentation of the decision-making process as a result of the Commonwealth’s intervention in the debate. The capacity for the environmental issue to create division within and between governmental departments and agencies had also been revealed in the dispute. As the following chapter will show, this aspect of the environmental policy debate was to become an important reason for institutional actors to investigate ways in which a more comprehensive and depoliticised approach to making environmental and land-use policy decisions - an investigative process that began as the Wesley Vale dispute became bogged down in the environmental guidelines debate.

The dispute also revealed much about what environmental politics had evolved into during the period of Senator Richardson’s tenure as national Environment Minister. The Federal Minister’s role in this project had been critical from the moment he had helped negotiate the Forest Accord, to the case he argued against extending FIRB approval to the
project in the absence of satisfactory environmental guidelines. Admittedly, this last stage of the dispute had required the input of Primary Industry and Energy Minister John Kerin, whose Department’s counsel of a cautious response to the project was due in no small way to the concerns held by its fishing industry clientele. Still, Senator Richardson had been a prime mover in the Cabinet’s volte face in its support for the Wesley Vale project. Typically, the primary reason for Senator Richardson’s approach lay in the Minister’s attitude to the political debate generally. Electoral considerations were of primary importance to this approach, and Senator Richardson’s actions in this and other major disputes emerging during his time as Minister reflected his belief that sensitivity to the environmentalist agenda served Labor’s electoral interests. Senator Richardson was less interested in the question of bringing rationality and long-term perspectives to the policy-making process than he was in being able to weld political decision-making to perceptions of that which would enhance Labor’s electoral position.

Because of their enhanced access to Senator Richardson during his time as Environment Minister, environmental interest group leaders were very aware of the minister’s belief in the electoral appeal of environmentalism. Indeed, they went out of their way to reinforce this notion in their regular briefings with him. Environmental leaders have spoken of a growing mutual respect for Senator Richardson, which Richardson also referred to in his autobiography (Richardson 1994). In short, the environmental leadership perceived the electoral dimension to the debate to be of utmost importance to the minister, and Senator Richardson appreciated the environmental leadership’s ability to convey the implication of particular decision options for movements in public opinion in submissions made to him.
Notwithstanding the scope for scepticism to exist where such data is provided by protagonists in any policy debate, it would appear that developer interests were rather slow in recognising the persuasiveness of this approach particularly when it came to Senator Richardson. After all, the Minister’s capacity to make decisions that could anger the environmental movement had been demonstrated at the beginning of the Wesley Vale dispute, and indicated that Senator Richardson was not necessarily simply the captive of the environmental movement. It was the environmental leadership, however, that was quickest to appreciate the persuasiveness of the electoral dimension to the land-use and resource policy debate. Herein lay the basis upon which the environment’s presence on the national political debate began to grow. It was also the basis on which environmental leaders reasoned - quite justifiably - that the time to achieve items on the environmental agenda had never been more opportune. Thus environmentalist demands for Federal action on land-use and resource matters increased during this period, particularly in the 12 months before the 1990 Federal election was due.

3.4: Greening the polls: elections and the environment

Electoral considerations were highly influential to Senator Richardson’s approach to the Wesley Vale pulp-mill dispute. The Minister’s brokerage of the Forest Accord occurred in the post-1987 election period when resolving the disputes with Tasmania and Queensland, rather than preparing for a Federal election, was uppermost in the Hawke Government’s agenda. However, Senator Richardson’s position on Wesley Vale in 1989, which was so influential in the project’s failure to materialise, was influenced by the proximity of the 1990
Federal election. Consequently, that Federal contest was to be profoundly influenced by the environmental debate. Indeed, a portent of what was to come occurred in the 1989 Tasmanian election in which the Gray Government was to lose executive power to an alliance of Labor and ‘green independent’ MPs following a dramatic realignment of voter support in which environmental candidates were the primary beneficiaries.

Table 3.1: Tasmanian State Election Results - 1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bass</th>
<th>Braddon</th>
<th>Denison</th>
<th>Franklin</th>
<th>Lyons</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>primary %</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swing</td>
<td>+2.5</td>
<td>-2.4</td>
<td>+7.9</td>
<td>+3.8</td>
<td>-3.6</td>
<td>-2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seats</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIB</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>primary %</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swing</td>
<td>-5.1</td>
<td>+0.4</td>
<td>-2.6</td>
<td>-8.5</td>
<td>-4.4</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seats</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREEN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>primary %</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swing</td>
<td>+14.1</td>
<td>+11.4</td>
<td>+8.5</td>
<td>+8.5</td>
<td>+16.8</td>
<td>+7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seats</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tasmania 1990

The Wesley Vale dispute was the primary issue in the Tasmanian election, and the success with which the localised anti-mill activists dovetailed with the more established
environmentalist political infrastructure primarily overseen by TWS, resulted in the
candidacy of ‘green independents’ in each of Tasmania’s five multi-member House of
Assembly electorates. The basic features of the election result are outlined in Table 3.1,
which indicates clearly the extent to which the green independents became the major
beneficiaries of voter realignments. The 17 percent primary vote obtained State-wide by the
green independents resulted in their securing five seats in the new Assembly - one seat from
each division. The table indicates that whilst the ALP regained electoral support in the south
of the State (where it won a seat from the Liberal party), Labor suffered an overall State-wide
decline in its vote. Whilst the Liberals also suffered a swing against them, the net loss of seats
to both the green independents and the ALP meant that, whilst it was still the largest of the
parties in the new House of Assembly, it no longer had an absolute majority.

The 1989 Tasmanian election was extremely important to national environmental
politics for two reasons. First, the great success the green independents and their
environmental movement-based organisational structure had in winning both a substantial
vote and representation to the Tasmanian parliament confirmed the relevance of the
environmental issue to electoral politics. Prior to this election, little conclusive evidence
existed to back up environmentalist claims to be able to command electoral support. Far from
simply indicating that environmental activists could win a strategic vote, the Tasmanian result
indicated the extent to which a ‘green’ political approach could impact widely upon the
electorate. For example, as Table 3.1 shows, the green independent’s Bob Brown won nearly
a quarter of the primary vote in the Hobart-based seat of Denison. Here was clear evidence of
the issue’s ability to impact upon mainstream public opinion, and upon mainstream political behaviour such as voting.

In the context of a national debate in which many decisions by the Federal Environment Minister were based on the assumption that the electorate’s sensitivity to environmental matters had been enhanced, the Tasmanian result implied vindication of Senator Richardson’s view of the relevance of the environmental issue to the electorate. Senator Richardson’s approach to Wesley Vale had been based on the view that the electorate was reacting adversely to the environmental implications of the project - a reflection of the community's greater environmental awareness. The 1989 Tasmanian election result served to reinforce the Senator Richardson view of the link between the environmental issue and voting behaviour.

The post-election politics that saw the Tasmanian ALP return to government by virtue of the ‘Green-Labor Accord’ was the second critical legacy to influence the nature and direction of national environmental politics. The Green-Labor Accord was an agreement negotiated between the Tasmanian ALP’s parliamentary leadership under Michael Field (himself a beneficiary of the Wesley Vale dispute during which his predecessor, Mr Neil Batt, was removed by Caucus for his failure to respond to the anti-mill movement), and the five green independent MPs. The agreement exchanged pledges of green independent support for a minority Labor Government for a commitment to certain policy outcomes particularly in the environmental field, and a promise to consult with the green independents on future policy
development (Haward and Larmour 1993). The significance of the Accord went beyond simply providing the basis on which Labor could return to government in Tasmania.

It also indicated that a important rift between the Tasmanian ALP and the State’s environmental movement had been healed, for the time being at least. Both Richard Davis (1983) and Hay (1987) have shown how the Tasmanian ALP, once the natural party of government in Tasmania, had experienced a fundamental division within its branches and within its core electoral constituency as a result of the Tasmania’s recurring environmental disputes. The emergence of an environmental movement contesting policy debates and electoral contests had attracted a number of activists and voters away from Labor. It was as if the progressive side of the political spectrum in Tasmanian politics had fundamentally fragmented into two mutually antagonistic camps. With the advent of the Accord, the notion of a Labor-environmental alliance in Tasmanian politics emerged which at the very least resonated similarly with the relationship that had developed between the core environmental interest groups and Federal Minister Senator Richardson.

The nature of the environmental debate at the Federal level intensified accordingly, with the Richardson approach enjoying sufficient Prime Ministerial approval to displace the disquiet pro-development blocks within Cabinet and Caucus had towards the issue. In mid 1989, the Hawke Government released a major environmental policy built around a prime ministerial statement entitled ‘Our Country, Our Future’. This statement was designed to reiterate what it projected as Labor’s achievements in relation to protecting World Heritage areas, and sought to outline future directions in Labor’s environmental policy making (Hawke...
1994:392-464). Interestingly, the statement sought to highlight a set of new issues and commitments that fell outside of the highly controversial question of extending Federal protection to wilderness regions. It committed Labor to a land regeneration program to be called ‘Landcare’ of which both the ACF and the NFF approved. Urban environmental matters were also on the agenda, as were industrial pollution matters relating to ozone depletion, ‘greenhouse’ gas emissions, and so on (Hawke 1989). The rather sardonic dubbing of this statement by the press as ‘The World’s Greatest Environment Statement’ (Time 31/7/89) indicated the extent to which journalists saw this manifesto as an exercise in public relations rather than substantive policy. Certainly the policy release was designed to extract maximum media coverage, and at the very least indicated the way in which the environment had evolved to become one of the major themes in a future Labor election campaign.

The degree to which Senator Richardson’s approach to environmental matters depended on a crisis-oriented style became very obvious in a rather surprising dispute that occurred in the lead-up to the 1990 Federal election over forests in the East Gippsland region in Victoria. Whilst a raft of environmental matters were being addressed during the 1987-1990 period, only a few major disputes managed to force their way on to the national agenda. Similarly, the majority of these major national disputes occurred primarily in the two States with the greatest wilderness resource - Tasmania and Queensland. Contests over wilderness in other States tended to remain confined within their respective decision-making processes. Such was the case in Victoria, where the Cain Labor Government had undertaken an extensive review of land and conservation policy-making, had recast the ministerial department and resource agencies who had hitherto administered land matters, and had
sought to undertake a major review of the State’s timber industry with a view to formulating
a Timber Industry Strategy (TIS) in order to give protagonist interest groups a clear indication
of how decisions would be made (Economou 1992:100-105). Victoria also had the Land
Conservation Council (LCC), a statutory body given powers to undertake environmental and
economic impact studies of land-use in the State and make recommendations to Cabinet. In a
ringing endorsement of the LCC, a former Victorian environment minister once said of the
body:

[The LCC] has at least four consultative mechanisms in the decision-making process.
It takes a long time, but it is worth it. It is a tribute to its independence and to the
calibre of the work that ninety six percent of LCC recommendations have been
accepted by successive Victorian governments since 1971. (Setches 1990:25)

Victoria, then, had an extensive land-use decision-making process to which major
land-use controversies were carefully and methodically worked through prior to
governmental determination. The Victorian Government’s sensitivity to the overarching
national debate was reflected in a decision it took to disallow woodchip operations, and to put
a careful investigative process in place for proposals for new pulp mills emanating from paper
manufacturers already located in the State. On the matter of wilderness preservation, the
Victorian Government had spent some time dealing with competing demands from
conservationists and the sawmilling industry for access to timber resources in East Gippsland.
It was this matter, and the ever present proposal for new pulp-mill construction, that became
the subject of the Commonwealth’s incursion into Victorian affairs when Senator
Richardson, at the behest of Victorian conservation groups, intervened on the question of
logging in sensitive areas in the East Gippsland region.
Significantly, the catalyst in the dispute was the release of a report by the Commonwealth’s AHC into the National Estate status of sites in the East Gippsland region that appeared to be analysing the very same region that the LCC had studied some three years previously. Given that the two bodies used different methodology to undertake evaluation of rather different matters, and given that there was no inter-agency co-ordination or cooperation in either study, it was hardly surprising that both final reports should differ. That the AHC nominated many more areas for possible Estate listing than the LCC became a major point of contention in the East Gippsland land-use dispute, and the various environmental groups (ranging from the local Concerned Residents of East Gippsland (CROEG) through to TWS) used the AHC report as the basis for claiming that more forest areas be given protection from logging than that proposed by the LCC. Environmental activists then undertook a series of forest blockades, and by January, Dr Bob Brown had visited a protest site at Mt Ellery, near Orbost, and intimated that this would be the next major wilderness campaign.

The protests and blockades (which attracted great media attention during the quiet Christmas-New Year news period) immediately resulted in Federal action. This, in turn, reflected the internal political dynamics of the Hawke Cabinet on environmental matters. In the new year of 1990 both the Federal Environment Minister, Senator Richardson, and Federal Resources Minister Senator Peter Cook came to Victoria to participate in round-table discussions with the Victorian Government and the protagonist interest groups. Cook’s role in these negotiations was to find ways in which timber harvesting and the proposed Victorian pulp-mill could remain on the agenda for the long-term, regardless of the short-term solution
worked out by Senator Richardson. Indeed, Senator Cook was reported to have rejected any likelihood of Federal intervention in the Victorian dispute when relations between the Victorian Government and environmental interest groups began to unravel (Canberra Times 11/1/90). Here, again, negotiations occurred against the backdrop of the Wesley Vale dispute. In such an uncertain environment, it was always unlikely that a new Victorian mill would have gone ahead regardless of what Cook and his colleagues had decided.

Senator Richardson, on the other hand, came to Victoria with only one objective uppermost in his mind - specifically, that the anti-logging protesters encamped in proposed logging coups in the Brown’s Mountain area get out of the forests in time for the Federal election. To this end Senator Richardson was prepared to offer Federal funds as compensation for any State government decision to extend a moratorium on logging in the disputed areas over the summer season (Australian 24/1/90). The Richardson offer comprised a $6 million grant to restructure the industry, and a $4 million grant to fund the development of plantations as an alternative source of timber. In the midst of this, Senator Cook, Senator Richardson and Prime Minister Hawke all publicly declared that there would be no employment losses as a result of this package (Canberra Times 14/2/90). The offer of some $10 million in Federal compensation was readily acceptable to the State government who moved to prevent the summer’s logging in the coups, thereby satisfying environmentalist demands which, in turn, led to a withdrawal of protesters from the region. And whilst some timber industry spokespeople remained sanguine on the outcome pending further negotiations, a hostile reaction occurred in the timber regions of East Gippsland which included the holding of a series of protest rallies and culminated in the candidacy of a pro-
logging candidate in the Federal seat of McMillan held by the ALP's Barry Cunningham (Age 17/1/90). Notwithstanding this, Senator Richardson's intervention achieved what he had set out to attain, and with the removal of protesters from East Gippsland sites, Senator Richardson was able to continue to cultivate Federal Labor's image as an environmentally sensitive government.

The reasons for Senator Richardson's intervention in the East Gippsland dispute were made clear by the way the 1990 Federal election began, and, indeed, by the way the result was arrived at. Senator Richardson had upset the Victorian Labor Government's approach to land-use matters for reasons of national electoral expediency. Given the proximity of forestry disputes in Queensland and Tasmania, the Wesley Vale dispute, and the announcement of 'the World's Greatest Environment Statement', the environment emerged as one of the major issues on which the 1990 election was fought. Interestingly, the election occurred during a period of significant economic developments, the electoral impact of which were rather difficult to assess. The Federal Government's strongest achievements had been in the area of unemployment in which the rate had stabilised and then began to fall. Inflation, too, had been falling. On the other hand, the Government's economic strategy had been based on the twin objective of bringing about wage restraint and allowing the market-place to determine the outcome of key economic matters including the exchange rate and interest rates - outcomes which adversely impacted upon the material interests of Labor's core constituency (Gow 1990:67 and 71). It was in this context that the ALP's strategy of ensuring that it had the support of various interest constituencies beyond the economic policy community started to take on some importance, and it was precisely at this point that the Government's actions in
the environmental policy area took on its electoral significance. After all, much of what the Federal Government had done since 1983, and especially in the period of fervent activity and output under Senator Richardson, was based on the view that the environment was one of those issues that appealed to the 'middle ground' of the Australian electorate.

It was at this point that the politics behind Labor's strategic decision to campaign on what it perceived to be its environmental credentials was complicated particularly by developments within the broader 'green' movement itself. Two points need to be stressed here: first, the emergence of a preference wheeling-and-dealing dimension to Australian environmental politics from 1983 up to and including the 1990 election occurred against a backdrop of feeling within the environmental movement ranging from unease to hostility. This unease emanated particularly from activists for whom social movement politics (of which they perceived environmentalism to be an integral part) represented an alternative to the hierarchy and oligarchy usually associated with traditional party politics (see Hutton 1987:22, Pakulski 1991:161, Lawson 1988:17). Thus, secondly, tension emerged within the environment movement, particularly between those participants and activists who viewed 'green' politics as an alternative to mainstream, party politics, and those involved in specific environmental policy struggles, usually via the organisational structures of environmental interest groups.

The significance of these factors lay in their capacity to seriously confuse and complicate the political terrain in the lead-up to the 1990 Federal election. The first major source of complexity lay with the emergence of political parties intending to contest the
election under ‘green’ nomenclature. The rather shambolic nature of the organisational approach of such parties was reflected by, in the case of NSW, a rivalry between ‘green’ parties resulting in the presence of two ‘green’ candidates in number of NSW seats. In Tasmania, green candidates contested three seats, whilst in Western Australia the most organisationally coherent effort by a green-nomenclature party evolved from the WA Greens - a party whose roots lay primarily in the state’s highly active peace and nuclear disarmament movement which had spawned the since-dismantled Nuclear Disarmament Party (NDP). A variety of green candidates also contested Senate positions in Victoria, Queensland, WA and Tasmania. Apart from adding a confusing dimension to the choice available to voters contemplating a ‘green’ vote, the emergence of national green parties placed pressure on the Australian Democrats. Indeed, an ongoing rivalry between the Democrats and the emergent political wing of broadly green political parties for the right to be considered the primary green party and stake a claim to the perceived ‘green’ constituency was a major feature of this period.

The emergence of a movement-oriented green politics as a result of these developments went beyond the ALP’s understanding of ‘green’ which, if the utterances and performance of Senator Richardson were any guide, was a perception influenced primarily by the central role played by interest groups pressuring the government on matters to do with natural environmental protection. A further complication occurred when the main environmental interest groups - particularly the ACF and TWS - were drawn into the politics of this emergent green political wing. Here the distinction between these groups as advocates for policy outcomes in favour of natural environmental preservation and the broader social
movement orientation of these minor green candidates emerged. Interestingly, a similar
distinction between the specific demands of these groups and the Democrats' policy platform
could also have been made - yet the two major environmental groups, in their decision to
conduct a 'Vote for the Environment' campaign, were prepared, in the vast bulk of the lower
house and Senate seats contested, to endorse primary votes for the Australian Democrats.
Significantly, this strategy also included advice to 'environmental' voters on the matter of
preference direction; those wishing to vote for the environment would, under this strategy, be
urged to vote for the Australian Democrats and then cast a preference for the ALP ahead of
the Coalition parties (Warhurst 1990 p.27).

These developments in the pre-election period were of some significance, for they
were to have a major influence on the decision by ALP strategists to actively seek the support
of the perceived environmental constituency by way of a rather unorthodox strategy. Opinion
polling during the campaign period indicated that the ALP had surrendered some voter
support, although the beneficiaries appeared to be the minor party and independent candidates
rather than the Coalition (Sunday Herald 25/3/90 and see Goot 1990). Such information
appeared to indicate that the type of voting pattern discernible in the Tasmanian elections in
the after-math of the Wesley Vale dispute (see table 3.1) had the potential to be repeated at
the national level. In the light of this evidence, and given that the best the ACF-TWS was
advocating was a preference for the ALP ahead of the Coalition, ALP strategists - who,
apparently influenced not only by internal opinion polling but also the advocacy of Senator
Richardson (Australian 28/3/90) - formulated a campaign message for the latter stages of the
campaign period that reflected the ACF-TWS position.
Whilst this message that the ALP as a more environmentally-sensitive party than its conservative opponents was hardly a surprising development, the explicit appeal to those voters who were contemplating voting for the Australian Democrats or for any of the other minor party or independent candidates to give Labor their second preference on the grounds of this environmental policy record was extraordinary for two reasons. First, this strategy amounted to an explicit statement about the legitimacy of the environmental issue upon the national political agenda. Second, and of greater immediate consequence to the election, the 'green voting strategy' had the associated impact of legitimising the candidacy of the Democrats and other minor candidates.

The legitimising impact of the strategy was reflected in the 1990 result in which at least three features were of critical importance. First, one of the most remarkable features of the national result - a comprehensive overview of which is contained in Table 3.2 - was the ability of the ALP to win an absolute majority of HOR seats despite winning one of its lowest levels of primary support ever, and despite winning a minority of the two-party preferred vote (49.9 percent). As the table indicates, this result could be accounted for to some extent by making reference to the significant regional variations in this swing. Notwithstanding this, the fact that, as the opinion polls suggested, parties other than the Coalition were the main beneficiaries of the swings in primary vote constituted the second major critical feature of the result.
Table 3.2: The 1990 Federal Election Result

## House of Representatives by primary vote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>39.4 (78)</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIB</td>
<td>35.0 (55)</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPA</td>
<td>8.4 (14)</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>11.2 (0)</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td>5.8 (1)</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### by swings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>-6.4</td>
<td>-4.1</td>
<td>-9.8</td>
<td>-3.4</td>
<td>-12.2</td>
<td>-6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIB</td>
<td>+0.4</td>
<td>-4.2</td>
<td>+1.7</td>
<td>+7.5</td>
<td>+2.1</td>
<td>+0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPA</td>
<td>-3.1</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td>-12.1</td>
<td>-4.7</td>
<td>-3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>+5.2</td>
<td>+3.9</td>
<td>+5.7</td>
<td>+6.7</td>
<td>+5.0</td>
<td>+7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td>+3.7</td>
<td>+4.8</td>
<td>+2.8</td>
<td>+1.2</td>
<td>+7.1</td>
<td>+2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## The Senate by primary vote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>38.4 (32)</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L/NP</td>
<td>42.0 (34)</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>12.6 (8)</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRN*</td>
<td>3.3 (1)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td>3.8 (1)</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### by swings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>-4.4</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
<td>-7.6</td>
<td>-3.0</td>
<td>-9.3</td>
<td>-4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L/NP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>+3.2</td>
<td>-3.8</td>
<td>+1.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>+4.1</td>
<td>+2.7</td>
<td>+5.7</td>
<td>+5.0</td>
<td>+3.7</td>
<td>+5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRN*</td>
<td>+1.8</td>
<td>+1.4</td>
<td>+0.4</td>
<td>+0.7</td>
<td>+3.6</td>
<td>+1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
<td>+1.2</td>
<td>+0.6</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(source: Australian Electoral Commission, Mackerras 1996
* GRN vote includes Vallentine Group, NDP, WAG, Greens, United Tasmania Group)
As table 3.2 indicates, the 6.4 percent decline in the ALP’s national primary vote was matched by a mere 0.4 percent rise in the Liberal party vote which, in two-party preferred terms, was itself undermined by the 3.1 percent fall in the vote of its coalition partner, the NPA. The data presented in this table indicates where the major movement in primary vote occurred; quite clearly, the electorate in expressing its dissatisfaction with the ALP chose to direct its primary vote towards the minor party and independent candidates before returning to the ALP by way of preference. Clearly a leakage of preferences to the coalition did occur which allowed them to win a 0.9 percent two-party preferred swing. The regional variation in this swing cost the Coalition victory; the gains won by the Liberal party in Victoria (nine seats) and South Australia (one seat) were offset by Coalition losses in Queensland (a net loss of two seats) and northern NSW (two seats).

In amongst this general pattern, the performance of the Australian Democrats particularly, and some of the efforts by candidates contesting under the ‘green’ nomenclature, were prominent - and this raised the third critical, if somewhat problematic feature of this election. As Table 3.2 clearly shows, it was the Australian Democrats who were the primary beneficiaries of a realignment of Labor support. Moreover, the table shows how the Democrat vote improved in the Senate - a result on primary vote that was rewarded with an increased Senate representation which, in turn, gave them the balance of power in the upper house. The notion of the Democrats being the primary beneficiaries in the 1990 contest is further enhanced by comparing the Democrat result with that of the various ‘green’ nomenclature candidates contesting in the HOR - the data of which is contained in Table 3.3.
Table 3.3: Green - Australian Democrat Electoral Performance Compared

Federal Election 1990

**HOR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>'green'</th>
<th>swing</th>
<th>AD</th>
<th>swing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>+2.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>+5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>+2.9</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>+3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>+0.4</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>+5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>+0.6</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>+6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>+9.9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>+5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>+0.3</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>+7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>+3.3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>+2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Senate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>'green'</th>
<th>swing</th>
<th>AD</th>
<th>swing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>+1.3</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>+4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>+1.4</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>+2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>+0.4</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>+5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>+0.7</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>+5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>+3.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>+3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>+1.3</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>+5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>+4.8</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>+1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

source: Australian Electoral Commission

This table shows, firstly, that the performance of 'green' nomenclature candidates was quite variable on a State-by-State basis (partly the result of either a decision to contest a small number of seats or, in the case of NSW, organisational difficulties and the propensity for internecine squabbles to develop between 'green' candidates). Most notable of all the results
in this category was the performance of the WA Greens whose 9.9 percent state-wide vote resulted from contests held in every seat in which there was remarkable uniformity across the state. The Australian Democrats, meanwhile, with a swing of 5.3 percent nationally won sufficient primary vote to displace the NPA as the third-largest primary vote winner, although the demographic dispersal of this vote meant that the party failed to win a lower house seat.9

Whilst these results were in themselves of moderate interest given their indication of a significant realignment of Labor support, their real significance for environmental politics lay in the role these votes played in the determining to outcome of the election on a two-party preferred basis. Arguably the most considered overview of the contribution made by preference flows of parties and candidates categorisable as ‘green’ (and this includes the Australian Democrats) comes from Mackerras who argued that the ‘green’ preference split favoured the ALP by a rate of 69 percent to 31 percent - a result greatly assisted by a national split of Democrat preferences at the rate of 64 to 36 percent. The key point in all of this is provided by Mackerras’ (1993:218) conclusion that:

Labor's second preference strategy was critical to their re-election. In New South Wales, the sitting National Party members for Page and Richmond were leading Labor on first preferences, but Labor won each seat because of a strong flow of Democrat and green independent preferences. In Victoria and Western Australia Labor sitting members were trailing Liberal candidates on the primary vote in Jagajaga, Melbourne Ports, Canning, Cowan and Stirling, but held their seats of Democrat and green independent preferences.

The complicity of these parties and candidates in the re-election of the ALP despite the swings against it on primary vote and despite the 0.9 percent two-party preferred swing constituted the third major legacy of the 1990 election simply by seeming to concur with Labor's experience of the re-aligning effect of the environment issue in Tasmania and by
apparently concurring with the Richardson predication of how the election would be
determined. These themes were reinforced by former members of Senator Richardson's
advisory staff10, and by a submission from the ACF-TWS. This paper, in assessing the impact
of the ‘Vote for the Environment’ campaign on specifically targeted HOR seats, argued that

[i]n targeted seats the campaign added 2.5 percent to the Democrat and
Independent vote and increased the proportion of such votes giving preference
to the ALP to 70 percent (compared with the national average of 60 percent);
in [the marginal Queensland seat of] Moreton the campaign was the deciding
factor in winning the seat for the ALP. In Fisher, the campaign moved the seat
from a knife-edge balance to a more comfortable margin for the ALP. In
Phillip, the campaign doubled the swing to the ALP’s Jeanette McHugh; in the
Senate, Democrat or Green candidates will be elected in every state. (Lambert
and Lambert 1990:1)

The argument presented by Lambert and Lambert that the ALP had benefited from the
support given to it by the chief environmental interest groups also resonated from within the
ALP. Certainly there were some Labor members like Jeanette McHugh (Phillip, NSW) and
the Deputy Speaker Ron Edwards (who won his West Australian seat of Stirling by a mere
243 votes courtesy of WA Green and Australian Democrat preferences) who concurred with
Senator Richardson's claim that Labor owed its electoral survival to its ‘environmental’
strategy (Australian 28/3/90). The government was also provided with an analysis of the
impact of environmental issues on the 1990 election undertaken by one of Senator
Richardson's ministerial advisers that echoed the Lambert and Lambert findings (see
Australian 20/9/90, Age 30/3/90).11 The emergence of these analyses, and the argument that
they were presenting - specifically, that the environmental interest groups had fulfilled their
side of the agreement that had underpinned the Labor Government's preparedness to make
environment-protection policies, and that Labor had benefited directly as a result - was of

150
political significance for two reasons. First, these sorts of arguments became the catalyst for a revision of the electoral consequences of Labor's relationship with the environmental movement that suggested that, far from securing the election, the flirtation with 'greens' had precipitated a collapse in Labor's primary vote to dangerously low levels. Thus whilst McHugh and Edwards might have seen 'green' voting as their salvation, defeated Labor MPs from the provincial Victorian provincial seats of McMillan and McEwen placed the blame for their loss with the party's environment policy (Australian 4/9/90).

Second, the whole question of the extent to which the environment - and, more particularly, the Richardson strategy of appealing for the preferences of third-party voters - influenced Labor's fortunes in the 1990 Federal election was inextricably linked with perceptions about the power and influence of the Environment Minister. This, in turn, fed into the ongoing divisions within Cabinet over land-use and resource policy issues in which were to be found competing environmentalist claims. As the case studies presented in the previous chapters have constantly noted, the quantum increase in the scope and preservationist orientation of land-use and resource policy decisions from 1988 coincided with Senator Richardson's tenure as environment minister. These decisions were clearly predicated on Senator Richardson's view that environmental protection was one of those key 'middle of the road' issues of importance to the very type of electorate that 'catch-all' Labor was trying to secure.

Many of these decisions were made despite the existence of significant opposition from within the Cabinet, and environmental debates became one of the major sources of
division. In a very real sense, Senator Richardson had undertaken a politically risky exercise in pursuing an issue capable of dividing not only the Cabinet but also one of Labor's major interest constituencies in the trade union movement (see *Sydney Morning Herald* 20/6/89). Moreover, if Seigmann's (1985:7-8) argument that the environment represents a middle-class issue whose pursuit has the potential to alienate blue-collar or working class sympathy is applied, the Richardson strategy also ran the risk of alienating Labor's core electoral constituency. In the light of these potential dangers, and given that his own prestige as a minister and political tactician was at stake, the release of reports particularly from his own staff had with them a very strong sense of self-justification.

3.5: Conclusion and overview: crisis-orientation as pretext to institutionalisation - the Richardson legacy

The significance of the crisis-oriented period of the Hawke Government's response to the environmental issue - a period that coincided with Senator Richardson's tenure as Environment Minister - was twofold; first, the crisis-oriented period was one in which the environment issue became firmly entrenched in the national political debate. Major environmental disputes, ranging from conflicts over significant land areas to localised concerns about the environmental impact of major industrial development, were a recurring feature of land-use debates in the Hawke Government between Senator Richardson's ascendancy to the environment portfolio, and the conclusion of the Wesley Vale pulp mill dispute. Associated with this unprecedented rate at which the environment figured as a major
national policy issue was the consolidation of the co-operative relationship between the core environmental interest groups and the Hawke Government - a development whose significance was to emerge particularly during the 1990 Federal election. Under Senator Richardson's stewardship of the environment debate, the Hawke Government had taken on something of a verdant hue, particularly where the creation of conservation-oriented decisions appeared to dovetail with electoral strategies that were designed to exploit the outward manifestation of co-operative Labor-environmental relations. For all its controversy (and, on occasions, strain and tension between the Federal Government and the environmental movement over particular disputes), the crisis-orientation period was so significant precisely because this was the time at which some of the most significant conservation-oriented land-use decisions were made. Certainly the environmental movement realised hitherto unexperienced success in achieving some of its major land-use agenda items.

Herein lay the second important legacy of the period. In addition to raising environmentalist expectations of that which could be achieved by exerting pressure on the Federal Labor Government, the crisis-oriented style of Senator Richardson's approach precipitated concern amongst pro-development actors in the field that the 'green lobby' was beginning to exert some dominance in land-use debates. Certainly the fate of the Wesley Vale pulp mill project - which had commenced with bilateral approval from both the Commonwealth and the Tasmanian Government - had done much to highlight some fundamental problems in the way environmental considerations were to be applied to industry policy. The consistency with which neither the Tasmanian nor Federal governments could co-ordinate their approach to environmental guidelines had highlighted the problem of
administrative coordination in a federal system (Chapman 1988; Galligan 1991). The complete failure of the NNBH EIS drew attention to the deficiencies of the Australian approach to EIAs (see Formby 1989; Buckley 1990:2). The rather short-term and ad hoc arrangement underpinning the Hawke Cabinet's decision on Wesley Vale drew criticism from environmentalists who wished to see a more comprehensive approach to incorporating ecological inputs to decision-making, whilst the ACTU expressed its anger at the apparent loss of an employment-generating manufacturing project (Age 8/3/89; Australian 15/2/89).

But perhaps of even greater significance was the concern being generated within the Government itself about the apparently short-term, ad hoc, and anti-development direction land-use and resource policy-making was taking during this period of environmentalist ascendancy. Deliberations over Wesley Vale revealed the emergence of a pro-development block within the Hawke Cabinet who sought to maintain the project's momentum in the midst of Senator Richardson's manoeuvring on this matter (see Bulletin 10/1/89) - a significant source of division within a Cabinet otherwise considered to be quite functional (see Campbell and Halligan 1992:20-30; Weller 1990:25-26). These Ministers (their Departments, and the industry clientele associated with them) considered the Wesley Vale outcome as a defeat for rational decision-making. The imperative to address the nation's balance of payments deficit, and to put long-term, comprehensive industry policy in place was viewed by the pro-development block within Cabinet as being more important than the short-term (usually electorally expedient) objectives being pursued by Senator Richardson.
Likewise, Prime Minister Hawke himself was developing an interest in trying to bring consensus politics to Federal-State relations (see EPAC 1990; Galligan 1993:292), and the recurrence of land-use disputes that precipitated Commonwealth intervention to achieve conservation-oriented outcomes exacerbated Federal-State tensions (see Painter 1988; Chapman 1990). Thus emerged the pretext for a change in governmental thinking on the environmental issue, based on an overarching view that conservation-oriented outcomes were increasingly the product of short-term politics, where maintenance of the Labor-environmental relationship in the name of electoral expediency appeared to be a primary consideration. Accepting that the environment was now a major issue, the pro-development block in Cabinet desired a qualitative change in the nature of the debate. In particular, these ministers desired a decision-making approach based on rational, economics-oriented analysis, and on seeking ways in which developer interests might be able to impact on the Cabinet in ways commensurate with the environmental interest groups.

The crisis-oriented period, dominated as it was by the approach of Senator Richardson as Environment Minister, was an important part of the evolution of Labor’s approach to national environmental politics. Not only was this the period in which the Labor-environmental relationship was re-confirmed and reinforced through a series of conservation-oriented outcomes, it was also a period that would significantly shape the subsequent phase in Labor’s approach to the issue - a period in which institutional design and innovation would figure prominently in the Hawke Government’s attempt to alter the nature and direction of the national debate. Up until the 1990 Federal election, national environmental politics under the Hawke Government had been dominated by specific issues. After the Wesley Vale pulp mill
dispute in particular, interest in shifting the debate away from its preoccupation with specific issues emerged from within the government. This would, in turn, set the context for the next phase in Labor’s approach to the issue - and approach that would be dominated by processes by which broader ecological concepts could be applied to a range of policy arenas, rather than by concerns to protect a particular forest, or prevent a particular industrial project.

1. In the context of Tasmanian politics which, as Sharman (1977) has argued, is profoundly influenced by regional parochialism, a major local controversy arose as it became clear that, without an increase in the harvest quota, the new pulp-mill venture in the State’s north (an electoral heartland for the governing Liberal party) would occur at the expense of the southern manifestations of the industry.

2. The National Government was in the process of terminal decline as a result of the effects of the Johfor-PM campaign.

3. Controversy over the NNBH EIS commenced when the TFIC, TFGA and CROPS argued that the study failed to adequately address the matter of effluent disposal. The release of the NNBH EIS, far from assuaging local concerns about the environmental impact of the mill, or even legitimising the company’s claims to competency in environmental engineering, rapidly became a major source of controversy that soon unravelled even the unanimity of support for the project within both levels of government. The EIS catalogued a list of environmental consequences from the chlorine-based pulp milling process that became a source of concern particularly for the producer groups who had expressed their disquiet when the Government abandoned administrative appeals rights. Of all the impacts - visual, atmospheric, the implications for the raw resource stock, and so on - the issue that suddenly emerged as the project’s Achilles heel related to the liquid wastes produced by the chemical bleaching process to be used at the proposed mill. The EIS discussed ways in which the resultant effluent would be treated through a combined process of condensing and then burning off residues, and biologically treating other waste waters to reduce the level of organo-chlorine deposits before discharging the treated waste via a 2.5 km outfall sewer into Bass Strait (see Tasmania 1989b:15-20). These proposals alarmed two producer groups in particular; the TFGA declared its total opposition to the mill on the grounds that atmospheric discharges of sulphur dioxide could pollute surrounding farm land with disastrous results for the local vegetable, dairying and meat industries (Tasmanian Country 21/10/1988). In the meantime, the Tasmanian Fishing Industry Council (TFIC) announced its ‘vehement opposition’ to the project on the grounds that the dumping of ‘toxic waste’ into Bass Strait would adversely affect the industry’s reputation as a producer of ‘clean’ fisheries (Examiner 13/10/1988).

4. Ms Milne’s rise to prominence paralleled that of Dr Bob Brown in the Lake Pedder and Franklin River disputes. Indeed, Ms Milne was to win a seat to the Tasmanian House of Assembly and become leader of Tasmania’s ‘green-independents’.

5. Interviews with Mr Michael Heatley, Tasmanian Conservation Trust, Canberra 7 April 1991; Mr Alec Marr, The Wilderness Society, Canberra 3 September 1993; Mr Phillip Hoystead, adviser to Ms Ros Kelly, formerly Tasmanian Conservation Trust, Canberra 3 September 1993; Mr Mark O’Neil, adviser
to Ms Ros Kelly, formerly East Gippsland Coalition, Canberra 3 September 1993; Mr Peter Matthew's, adviser to Ms Ros Kelly, formerly Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra 3 September 1993.

6. The rise and fall of the NDP from its origins in 1984 through to attempts by the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) to infiltrate the party are covered in Quiggley (1986).

7. The 39.4 percent won by the ALP in 1990 was a post-war record low. The other comparable results occurred in 1977 when the ALP won 39.6 percent of the primary vote for 38 HOR seats, and 1966 when 40 percent of the primary vote returned 41 lower house seats.

8. This was particularly in evidence in NSW where, according to the AEC, some seats were contested by two 'green' candidates.

9. Winning lower house representation was a major part of the Australian Democrats' 1990 election strategy, and this was nowhere more clearly in evidence than in the decision of the then leader of the party, Janine Haines, to resign her Senate seat to contest the lower house seat of Kingston (SA). This effort failed, however. The closest the Australian Democrats came to winning a seat was in the NSW seat of Cunningham in which the Democrats' Meg Sampson won 13.6 percent of the primary vote, but on a two-party preferred basis came within 2.5 percent of winning the seat from Labor.

10. The key person providing the analysis backing up Richardson's claim that the environment had delivered key marginal seats, and hence the election, to Labor was Simon Balderstone. Balderstone had been an journalist with The Age and was later a publicity officer with the ACF before being co-opted into Graham Richardson's advisory staff. Balderstone later transferred to the advisory staff of Prime Minister Hawke.

11. The report on the impact of the environmental issue on Labor's re-election was authored by Simon Balderstone formerly of Graham Richardson's staff but, at the time of writing the report, and advisor in Bob Hawke's office. In his commentary on Labor's relationship with the 'green vote', Milne reports that Balderstone cited 10 seats that were won by Labor on the basis of 'green' preferences, including Cowan, Canning and Stirling (WA), Page and Richmond (NSW), Moreton, Fisher and Kennedy (Queensland) and Melbourne Ports and Jaga Jaga (Victoria). Milne concurs with this view by pointing to the abnormally high rate of Australian Democrat and 'green' candidate preference split towards the ALP - essentially a repeat of the Mackerras argument that parties from the 'green' side of the political spectrum assisted Labor in winning a large number of seats on preferences in seats in which, on the count of primary votes, the Liberal party had been ahead.
A new era of national environmental politics emerged after 1990 that was based on a much longer-term perspective. It involved the bringing together of adversarial interest groups in a bid to find common ground on which long-term land and resource-use decisions might be made, and which displaced the primary role specific land-use disputes were having in the national debate - in short, a transformed debate. Whereas in the previous period the national environmental debate had been dominated by specific land-use disputes to which the Hawke Government had responded with short-term decisions based on immediate political considerations (including the likely electoral legacy of a given decision), the new era of national environmental politics - where the Labor Government sought to manage what had now become a highly politicised and controversial debate - addressed matters such as how ecological perspectives could be included in the processes by which government makes land-use policy decisions, what government meant by the concept of ‘ecologically sustainable
development’, and how land-use decisions could be made that might satisfy both environmentalist and developer demands.

The design of new government-created agencies capable of undertaking this type of debate and seeking to mediate hitherto adversarial interest groups, and the reform of existing agencies that had responsibility for national environmental policy matters, was central to this qualitative shift in the nature and direction of the national debate. Three agencies in particular were to figure in the Hawke Government’s effort to recast the national debate, including the AHC (whose operational approach to investigating the National Estate value of disputed land areas was to be reformed), the ESD Working Groups (who would work on the question of how ecological sustainability and development might be reconciled), and the RAC (the primary agency to seek to bring the various elements of the resource debate together in order to provide Government with the best quality information on which land-use and resource policy could be made (Kerin 1990:20)). Shifting the national environmental debate away from its previous dynamic in which developer and environmental interests would battle with each other over specific land-areas, and in which the Government’s actions contributed to the controversy, was a major objective in this reform. Instead, the Hawke Government sought to institute a debate concentrating on broader concepts contained within government-controlled forums and agencies in which inter-interest group mediation was the preferred approach. In short, the Hawke Government sought to apply an institutional fix to the political problems that had emerged from the way in which environmental matters had been dealt with under the crisis-oriented approach.
The origins of this move to transform the debate lay in the way environmental politics had been played out since the replacement of Mr Cohen by Senator Richardson as Environment Minister. The division of the Hawke Cabinet into pro-development and pro-environment blocks was an important legacy of this period. It will be argued in this chapter that the move to transform the environmental debate reflected the desire of the pro-development Ministers to re-establish their influence and the pro-development agendas of their Departments (and their clientele interest groups) over those policy debates to which the environment was relevant. In a very real sense, the attempt by Senator Richardson’s colleagues to re-assert themselves in the face of the Environment Minister’s influence over events (including his relationship with the Prime Minister, his role in the Wesley Vale dispute, and his contribution to Labor’s ‘green’ strategy in the 1990 Federal election) provided an important dynamic in the Hawke Government’s move to transform the national debate. Interestingly, the ministers who embraced the idea of an institutional remedy to what they saw as excessive environmentalist hegemony over the land-use debate were able to obtain support not only from developer interests, but also from some within the environmental movement. The demand for improved environmentalist access to the institutionalised decision-making process had been a long-standing item on the environmentalist agenda (Toyne 1989; Davis 1985; Saddler et.al. 1980:68-70).

This chapter traces a critical moment in Australian environmental politics during the Labor period. It charts the major qualitative shift in the debate away from specific land-use
disputes to embrace, instead, the notion of a government-directed long-term debate about incorporating ecological values into decision-making, and - of equal political significance given their role in the specific land-use disputes - bringing the protagonist environmental and developer interest groups into a policy-discussion process from which political consensus on previously controversial matters could emerge. In short, this period was one in which the Hawke Government attempted to apply neo-corporatist principles to national environmental policy-making. This approach partly reflected the realisation that the shortcomings present in the creation of national policy in this field (many of which were being exposed by the Wesley Vale dispute) needed to be addressed. It also reflected an important political reality: specifically, that the Hawke Government generally, and the pro-development ministers in particular, wanted to reassert political control over a debate that seemed to be overly influenced by the environmental movement.

This chapter commences by examining the politics of reform to the AHC that, it will be argued here, acted as a harbinger of a more ambitious attempt at recasting of the national debate generally. The case of the AHC is also significant for what it reveals of the political dynamics of this reform process, to which a power struggle between Senator Richardson and the pro-development Ministers was central. It then examines the politics behind the origins of the ESD Working Groups and the formation of the RAC - where, in both cases, very similar political dynamics are noted. As with the previous phases in the Hawke Government’s approach to environmental matters, this period in which the debate moved from specific disputation to become subjected to bureaucratically-oriented debates about the long-term
incorporation of ecological values in policy-making generally was an evolutionary one. The fact that the critical dynamics of this debate were being played out within the Government was very important. It indicated that a change to environmental policy politics was underway in which the Government, rather than the interest groups from the environmental movement would become the dominant actor in the process.

4.1: Origins of environmental politics in transition: from issues to process

Between 1988 and the 1990 Federal election, the DASETTR and its minister, Senator Richardson, were at the forefront of a spate of activity that saw the environment emerge as a major national policy issue. In the face of this, the main impetus for changing the form and nature of the environment debate as an expression of concern at the consequences of the Richardson approach came from the development-oriented departments. Indeed, much important work on formulating concepts such as ‘Ecologically Sustainable Development’ (ESD) as an argument in favour of the proposition that development, economic growth and environmental protection could and should be reconciled, and in planning for the Resource Assessment Commission (RAC) emanated from the DPIE with the active support of its ‘super’ Minister, John Kerin. The mining and forestry industries, who perceived their interests to be particularly vulnerable to what they perceived to be a rampant environmentalist opposition, supported the Department's interest in seeking ways in which the politics of short-
term decision-making could be curbed. The interest of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) in these matters was indicative of a slightly different set of political objectives at work in the political outlook of this important department and the Prime Minister himself. If the DPIE and its developer-oriented clientele were seeking means by which the political influence of the environmental movement could be curbed, the Prime Minister's main objective was clearly one motivated by a desire to bring the certainty and stability of consensus politics to this extraordinarily complex and conflict-ridden policy area.

Whilst the political climate following the Wesley Vale dispute provided the context within which this attempt to reform the process could occur, an even earlier attempt at addressing the politics of process in national environmental policy-making involving the Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) had occurred in 1986. This moment in the AHC's history was of significance for three reasons: first, by virtue of its role as one of the few Federal agencies operating in the area of aggregating and analysing areas of natural environment subjected to applications for classification under the title of 'National Estate' (see Australia 1974b), the AHC was inevitably drawn into the dynamics of national environmental policy-making. As section 30 of its enabling Act put it:

Before a Minister, a Department or an authority of Australia takes any action that might affect, to a significant extent as part of the national estate, a place that is on the Register, the Minister, Department or authority, as the case may be, shall inform the Commission of the [proposed action] and give the Commission a reasonable opportunity to consider it. (Australia 1975:613)

Whilst the constitutional authority of the Act's requirements were really confined to Federal agencies, the politics of the environmental debate were such that the AHC represented one of
the few institutional gateways into the land-use decision-making process for non-material values and inputs. Thus, as the previous case studies into the politics of the battle over the national natural environmental estate have shown, the AHC loomed large in environmentalist manoeuvrings with governmental and developer interests and the requirement that the Federal Minister seek ‘prudent and feasible’ alternatives to disturbing registered sites or areas of the National Estate outlined in Subsection 1 of Section 30 of the Act.

Second, as a result of the political reality of the role section 30 of the Act played as a gateway for non-material inputs, the AHC had, since its inception under the Whitlam Government in 1975, repeatedly been the subject of administrative reviews, partly as a response to pressures emanating from developer interests aggrieved by the ability of the Commission to interfere in the land-use realm. These reviews up to and including the one initiated by the Labor Government in 1985 all had in common the implicit recognition that procedural politics could have significant consequences. As a result, the AHC's own procedures had the capacity to frustrate pro-development land use decisions, as well as precipitating conflict between the governmental agency and developer interests, and between the Commonwealth and the States over land-use matters. Finally, the 1985 inquiry was of great interest because, quite simply, it took some three years to be finalised and, by the time the final report was published, the political environment had changed so fundamentally that, far from leading to a circumscribing of the Commission’s influence, the Minister to whom the report was delivered - none other than Senator Richardson - was able to selectively apply those critical findings that provided the basis for an increase in resources for the AHC.
The story behind the AHC review is important not only for the legacy it left with regard to the way in which the Commission itself perceived its role and function, and how the Commission undertook to reform its approach to dealing with heritage listing, but also for that which it indicated about the general themes present in environmental policy politics at this time (see Rosauer 1993). Notwithstanding the constitutional questions regarding the power of Federal actors in land-use matters, the AHC was clearly one major agency whose activities had some political utility particularly for the environmental movement's political objectives. Partly as a consequence of this the Commission was enjoined in land-use disputes as a consequence of its obligation to assess the estate value of the natural, built and indigenous peoples' environments. Additionally, the Commonwealth's entry into the UNESCO covenant on World Heritage protection had the effect of giving additional importance to the deliberations of the AHC. Once again, in the absence of any other agency, and by virtue of the effective monopolisation of evaluative skills by State agencies, the AHC stood out as the major Federal agency capable of contributing the intelligence necessary to evaluate the case for or against such heritage listing.

The way in which the process of registering 'the National Estate' had become highly politicised in the adversarial climate that dominated land-use politics was, to the frustration of AHC personnel, nowhere more comprehensively displayed than in the reactions of developers, environmentalists and government to AHC recommendations in favour of listing
sites or placing them on the ‘interim register’. According to the Act, protection of the National Estate occurs where:

Each minister shall give such directions and do all such things as ... can be given or done by him for ensuring that the Department administered by him or any authority of Australia ... does not take any action that adversely affects, as part of the national estate, a place that is on the Register unless he is satisfied that there is no feasible or prudent alternative to the taking of that action ...
(Australia 1975:612)

This section clearly makes no reference to any absolute power held by the Commonwealth to prevent the utilisation and/or development of areas placed on the AHC register. Yet, in the political environment that had developed particularly in the wake of the Franklin dam dispute, the notion of ‘National Estate’ listing carried with it the connotation that such registered places were sacrosanct to the point that they should be left untouched. Whilst the AHC itself was at pains to point out that this was not in fact the case, environmental interest groups often saw the extension of AHC registration of disputed areas as an important first political step in their preservationist campaigns. On the other hand, developer interests, operating in the same political environment, began to perceive National Estate listing as being ipso facto a denial of access.

In 1985, clearly as a result of the political pressures brought to bear as a result of the dispute over Queensland wet tropics, developer interest groups pressed the Federal Government to undertake an investigation into the operation of the AHC (Galvin 1990:111). The review's terms of reference basically reflected the substance of the complaints made about the Commission by developers and the various State Governments. Much of these critical perspectives derived from developer perceptions of an excessive AHC influence on
land-use determinations by virtue of Section 30 of its Act. They centred on lack of certainty over the implications of heritage listings and concerns about the way in which the Commission undertook its investigations. Critics had accused the process of being insufficiently open to external scrutiny, and that there had been excessive Federal interference in State affairs. There were also concerns about the exclusion of economic considerations as part of the AHC's evaluative criteria, and over the delays in the Commission actually getting around to investigating matters drawn to its attention (AHC 1991:2-3).

The report handed down by DAHE rejected many of these criticisms, arguing that

among the more controversial are the possibilities for greater Ministerial control, State and local government veto powers and the inclusion of other national estate criteria (for example, economic significance) in the registration process. In rejecting these proposals, the report argues that each emanates from a fundamental misunderstanding of the concept of the register as envisaged by the Hope Committee in 1974 and as endorsed by all political parties since that time. (DAHE 1986:viii)

Of criticism levelled at the AHC, the DAHE review concurred with developer claims that the delays between reference of investigations to the AHC and the completion of final reports were too long and, consequently, undesirable. Interestingly, this finding, in turn, became the basis for a ministerial decision that expanded, rather than diminished, the Commission.

According to the review, the major problem confronting the Commission lay in its poverty of human resources capable of carrying out ever more complex investigative tasks. The review also cited the lack of resources as a major source of poor relations between the AHC and the developer community. The review found that such poor relations stemmed from a mistaken view of the AHC's operation held by developers who (wrongly) perceived heritage listing to

167
mean that development could not go ahead. Taking these two issues into account, the review called on the minister to increase the AHC's human resources to reduce investigative delays, and to commit more funding to the Commission to undertake an educational programme to permit greater awareness and knowledge of the Commission's activities (DAHE 1986:128-129).

Ministerial action on this review did not occur until after 1988, and then the outcomes were clearly influenced by the fact that the presiding minister was Senator Richardson. The first legacy of the review manifested itself in the amendment of the Commission's act. These amendments centred around changes to the Commission's modus operandi with respect to National Estate listings. Here the changes reflected some of the concerns of the AHC's critics by providing clearer guidelines on what constitutes 'National Estate', by opening up more avenues for local government participation, and providing greater scope for objections to be lodged. Further, the amendments sought to make the AHC's deliberative processes more open to public scrutiny (see DAHE 1986; AHC 1991). The second major legacy lay in the areas of resourcing the AHC. If developer interest-group intentions in pressing for a review were initially based on a desire to see the Commission's presence in the evaluative processes constrained, the outcome under Senator Richardson's administration represented a strategic victory for the Commission, as the increase in resources now allowed the Commission to undertake more analyses.
Though this outcome in the area of resourcing appeared to be a further manifestation of the ascendancy of the environmentalist side of the bureaucratic equation, there is evidence to suggest that the 1988 review had a much more profound impact on the perception of the AHC's approach to land-use matters within the Commission itself. Whilst the Commission had been the subject of developer interest-group disquiet during the period in which Mr Cohen was environment minister, the vehemence of this criticism underwent a quantum leap during the Richardson Ministership. Indeed, much of this opposition focussed itself on the incumbent chairman, Mr Pat Galvin, who was viewed by developer interests as being far too closely aligned with environmental advocates (Galvin 1990:114). Whilst this criticism of the Chairman was rejected by the Commission, it is clear that the issue of perceptions - particularly the view of the AHC being a tool of the ‘environment lobby’ - emerged as a matter of concern for the AHC in the post-review period. The Commission was also wary of the implications for its political relationship to other bureaucratic institutions and the Cabinet stemming from this popular perception. In the post-review period, the AHC began to look at ways in which it could address these problems and, in a telling development, process became the basis of internal reform.

The Commission's own reform approach lay in developing what it called ‘regional assessment’ which the new AHC chairman Mr Tony Fitzgerald QC (who replaced the retiring Pat Galvin in November 1990) described as

...regional assessment of forests in order to determine their natural and cultural values and the extent to which those values are protected in any applicable State or Territory nature conservation reserve system and to agree upon the
management practices to be adopted in areas outside the reserve system by the appropriate State or Territory agency. (AHC 1991:4)

This new process was aimed at addressing four political considerations: first, the Commission wished to move away from being asked to look at National Estate listings in a piecemeal fashion. Rather than looking at small parcels of land, the Commission clearly wished to be able to look at contested sites in their regional totality, thereby converting the registration process from an *ad hoc* to a more comprehensive process. Second, the AHC reasoned that a move away from piecemeal to comprehensive assessment would depoliticise the whole concept of ‘National Estate listing’ by allowing the Commission time and space to explain that such listing did not necessarily mean that development could not go ahead. Third, the Commission clearly wished to move away from the emergence of conflict between itself and concomitant State-based agencies. Finally, the Commission believed that, in order to ensure its long-term survival in the milieu of national bureaucratic politics, the Commission had to break down this notion of a nexus between itself and the environmental movement. It is indeed noteworthy that environmental groups comprised the greatest critics of the AHC's utilisation of ‘regional assessment’ (Rosauer 1993:29-33).

This important change in the AHC's method of operation is of interest for three significant reasons. First, any change to the Commission's activities in the area of National Estate evaluation had significant implications for the politics of national environmental policy-making simply because the Commission was such an important yet solitary institution in national land-use decision-making. Certainly the AHC's ability to declare areas of natural environment as integral parts of the ‘National Estate’ gave it a particular amount of political
importance in the national land-use debate, given that the bestowing of such a status was an essential ingredient in the process by which localised land-use disputes became debates over the sanctity of the national cultural, scientific and environmental estate.

Second, the emergence of process and procedure as areas in which the AHC's operation in land-use decision-making could be reformed represented something of a harbinger of the way in which the national environmental debate would proceed particularly in the post-1990 Federal election period. This new direction in environmental politics was to be one in which matters of process would predominate in order to achieve order, stability and fulsome evaluation in the decision-making process. The AHC's internal decision to pursue 'regional assessment' pre-empted the approach that the government would attempt to institute in the form of some other, newer policy-evaluating institutions.

Finally, the fact that the momentum towards a process-oriented reform of the AHC's role in the land-use decision-making process was greatest within the Commission itself was highly suggestive of an important new dynamic emerging in the politics of national environmental policy-making. In this dynamic, the bureaucracy itself was playing an important role. This was an indication of the way in which this agency and some other departments - most notably, the DPIE - were also considering the importance of procedure and casting a longer-term view towards environmental policy-making than had been demonstrated under the Richardson crisis initiation/management model. The fact that the AHC had been dealing with the environmental issue as a quasi-technical phenomenon simply
contributed more to the tendency of policy-makers at this bureaucratic level to be concerned with the long-term difficulties of attempting to balance competing land-use demands with scientific and technical approaches to decision-making - an almost antithetical approach to that of the essentially pragmatic and election-driven approach of Senator Richardson and some within his advisory staff. The AHC developments, then, indicated that, at the bureaucratic level at least, interest in altering, if not reforming, environmental policy-making was homing in on processes, and the way in which complex, often contradictory value-inputs could be incorporated into a decision-making process geared not to the next electoral cycle, but rather towards the medium- to long-term.

The interest in the capacity for evaluation processes to deliver greater certainty, to reduce the prevailing environment of political conflict, and to deny the ability of one or a small number of interests to exercise excessive influence over the decision-making process thus emerged as an important theme. The Wesley Vale pulp mill dispute in particular made two things abundantly clear to those for whom process would emerge as the key issue in this debate. First, the way in which the dispute had transpired indicated that the dynamics of land-use and resource policy were still essentially based on short-term perspectives, were motivated by reaction (particularly where politicians were reacting to perceptions of electoral consequences stemming from particular decisions), and were overly dominated by the ability of interest groups to run reactive campaigns in response to particular decisions. In other words, so many factors contributed to the fragmentary approach of Federal actors. These included the problems associated with federalism (including the uncertainty over the division
of powers, the propensity for state political actors to jealously guard their sovereignty over land-use and resource matters, and the lack of expertise of Federal bureaucratic institutions vis a vis their state counterparts), the rising ability of environmental interest groups to run effective opposition campaigns and the capacity for the land-use dispute to divide the Cabinet and Caucus.

Second, and arguably of greatest significance, the fact that, despite the experience of State and Federal governments since the Lake Pedder dispute in the 1960s, policy-evaluation processes at both the Federal and State level were failing to consider environmental value-inputs to decision-making in anything other than a reactive way was clearly emerging as a major short-coming in the decision-making processes. Nowhere had this been more painfully obvious than in the debacle that had ensued in the Wesley Vale debate with respect to the environmental operational guidelines. As the previous chapter indicated, neither the Tasmanian nor the Federal Governments had a clear idea of what it was they expected of developers with regards to the emergent rhetoric of the need to balance development with environmental sensitivity. This episode served to reinforce the view, held particularly by pro-development interests both within and outside of the Cabinet, that the environmental movement's ability to influence the land-use debate by referring to 'emotive' arguments based on aesthetics had occurred at the expense of hard economic and scientific analysis (*Business Review Weekly* 16/12/88; NAFI 1990:10-12). In the politics of recasting the way in which land-use decisions would be made in the future, those advocating reform of the process desired a concept that could articulate the idea of a coexistence of development and
environmental protection, and of a process that could displace the debate on aesthetics and non-material values with a more comprehensive evaluative process to which economic analysis would be included.

Once again, the experience of the Tasmania debate in the immediate aftermath of the Wesley Vale dispute acted as something of a portent for what would happen federally. The Tasmanian Parliamentary Accord had two extremely significant consequences for Tasmanian politics that were also to impact nationally. First, the establishment of the Parliamentary Accord signalled an important watershed in Tasmanian environmental politics in which the traditional dynamics of land-use politics were reversed. Up until the coming of the Accord, and some of the important institutional arrangements to later emerge under its auspices (Hay 1993), Tasmanian land-use politics had been remarkable for the failure of the State's institutionalised decision-making process to proactively and effectively incorporate non-material value-inputs to the decision-making process. Now, under the auspices of the Tasmanian Parliamentary Accord and subsequent consultative arrangements, developers environmental groups and government actors were brought together in a bid to make proactive, consensual decisions. Given the Commonwealth's own developing interest in process and consensual decision-making as a preferred alternative to short-term decision-making, this major development within Tasmanian politics was extremely timely. The post-Tasmanian Accord period, by returning the politics of land-use back to the institutions of the State, in fact provided an important degree of political space within which the
Commonwealth was able to pursue its own agenda of procedural reform of environmental policy-making.

Second, the form and nature of the land-use decision-making reform undertaken under the auspices of the Tasmanian Parliamentary Accord (particularly, the so-called ‘Salamanca Process’ which emerged from the consultative culture spawned by the Accord (Larmour 1990:67-69)) stood as a harbinger of the type of procedural reform underpinning the thinking of Federal political and administrative actors. The Salamanca Process involved a series of round-table discussions and negotiations between the major interest-group actors such as the Forest Industries Association of Tasmania (FIAT), ACF, TWS, the Trades and Labour Council and, indeed, the TFIC and the TFGA who had all been politicised by the spate of resource issues confronting Tasmania in the post-Franklin dam period. The process led eventually to the ‘Salamanca Agreement, which emerged, as Sandford has argued:

[from forest management] discussions, and supported by the Labor/Green Accord, the Salamanca Agreement emerged on 31 August 1989. It was seen as a breakthrough in the deadlock over forest management in Tasmania ... The Salamanca Agreement bound all parties to work together for twelve months to develop a long term strategy for forest management in Tasmania. The Salamanca Agreement was intended as an interim measure pending the development of final Forest and Forest Industry Strategy by 1 September 1990. (Sandford 1993:129)

Governmental convening and management of a forum for inter-interest group participation seeking the creation of long-term strategies and statements based on dialogue, negotiation and, hopefully, consensus as a means of moving away from the problematic decision-making procedures of the past were clearly the key features of this reformed decision-making process. Whilst no evidence exists to suggest that it was used as a model for the Commonwealth, the
Salamanca Process was indicative of the process-oriented approach that dominated the reforming perspective of protagonists and institutional actors involved in land-use politics at this time. Moreover, some of the interest groups, and, indeed, personnel, involved in the Salamanca Process were also involved in national environmental politics. The transition in Tasmanian land-use politics that occurred in the aftermath of the election, the Accord and the Salamanca Process set the context for attempts at similar reform at the national level.

In the meantime, whilst so much of the politics of the Tasmanian election were a reflection of the peculiarities and uniqueness of the Tasmanian political culture, the incidents that occurred between the termination of the Wesley Vale pulp mill and the State election had other important direct and indirect ramifications for the broader context of national politics - a factor confirmed by media reports of national political actors closely monitoring the Tasmanian situation and agreeing that the national political landscape would be altered as a result (Australian 15/5/89). This occurred through the design of new Federal forums that could allow for a very different style of environmental debate to emerge. Partly as a result of the high value it placed on the notion of ‘consensus politics’, and partly in response to the problems the environmental issue was causing it, the Hawke Government became very interested in seeking ways to improve land-use policy decision-making. It did so by utilising a concept - Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) - that provided scope for hitherto antagonistic interest groups to find some common ground as a basis for co-operative rather than conflictual relations. It also sought to institute a body - the Resource Assessment Commission (RAC) - that could perform the crucial functions of aggregating and filtering the
vast data and value-inputs relevant to any given land-use or resource policy issue. It was also intended to provide a forum within which the contest between developers and environmentalists could be internalised as an alternative to the propensity for such disputes to spill over into the public realm.

The RAC and the ESD Working Groups (ESDWGs) were to be the cornerstone of a reformed process of diverting the land-use protagonists away from the public arena, and towards bureaucratic channels over which institutionalised policy-makers could attempt to exercise more control. Key interest groups (invariably industry peak organisations and the handful of leading environmental groups including the ACF and TWS) were invited to participate in discussions and dialogue with governmental actors drawn primarily from the Federal and relevant State bureaucracies. If the Prime Minister’s instructions to his newly appointed ESDWG chairs that

[Membership of the working groups has been limited so that they will not be too large to operate effectively. However . . the subject matter is of great interest to many groups, institutions and individuals that are not represented directly on the working groups. State governments have particularly wide-ranging responsibilities. It is essential that interested parties not on the working groups have an opportunity to provide information and put their views (letter R.J. Hawke to S. Harris 29 August 1990)

was any guide, it was clear that the process of bringing interest groups together in an environment more conducive to dialogue as an essential first step towards seeking consensual outcomes was going to be of utmost importance.
4.2 Towards a long-term perspective: ESD and the Working Groups

If dialogue in state-sanctioned forums and institutions structured to permit participation of the major groupings in the debate was to be the essence of the reform to the structures by which land-use issues were to be evaluated at the national level, the notion of ‘Ecologically Sustainable Development’ was to be the key concept on which this co-operative approach would be tested. The ESD concept used by the Federal Government derived from the construction of the term by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) whose 1987 report, commonly referred to as the Brundtland Report, established the key themes that underpin the concept (Davison and Barns 1992:4). The WCED argued that:

Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable - to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits - not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organisation on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. But technology and social organisation can both be managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth. (WCED 1987:10)

Thus the Brundtland Report was able to integrate both concern for the biospheric survival of the planet with the demands - particularly from those nations external to a paradigm dominated by the major industrial nations - for commitment to economic growth as an answer to world poverty. From the Report also came two themes that would underpin debates on how nation states would address matters arising, including, first, the notion of ‘intergenerational equity’ which referred to the requirement of each generation to bequeath a biospheric legacy...
to the next, and ‘intragenerational equity’ which concerned itself with ensuring social justice prevailed in the formulation of policies designed to alleviate current environmental problems.

Here, then, was to be found a document emanating from the United Nations that provided the basis for arguing the case for integrating the need for environmental protection with decisions seeking to achieve development (which, it must be noted, the WCED qualitatively differentiated from ‘growth’ by referring to development as seeking to improve the quality of human existence (see Hare 1991)). Its report provided the ground-work for allowing institutional actors to express environmental policy matters in the context of a continuing commitment to economic growth. In a very real sense, the Brundtland Report represented something of a compromise between the interest in and commitment to growth held particularly by governmental actors, and the dire warnings of fundamental ecological disaster emanating from sections of the environmental movement.

This was quite evident in the Australian approach, where the ESD concept was to emerge as one of the central themes in the qualitative transformation of national environmental politics. Although not a major political player in land-use politics, the Australian Commission for the Future nevertheless established the broad parameters of the ESD debate when it argued:

Many Australian business, farm, industry, conservation and government leaders, however, increasingly see sustainable development as searching not for a balance but for the integration of the two concerns. If we think of ecology and economics as partially overlapping sets, sustainable development can be considered as the matter of intersection. The aim of a national strategy must be to make that area as large as possible (Commission for the Future 1990:36)
This theme was taken up with particular vigour by the Primary Industries and Energy Minister, John Kerin, who emerged during this transitional period as a major advocate for a process-oriented transformation of the national environmental debate. In a major speech at the Inter-Continental Hotel in Sydney in November 1989, Kerin argued with regards to the complexities of the land-use debate he had been grappling with during his time as minister:

While only the extremists take themselves seriously, the use of extreme propositions being advanced by some makes the point that at some stage, governments have to apply some judgement and policy based on conceptual, scientific or welfare basis to sort out the wheat from the chaff in the arguments being put forward with equal weight to the public ... There needs to be some judgement applied to the intellectual depth of arguments being presented by scientific groups as well as to the decibels and the corridor combing (Kerin 1989b:7)

This speech was of significance for three reasons; first, its delivery coincided with the Government's movement towards instituting reforms to the policy-evaluation process in which the establishment of the RAC would be central. Second, the speech laid bare some of the important assumptions about the optimum view of land and resource-use policy-making held by pro-development ministers. Mr Kerin was clearly at pains to indicate his acceptance of the argument that unwise land-use (including land-use that failed to consider environmentalist-oriented value inputs) would lead to the type of ecological disaster forecast by Brundtland. But the speech also stressed the importance of scientific input for these ministers - and by this, Mr Kerin was clearly indicating the exasperation pro-development ministers had experienced over the tendency for disputes to move away from 'scientific' and 'economic' analysis in preference for 'emotive' responses. As the Minister explained:

The greenies haven't got it all wrong, folks. But someone has to make sense of all the clutter and take into account what is possible in a society abundant with competing demands. And in the last resort, this can only be governments. Governments have to take decisions and implement consistent policies about
legitimate concerns expressed in a society. As far as the environment is concerned, the adaptation of socio-economic systems now in place and the application of science, technology, engineering and environmentally sound techniques of industrialisation are more likely to be successful than adoption of the reactionary urge to stop the world because some of us want to get off. (Kerin 1989b:1)

Herein lay the dominant themes that were to underpin the qualitative change in the way the Federal Government would seek to manage the land-use debate hereafter.

Mr Kerin argued that the Government's approach in trying to formulate processes in which rationality, inquiry and science would replace the 'emotiveness' of the environmentalist position, would be based on adopting a concept of 'sustainable development'. The problem here, however, was that a major debate about ESD would be possible given, as Papadakis noted, the ability for the concept to mean all things to all protagonists (Papadakis 1993:121). It was at this point that the combined effort of the DPIE and the Government's utilisation of tripartite consultative mechanisms of evaluating issues was applied to the problem of working out exactly what ESD would mean. This process began with the release of a DPIE discussion paper outlining the parameters of the debate and foreshadowing the Government's acceptance of at least five key principles: specifically, that economic and environmental goals were to be integrated into policy-making and activity; that environmental assets were to be properly evaluated in the future; that there would a guarantee of inter- and intra-generational equity; that matters associated with high environmental risk would be dealt with by policy-makers in a cautious way; and that policy-makers recognised the 'global dimension' of the environmental debate (DPIE 1990:2). The discussion paper noted that the complexities associated with seeking to integrate environmental input were
simultaneously of great necessity lest more irreparable environmental damage be sustained, but also controversial by virtue of the apparent incompatibility of materialist and non-materialist values. Here, the Government noted, was the task ahead of participants in the debate in which

...promoting ecologically sustainable development requires co-operation between governments, industries, unions and conservation interests, and the support of the community generally if it is to be truly effective. (DPIE 1990:12)

The announcement of the commencement of a process investigating the implications of ESD within the context of the DPIE's five major principles accompanied this discussion paper. The process, it must be noted, was to be one in which the consultative dynamics would evolve around the participation of key interest groups and/or interest leaders and particularly governmental actors drawn from the bureaucracy and statutory authorities such as the CSIRO. Herein lay the origins of the ESDWGs - a set of discussion groups arranged into eight major economic functions in which environmental and resource issues were central (including tourism, agriculture, energy production, manufacturing, fisheries, mining, transport and forestry) required to investigate the question of defining ESD within the terms set by the DPIE discussion paper and to

...provide advice to government on future policy directions, and to develop practical policy directions for implementing them, in the context of the government's general budgetary constraints and existing policies and programs which impinge upon the subject areas ... (letter Hawke to Green 29/8/90)

The eight working groups were required to report to an executive group comprising three senior chairpeople (who, between them, also chaired the eight working groups) who would, in
turn, report back to a Sustainable Development Sub-Committee of the Cabinet. These groups were to be temporary phenomena, and the ESDWG process was initially required to complete its work and table its reports before Cabinet some time in the new year of 1991 to allow the Federal Government to seek the input of state and territory governments.

Given the growing interest within the environmental movement in articulating a similar notion of integrated approaches to land-use, it was assumed within bureaucratic circles that this approach would enjoy significant success in bringing environmental groups in with industry, unions and the Government in a bid to co-operatively sort out pressing land-use and resource issues. Indeed, within the environmental movement's organisational core there was significant interest in and, in the case of the ACF at least, a great deal of work done on the ESD concept. Certainly these groups could have little quarrel with the notion of careful and fulsome exploration of policy matters associated with the ESD debate, given that demands for just such a careful and wide-ranging approach to policy had been a long-standing item on the environmentalist agenda. There was, however, a major debate operating within the movement generally as to where the emphasis in the Brundtland's approach - and, by extension, the approach of governments - was falling in the ESD debate.

Environmentalists were, not surprisingly, more willing to see emphasis put on the 'ecological' side of the equation. The major concern from the environmental side of the debate, however, was a perception that the state, in conjunction with developer interests, was putting greater emphasis on the term 'sustainable' as a counter to what developers perceived
as the capacity for a concept including the term ‘ecological’ to be, by definition, anti-growth (see ACF 1991).

Table 4.1: ESD Working Groups: Types and Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESD Group</th>
<th>Federal Govt.</th>
<th>State Govt.</th>
<th>Industry Groups</th>
<th>Environment Groups (Group type)</th>
<th>Consumer Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trasport</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (ACF)</td>
<td>Yes Greenpeace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (ACF)</td>
<td>Yes Greenpeace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (ACF)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (ACF)</td>
<td>Yes Greenpeace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (ACF)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisheries</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (Greenpeace)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (ACF)</td>
<td>No (WWF)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These concerns underpinned suspicion about the ESDWG process across the
movement, although, as the sketch of the particular groups and the participants outlined in
table 4.1 shows, three out of four of the major environmental groups invited to participate in
the process (the ACF, TWS, the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), and Greenpeace)
actually took up the opportunity in all but one working group. According to the ACF, four
considerations were central to their decision to participate in the process including that they
believed the public expected ‘green groups to work at constructive problem solving’, that
these groups gave the ACF access to areas otherwise difficult to exert leverage on (including
industry policy), that the opportunity to work towards integration across policy sectors
needed to be taken up, and that the ESD process was an opportunity to counter the Federal
Government's growing interest in devolving land-use matters back to the states (ACF 1991).

There were, however, two instances where environmental groups refused to
participate in the process. The four major groups sought all refused to participate in the
forestry working group as an expression of opposition to the Federal Government's interest in
responding to forest industry demands for security of access to timber resources - the
forerunner to the Resource Security Legislation debate (Australian 17/10/90). Indeed, the
Wilderness Society indicated that it had no intention of participating in the ESD process at all
for two substantive reasons. First, TWS disagreed with the development orientation of the
DPIE approach to ESD, arguing that more emphasis needed to be put on the concept of
ecology. Second - and this was a theme that was repeated in the organisation's response to the
RAC - TWS rejected the political implications of participating in a consultative process
within which the terms of the debate were dominated by the bureaucracy, and which represented a competing demand on the organisation's ability to conduct the type of direct, activist-oriented campaigns it preferred to pursue (letter R.Mills (RAC) to A.Moult (TWS) 6/12/90). Here, then, a significant limitation in the Government's approach towards managing the environmental debate was revealed. Whilst the formation and conduct of the ESDWGs was based on the tried and tested process of interest group consultation, and, in the main, this approach was able to proceed because of the belief of at least the ACF that there were more benefits than costs to be accrued from participating in the process, the Wilderness Society's attitude revealed something of the brittleness of the consultative method where major groups could not be enticed into the process.

4.3: Institutional design as the lynch-pin of reform: the RAC

The formation of the Resource Assessment Commission represented the creation of a major new institutional actor which epitomised the Hawke Government's approach to reforming the decision-making process. The essence of this approach was outlined by Kerin in his second reading speech in the Resource Assessment Commission Bill in which he argued that resource policy making

...should be an integrated approach to conservation and development by taking both aspects into account at an early stage ...[and that] resource use decisions should seek to optimise the net benefits to the community from the nation's resources, having regard to efficiency of resource use, environmental
considerations and an equitable distribution of the return on resources.  
(Parliamentary Debates, HOR (Weekly Hansard) 1989:1822)

Here was an explicit statement outlining the Government's desire to see environmental considerations integrated into an evaluative process that dealt with these matters pre-emptively and pro-actively (and, by implication, signalling the wish of the pro-development block in the Cabinet, at least, to get away from the reactive decision-making that had characterised a number of decisions prior to 1989). Further, the debate indicated the extent to which the sponsors of this reform believed that environmental matters had been dealt with ‘emotively’ rather than rationally. The RAC, as section 8 of the Resource Assessment Commission Act (1989) required, would be the ideal panacea to this problem by including scientific and economic analyses in the deliberative process along with processes designed to ‘assess the losses and benefits’ of alternative uses of the resource in question (Australia 1989:3-4).

The Act provided for a statutory authority comprising a chief commissioner with powers to appoint assistant commissioners with expertise in areas of resource policy to which the RAC’s attention would be focussed by virtue of a reference from Cabinet. The RAC’s basic task, as outlined by Section 8 of the Act, was to investigate the ‘resource matter’ referred to it in order to assess the cultural, scientific, social, environmental and economic utility of that resource, and to assess the losses and benefits - both in material and non-material terms - of alternative uses of that resource. Such deliberations would be required to take into account the Government's final position on the ESD concept. The RAC would provide the inellectual and scientific data upon which the Government would make its policy
decisions. The Commission's staff - the Policy and Corporate Support and Research divisions - would exist primarily to undertake the extensive information aggregation and filtering process, whilst the Commissioners themselves would be prominent during the inter-interest group and public hearing stages of the inquiries. Here the Industries Assistance Commission (IAC)\(^3\) provided the primary model for the RAC, not so much for its structure (although it is noteworthy that there were important parallels between the two) but rather for its role as an aggregater of data and inputs, its filtering and advisory functions, and its independent statutory status allowing it to conduct inquiries to which interest groups and the public itself could participate (Galligan and Lynch 1992:10).

The importance of aggregating and filtering data was paralleled by a desire to institute an evaluative process of utmost public transparency. The Act specifically established a non-judicial format for the Commission's activities (although the subsequent appointment of Justice Donald Stewart, who, by virtue of his previous incarnation as a Queens Counsel and head of the National Crime Authority, came from a very legalistic background and who, according to his detractors, tended to be far too legalistic in the conduct of inter-interest group and public hearings (see Business Review Weekly 3/11/89, Sunday Age 17/6/90)) and the overall intention to depoliticise the processes of interest group interaction was made clear in the Commission's stated intention to adopt a 'mediation' process. As Boer et al. put it:

Mediation has the power to make inquiries more participatory, to involve affected parties from the earliest stages of the inquiry process ... Mediation of resource dispute requires an explicit set of procedures if the results are going to be more than ad hoc compromises based on polarised positions. (Boer et al. 1991:2)
The commitment to depoliticising the environment debate, based on the institutionalisation of consultative and dialogue-oriented structures, was also in evidence in the Commission's approach to report-writing. The RAC was required to submit its findings to the Prime Minister, and in so doing the Commission soon adopted the IAC-type process of issuing a preliminary report designed to solicit public commentary, and then issuing a final report. Unlike the IAC, however, the RAC went to some lengths to ensure that its final reports differed from the preliminary drafts lest participants involved in the public comment phase thought that their submissions had been made to a body that had already made up its mind.

The RAC came into being in November 1989 following the Hawke Government's National Environmental Policy Statement, and with the on-going implications of the Wesley Vale outcome still reverberating through the timber industry and its relations with the Federal Government. The origins of the Commission, however, could be traced back to 1988 where the idea of creating a consultative, expert-oriented body capable of sifting through the complex range of issues and inputs relevant to land-use and environment matters (and to give economic considerations proper weighting in land-use debates) was originally floated from within the Resources Assessment Unit within the DPIE (DPIE 1989:102-103). The idea to create the RAC was given fulsome support by the National Association of Forest Industries (NAFI) and the Australian Mining Industry Council (AMIC), both groups concurring with the view that the problems besetting land-use decision making stemmed from a failure of the evaluative process to operate rationally. The proposed RAC appeared to be an ideal panacea
for what these groups saw as a tendency for the debate to lose its way over emotive issues (Grayson 1989, *Business Review Weekly* 16/12/88).

Once again, the coincidence of outlooks and aspirations between the DPIE and its Minister, John Kerin, had two important consequences. First, given Mr Kerin's status as a member of the pro-development block within the Cabinet, the proposal of a rational-comprehensive method of resolving land-use conflict pre-emptively represented an important fall-back position for a Minister politically wounded by the contribution his prevarication over fishing industry interests made to the collapse of Wesley Vale (*Australian* 14/11/90). Certainly, if the battle for policy ascendancy on these matters was one mainly between Cabinet rivals generally, and between Senator Richardson and the pro-development block in particular, the second major consequence of the RAC was that, on paper at least, the method of decision-evaluation embraced by the Commission was meant to act as a foil for the tendency of Senator Richardson's decision-making politics to be dominated by short-term, *ad hoc*, overtly political considerations.

Whilst the Government was loathe to admit it, the highly political nature of the debate over the RAC was reflected in the manoeuvrings that went on at three different levels during the period in which the Commission was conceived and, soon after, given the terms of reference for its first inquiry. Once again, the struggle between the pro-developers and the pro-environmentalists in the Cabinet, with Mr Kerin and Resources Minister Cook leading the former, and Senator Richardson the main protagonist on behalf of the latter, impacted
upon the creation of the Commission. The first manifestation of this struggle occurred within the realm of inter-departmental rivalry (Painter and Carey 1979). Upon learning of the DPIE’s activities with the Resource Assessment Unit, the Department’s major inter-departmental rival - DASET - began to agitate for some input to the formation of the proposed Commission (see DASET 1988-89:180). Whilst the influence of this ‘input’ on the form and nature of that proposed by the bill is difficult to assess, one major legacy of this agitation concerning the departmental home base for the Commission did emerge that was to have some political significance. The DPIE intended for the RAC to fall under its auspices, whilst the DASET agitation sought to have the Commission placed under its control. The compromise struck between the Departments was brokered via the Prime Minister’s office, resulting in the RAC falling under the auspices of the DPMC.

Whilst there were suggestions that the Head of the DPMC - Dr Michael Codd - was less than enthusiastic about such an expansion to his department’s role, the RAC’s placement under the auspices of the Prime Minister was indicative of an important dimension of the politics of environmental policy-making during the Richardson years under the Hawke Prime Ministership between the 1988 and 1990. Quite simply, the power Senator Richardson exercised over land-use politics was a power expressed via the Prime Minister - a reflection both of Senator Richardson’s standing as machine man and strategist, and as an important confidant. What mattered in Senator Richardson’s advocacy of the environment as an issue that appealed to the electoral ‘middle ground’ and thus as something worthy of sympathetic attention was the fact that the Prime Minister concurred with this view and was prepared to
put his leadership on the line for some of Senator Richardson's positions. Thus, far from being a genuine compromise, the placement of the RAC outside of the confines of the pro-development DPIE and its Minister represented a major strategic victory for the DASET and Senator Richardson.

The second major instance of Senator Richardson's influence over the debate occurred during the period in which the Commission's enabling Bill was being debated in the Senate. Here the problem for Mr Kerin - and the window of opportunity for Senator Richardson - lay in the fact that the balance of power in the upper house was held by the Australian Democrats. Democrat support for the bill was not to be forthcoming until a couple of amendments were made that went to the heart of environmental concerns about the Commission as originally proposed by Mr Kerin. Two issues in particular were prominent; in homing in on the ability of environmental interest groups to be able to participate as fully in RAC inquiries as their better financed developer interest-group rivals, environmental groups sought to have provisions for Government funding of environmental interest group participation included in the Act. Second, environmentalists (and, it must be noted, DASET and Senator Richardson) were critical of the composition of the RAC as outlined in the original bill in which assistant commissioners were to be drawn from the IAC and the Australian Science and Technology Council (ASTC). As Australian Democrat Senator Norm Sanders argued, these two groups were viewed by environmentalists as emanating from the 'pro-development' side of the debate (Weekly Hansard: Senate 1989 (10):4223). To balance this, the environmentalists demanded a role for the AHC.
The pro-development block in the Cabinet really had little choice. To insist on the Bill passing in its pure form would have led to its defeat. Excluding the AHC, meanwhile, would have run counter to the inclusionist and consultative values underpinning the Government’s approach to reform. This, in turn, would have alienated the environmental movement which would have risked the whole idea of incorporation. In the end, the Government had to accept the Australian Democrat amendments, with Senator Cook stating that the Government accepted that

...the Australian Heritage Commission would wish to appear at [RAC] hearings. However, this amendment, if enacted, would impose upon the Commission a statutory obligation to do so. In our view it is to the point that it should. The National Estate is something that the AHC assess ... There is a whole body that argues whether the Commission makes the right judgement. I do not propose to enter that argument ... It seems appropriate ... that it should have a statutory obligation to appear... (Weekly Hansard: Senate 1989 (10):4281)

The rather oblique reference to the critical arguments about the role of the AHC glossed over the ignominy of Senator Cook's position given that his department and its clientele constituted one major source of such criticism. Moreover, the inclusion of the AHC represented an important strategic victory for Senator Richardson in his and his Department's rivalry with the developer-aligned Departments.

This was not to be the full extent of Senator Richardson's impact on the new Commission, however, for the influence he was able to exert on the Government's decision to refer the question of resource use in the Kakadu National Park Conservation Zone area was to have a lasting impact on the politics surrounding the RAC even beyond the end of Senator
Richardson's tenure as Environment Minister. Rather than become bogged down on the intricacies of a specific land-use or resource policy dispute, it was intended that the RAC would investigate a whole range of matters associated with a broad resource issue (Business Review Weekly 16/12/88). The foreshadowing of a major RAC investigation into ‘forestry’, in which the Commission's brief was to widely investigate structure, composition and the political economy of the industry as well as investigating aspects relating to environmentalist demands upon the resource (RAC Bulletin No.3, 25/7/91), was an example of what the RAC was intended to do (Weekly Hansard: HOR No. 5 1989:1823). In the lead-up to the 1990 Federal election, however, Senator Richardson sought to utilise the RAC to investigate a specific land-use dispute. Soon after the passage of the RAC's enabling legislation, the Federal Government became embroiled in a dispute between environmentalists and the mining company Broken Hill Proprietry (BHP) over mineral exploration and development leases in the Coronation Hill region within the Kakadu Conservation Zone.

The urgency of this issue increased as the Government began to plan for a future Federal election towards the end of 1989. The Federal Government sought ways in which to delay the movement of mining interests into the disputed area without alienating developer interests, whilst seeking to maintain its credibility with the leading environmental groups. It was precisely at this point that tension between the pro-development block in Cabinet and Caucus and Senator Richardson's pursuit of his 'green' strategy once again came to the fore. The debate within Cabinet revolved around Senator Richardson's proposal to extend the Kakadu National Park on the one hand, and the concern of the pro-development Caucus and
Ministerial block to see mining proceed at the Coronation Hill site - a move opposed by environmentalists on the grounds that such operations would pose a grave risk to the area's surrounding ecosystem. To add to the degree of difficulty, the dispute also touched on the issue of uranium mining - typically a major source of strain in internal Labor politics (see Jupp 1982:120; and Davis 1992:225-227). In this context, Senator Richardson's primary objectives were to, first, provide a signal of the Government's commitment to the environment generally and, second, to delay rather than prevent the commencement of mining operations in Coronation Hill until after the 1990 Federal election (see Age 7/10/89).

As senior political journalist Alan Ramsay noted:

Cabinet's decision on Kakadu ... might well be the 'right decision' as Hawke insisted on Thursday night. And no doubt it is a decision, as he also asserted, that most Australians would endorse. Certainly Labor's opinion pollster, Rod Cameron, has been saying so to Bob Hawke and Graham Richardson for some months. (Sydney Morning Herald 7/10/89)

It was precisely in the context of this search for a pragmatic outcome that would give a clear signal of the Government's commitment to the environmental agenda whilst simultaneously leaving an opening for mining to proceed, and in pursuit of the overarching aim of getting Kakadu off the national political agenda in time for the election, that the Government struck upon the idea of referring the issue to the RAC. Whilst the decision to refer Coronation Hill to the RAC was made to further advance the impression that the Government wished to preserve as much of the disputed area as possible, it also represented something of a pragmatic decision allowing a window of opportunity for the developer interests - particularly BHP - to be able to obtain permission to develop the area should the
RAC inquiry find little of environmental or non-material value (*Parliamentary Debates: Senate* Vol 136 17/10/89:1978). In essence, the decision to refer Coronation Hill to the RAC represented, in no small part, a means of diverting what was proving to be an extremely difficult question of environmental policy on to something of a bureaucratic/investigatory side-track and thereby removing the issue from the agenda in anticipation of a general election - an action that was criticised by business interests (*Business Review Weekly* 3/11/89). Certainly this announcement of the Government's intention to refer the matter to the RAC gave the Government the space it needed to conduct a future election campaign based on reference to the Government's environmental credentials in which extension of the Kakadu National Park could be listed as one of its major achievements.

The origins of the ESDWGs and, more particularly, the RAC, therefore lay within the concern held by pro-development Ministers about the form and nature of land-use and resource policy-making had taken during a period of heightened environmentalist activism. This was also a period that saw a major increase in preservation-oriented policy output particularly via the office of the Minister for ASETT, and which countered the influence of the materialist values and objectives that underpinned development proposals. These moves to reform the decision-making process through procedures designed to incorporate protagonist interest groups and oriented towards slower, careful, fulsome consideration of environmental, social, cultural and political inputs were given particular impetus in the aftermath of the Federal Government's handling of the Wesley Vale dispute. The emergence of the RAC in particular represented a major watershed in the Government's approach,
although, as this chapter has shown, the genesis of this body and its ESD auxiliary occurred during a period that represents something of a political cusp. With the prospect of a Federal election, and with Senator Richardson still managing the environment portfolio and dominating Cabinet approaches to environmental matters, the birth of the RAC was indeed influenced by the persistence of the very political dynamics its creation was designed to change. Indeed, as will be shown below, these dynamics were to leave an indelible mark on the RAC, and the legacy of the Environment Minister's role in having the newly formed Commission tackle the highly contentious Kakadu issue would outlast Senator Richardson's official involvement in the environment policy debate and have a major impact upon the future of the Commission.

4.4: Conclusion and overview: an institutional fix to the national debate

This chapter has traced an important period in Australian environmental politics within which lay the origins of the Federal Labor Government's attempt to qualitatively change national land-use and resource policy decision-making. Notwithstanding some overlapping of the time in which key institutional initiatives such as the RAC were being designed and the discharging of central resource disputes such as Wesley Vale, this critical period in which the institutionalised policy-making process began to re-orient itself towards long-term, rational and comprehensive approaches to decision-making began in earnest during the later stages of the Wesley Vale pulp mill dispute, where it became clear to pro-
development ministers in the Hawke Cabinet that Senator Richardson’s environmental-oriented approach was prevailing. The fact that the mill did not realise fruition was followed up by the Hawke Government’s use of a ‘green’ strategy in the 1990 Federal election - a strategy for which Senator Richardson was again a powerful advocate. For the pro-development ministers, this period had resulted in the loss of a major industrial project, and with the Government participating in a high-risk electoral strategy the outcome of which appeared to put the Government in even deeper political debt to the environmental movement than before.

In the face of a need perceived by the pro-development Ministers in particular to reassert Government control over the environmental debate (and to also seek ways to contain Senator Richardson’s influence over the debate), there emerged an interest in transforming the environmental debate away from specific issues and their capacity to lead to short-term and reactive decision-making. The qualitative transformation envisaged by national institutional actors was one based particularly on an emphasis on long-term decision-making, incorporation of hitherto antagonistic interest groups into officially sanctioned channels of communication, dialogue and negotiation, and a commitment to fulsome evaluation of as wide a range of values and inputs as possible - including, of course, economic considerations. Implicit in the creation of the RAC, the formation of the ESDWGs and the internal reform of the AHC was a desire amongst institutionalised policy-makers to move towards a methodology of ‘good policy-making’ based on careful analysis, multilateral interest-group consultation and seeking to incorporate rather than alienate state political actors.
The significance of the period covered in this chapter - starting with the reforms applying to the AHC and finishing with the Federal Cabinet reshuffle following the 1990 Federal election - lies not only in that which began to emerge by way of new institutions and policy-making arrangements that would be the vanguard of the qualitatively reformed policy-making process, but also for that which it exposed of the political dynamics prevalent in the environmental debate. Clearly even the attempt to qualitatively transform the policy-making process was in itself a political event pursued in particular by the knot of pro-development Ministers, including Mr Kerin, Senator Cook, Senator Button and Senator Peter Walsh. Yet as the AHC reforms, the way in which Senator Richardson and his Department were able to influence the design and, later, the terms of reference for the RAC, and the government's approach to the 1990 Federal election indicated, the process of transforming the style and dynamics of national environmental policy-making was, for the pro-development group, slow and difficult. In each of these transitional developments Senator Richardson's influence was manifested and the brinkmanship that characterised the negotiations over World Heritage listing of disputed forest areas, and the politics that underpinned the Wesley Vale dispute also led to an increase in the staffing and resources of the AHC, modifications to the way the RAC would operate, and in using the RAC as a convenient parking spot for the problematic Coronation Hill issue in time for the 1990 Federal election.

The transition from short-term, reactive environmental policy-making to a more proactive, long-term and multi-laterally consultative approach to land-use and resource policy-
making, therefore, occurred fitfully and over a longer period than the pro-development Ministers would have wished. The period from the cessation of the Wesley Vale dispute to the 1990 Federal election, therefore, represented something of a cusp in the Labor Government's relationship to environmental politics. Prior to Wesley Vale the environment's salience to the national political agenda underwent a quantum increase from the moment Senator Richardson had ascended to the ‘super ministry’. The Wesley Vale dispute served to highlight the tensions associated with an approach to environmental politics predicated primarily on electoral considerations. Indeed, the 1990 election was itself the crucial turning point given that electoral considerations were at the heart of the Senator Richardson approach to environmental matters, and that the ambiguity of the result did little to prove or disprove the wisdom in the Government's sympathetic response to the preservationist agenda of the environmental movement. With Senator Richardson's removal from the portfolio, and with bodies such as the RAC and the ESDWG in place, it appeared that if qualitative reform of the decision-making process was about to occur, then it would realise its fruition in the changed political and economic environment of the post-1990 election period.

1. Prior to the investigation undertaken into the AHC under the auspices of the then Department of Arts, Heritage and Environment referred to here, there had been five other reviews of the AHC. The Bland Review in 1976 led to amendments to the AHC's operating Act, the Hidges Review of 1978-79 made recommendations on how the AHC should go about dealing with listings involving privately held land, and three other reviews in 1979, 1981 and 1982 that looked into abolishing the AHC and divesting its responsibilities to the states.

2. It is noteworthy that much of the AHC's advocacy of this approach is couched in terms of co-operative Federal-State relations. The Commission cites its co-operative venture with the Conservation and Land Management (CALM) of Western Australia in investigating the state's south-west as an example of how 'regional assessment' is to operate (see AHC 1992).
3. The IAC was later to become the Industries Commission (IC).
CHAPTER 5

ASCENDANCY OF THE INSTITUTIONAL FIX?
ENVIRONMENTALISM, 'ACCORDISM'
AND THE NEW POLICY-MAKING PROCESS UNDER PRESSURE

For a very brief period the politics of environmental policy-making were subject to the new institutional arrangements brought about with the reform of the AHC, the formation of the ESD Working Groups and - above all - the convening of the RAC. Here then, was a period in which bureaucratic actors exerted some influence in the debate, and, in so doing, yet another set of values, assumptions and operational cultures were applied to the difficult problem of trying to make politically viable, environmentally-sensitive land-use and resource policy decisions. Yet almost from the outset, this newly reformed approach to dealing with national environmental policy debates was placed under significant pressure. This pressure derived from the controversy surrounding the notion of 'ecologically sustainable development' that was central to the work of the ESDWGs, and the tensions underpinning the RAC's investigation particularly into appropriate land-use at the Coronation Hill site in the Kakadu National Park Conservation Zone.

As a result of the institutionally-based reform of the environmental policy-making process, bureaucratic actors began to exert a greater influence over the debate.
These actors brought notions that decisions could be made rationally, comprehensively, and on the basis of a longer-term outlook than any process dependent on the short-term nature of parliamentary politics could ever hope to achieve (in short, a process that was designed to be the antithesis of the approach that had evolved during the Richardson years). The importance of this dimension of the national environmental debate reflected the importance of the bureaucracy to the political process overall. The dominance of the bureaucracy over the critical functions of decision-making such as garnering intelligence and information upon which decisions can be made, channelling such information to the executive by way of advice, coordinating the interest groups who can get access to government, and overseeing the actual implementation of policy provides scope for a second broad source of influence to emerge (Zeigler 1980:11: Davis 1980:153; Baumol and Oates 1975:18). This approach dovetailed with another very important set of values and outlooks applied to the environmental debate by the Hawke executive. These values, it will be argued in this chapter, came from the Government’s successful application of neo-corporatist approaches to other problematic policy areas such as economic policy and industrial relations in its objective of creating policies on the basis of broad social consensus through the participation of key interest groups.

This chapter argues that a brief period between the alteration of political dynamics caused by the 1990 Federal election and its subsequent Cabinet reshuffle, and the climax of a leadership struggle between Bob Hawke and Paul Keating and its aftermath occurred in which something of a bureaucratic ascendency occurred over the
environmental debate. This was an ascendency based primarily on the operation of the ESDWG process and, above all else, the RAC inquiries into Coronation Hill and the timber industry. Here, then, was the period in which environmental politics was transformed as institutional actors exercised leadership over the debate - a situation to which protagonists interest groups generally, and the environmental movement in particular, were recast as respondents to, rather than initiators of, the environmental debate. Here was a period in which Dror’s (1968; 1971) notion of the ‘normative optimum’ model of policy-making, where government attempts to learn from past policy experiences and try to remedy problems by addressing the policy-making process, was most apposite as a description of the way in which institutional actors were seeking to transform the national environmental debate.

This chapter also traces the source of major problems with this approach. Two matters in particular served to undermine the ability of the government to contain the environmental debate within bureaucratic channels: first, the growing leadership problem within the ALP to which the Hawke Government’s difficulties with an important environmental matter being addressed by this reformed process was to make a major contribution; and, second, the problematic nature of the environmental movement’s response to the opportunities being offered by the reformed process. Of critical importance here was the contradictory tendencies to be found within the environmental movement between those component parts for whom participation in bureaucratised policy-making processes was viewed as an important political activity,
and those more committed to direct activism particularly with regards to specific land-use disputes. As will be argued below, these tensions surfaced with particular force when the Hawke Government sought to institute a Resource Security Legislation (RSL) program, the effect of which was to precipitate a return to the environmental-developer dichotomisation of the debate that the more Accordinist-oriented approach was supposed to circumvent. In all, this chapter highlights the problems that the Hawke Government had in applying an institutional response to the difficulties associated with the creation of national environmental policy. Throughout this period, the Hawke Government sought to use institutional arrangements to de-politicise the national environmental debate. Yet, as will be shown below, the capacity for these land-use disputes to defy the application of bureaucratic values and approaches to decision-making served to make these new arrangements quite fragile.

5.1: ‘Better decision-making’ in practice? The RAC and national land-use policy debates

In the aftermath of the 1990 Federal election, the newly created RAC was set to work by Cabinet on two substantive matters including an investigation into the state of the Australian timber resource and an inquiry into the ‘use of resources of the Kakadu Conservation Zone’ in which the inquiry would be required to assess:

...the environmental and cultural values of the Conservation Zone; the impact of potential mining operations within the zone...; the national economic significance of potential mining development;... [and] the interests of Aborigines affected by any potential mining development. (RAC News No3, June 1990)
Whilst not directly relevant to the politics of timber resource policy, no consideration of the RAC's operation in the reformed decision-evaluation process in the post-Richardson period can be fully understood without reference to the consequences of the Kakadu inquiry. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the flagging of this inquiry by the then Environment Minister, Senator Richardson, represented something of a minor controversy in the lead-up to the 1990 election. Caught between the preservationist agenda of the environmentalist clientele assiduously courted during the Wesley Vale dispute, and the demands of developer interests that there be a clear demonstration of the Government's commitment to mining and development, Senator Richardson used the newly formed RAC as a bureaucratic side-track into which the problematic Kakadu issue could be shunted for consideration after the election. The announcement of the terms of reference by Prime Minister Hawke on 26 April 1990 simply confirmed the political arrangements put in place by Senator Richardson in the pre-election period (see Kelly 1992:536-541; Age 7/10/89).

The Coronation Hill issue was fraught with political difficulties for the RAC. The Commission was fully aware of, first, the entrenched positions taken by both the main environmentalist and developer interest groups on the fate of mining particularly in the Coronation Hill area. Second, the RAC's own existence was being tested in an environment of high expectations particularly of pro-development interest groups such as NAFI and particularly AMIC, and the pro-development block within Cabinet. The importance of the Kakadu Inquiry lay in two important aspects of the inquiry's conduct: first, it was in the Kakadu Inquiry that the Commission utilised some of its most
innovative methodologies of attempting to achieve the extremely demanding task of incorporating non-material, ecological value-inputs to the decision-evaluation process; and, second, the Commission's final report highlighting the question of indigenous peoples' demand upon the land-area in question to the exclusion of developer interests. This finding effectively re-aligned interest-group attitudes to the Commission. In a very real sense, the RAC's findings on Kakadu and its utilisation of controversial evaluative procedures overshadowed the work undertaken in its forestry study. Indeed, these developments altered the political environment within which the RAC, as the lynch-pin of the reformed evaluative process, undertook its investigations to the extent that by the time the Commission handed down its forestry reports (and, incidentally, was praised for its efforts by at least one major newspaper editorial (Sydney Morning Herald 8/7/91)). As a result, the RAC’s own existence was being questioned by many of the developer groups who had initially expressed support for the Commission's creation.

The forest and timber inquiry, on the other hand, was clearly the type of broad-based resource investigation that the Commission preferred. The RAC's performance in this inquiry was entirely consistent with the high value placed on the Commission's role as an aggregator and filter of the vast array of technical, scientific and normative value inputs to the resource debate. As Richard Mills, the then Head of Office within the RAC put it, the role of RAC inquiries was to find alternative approaches to conflict-oriented debates on the basis that

...[i]ssues are referred to the Commission because they are complex and contentious. The Commission may reduce conflict by identifying the issues, the facts, and the opinions, and by clarifying reasons for disagreement. But it is unrealistic to suppose that strongly held positions
will change significantly because an inquiry takes place. (Stewart et.al.1991:29)

Here, then, was the clearest articulation of the way in which the Commission perceived its role as an advisory body to the executive, sifting through the vast array of data and submissions on a given resource issue and reporting the key findings to the Cabinet in terms of, again as Mills put it ‘... describing the costs and benefits of various alternatives.’

In order to discharge this function, the Commission undertook a number of approaches designed to open the evaluative process up to broad participation in both inquiries. The convening of public hearings and the calling for submissions from interested parties was clearly consistent with the Commission's intention to have transparent processes in which interest groups and individuals could interact in discussions on the resource question under the management of the Commission.¹ Moreover, the commitment to mediation as part of the process designed to bring hitherto conflictual protagonists within the confines of a dialogue and negotiation-oriented process in a bid to find common ground did achieve some success. Both sides of the debate concurred with the RAC's findings, released in the draft report, that the Australian timber resource was of vital importance to the Australian economy, but that it had also been subjected to unsustainable levels of exploitation (Age 6/7/1991).

Further, both conservationists and the timber industry concurred on the need to find alternatives to the exploitation of native forests and wilderness areas, opting instead for a commitment to investigating the likelihood of an increased utilisation of hardwood plantations.
The utilisation of round-table mediation and public hearings was not the full extent of the Commission's important work in the inquiry process. In addition to convening these public hearings, the RAC's own analytical divisions were hard at work aggregating and, more importantly, evaluating data on the various demands upon the resource in question, the extent of the resource available, and the range of values underpinning these demands. In the forestry inquiry, for example, the RAC undertook an extensive survey of the state of the national forestry resource and the structure of the timber industry. It also undertook public opinion surveys designed to gauge public attitudes to forest conservation (*RAC Bulletin* No.3 25 July 1991). However, it was in the application to the Kakadu inquiry of methods of dealing with the most vexing problem confronting the RAC - specifically, investigating means by which evaluative procedures traditionally weighted in favour of considering economic value-inputs to land-use decision-making could give equal salience to non-materialist values (see Stewart et.al. 1991:16-18) - that the most innovative and controversial analyses were undertaken. Here the RAC inquiry attempted to reconcile material and non-material appreciation of the opportunity of development against the cost of preserving environmental 'goods' by investigating a method that might assign monetary values to the environmental goods in question. As a RAC discussion paper argued, the essentially economic question of how 'goods' - including environmental goods - were valued held the key to the apparent failure of a more materialistic approach to consider such matters adequately. As James explained, environmental resources typically tended to be

...misconstrued as 'free' - free supplies of air, free forests, free soil and free plants, animal and fish supplies. Such free gifts of nature cost nothing to produce, and hence have not been adequately represented in
the pricing system ... The outcome has been profligate use of natural resources and their consequent degradation. (James 1991:3)

Of the range of models available to undertake econometric analyses capable of assigning monetary value to the non-economic ‘good’ of a land area as a conservation resource in the Kakadu debate, the RAC opted for the Contingent Valuation Method (CVM). The CVM model was utilised to overcome the problem of assigning a monetary value to non-material goods by seeking response from the marketplace as to an estimation of the monetary value respondents would be prepared to forego in preserve the resource in question. As Wilkes has argued, the CVM aimed to remedy the problem of determining the ‘value’ of items such as wilderness preservation or preservation of species threatened with extinction by surveying respondents as constituents of a community-based market place to ascertain just what amount of money they would be prepared to spend to achieve such preservation. As a RAC discussion paper explained the technique:

In many respects, CV[M] is similar to market research surveys that estimate consumer demand for new a new product. The CV method uses surveys to elicit people's valuations of increases or reductions in the provision of environmental amenities by constructing a hypothetical market. Basically, these 'markets' are outlined to the respondent by a scenario describing the amenity ... Respondents are then asked for their valuation, contingent on the scenario described to them. (Wilkes 1990:9)

In this way, the CVM would be able to assign a monetary value to environmental goods capable of being considered within the traditional framework of cost-benefit analyses of land-use alternatives that predominate institutionalised approaches to decision-making (Wilkes 1990:2-3 and 8).
The RAC's use of this model, and, indeed, the findings themselves were subjected to trenchant criticism from pro-development politicians and interest groups. The criticism focussed on the controversial nature of the highly complex CVM process and the variations introduced by the RAC inquiry (a controversy, it should be noted, that resonated within the RAC itself where scepticism about CVM could be found from within the organisation) on the grounds that, as Wilkes put it, such an approach represented the problem of obtaining 'hypothetical answers to hypothetical questions' (Wilkes 1990). There was also criticism of the survey's findings on the grounds that they lacked reality and, by virtue of the dubiousness of the survey methodology, really lacked force or substance in the debate (Age 27/5/91). This criticism was to have significant political consequences, for the alignment of BHP, AMIC and pro-development members of the Cabinet into a block critical of the survey represented something of a reversal of this constellation's support for process-oriented reform of the decision-making procedure, and their subsequent support for the RAC.

These criticisms also reflected a certain disappointment on behalf of developer interests with the way in which the 'economic question' associated with land-use disputes was being handled by the Commission. Unprepared to accept the concept of finding monetary values for essentially non-material goods, the pro-development side of the debate viewed the CVM process as something of a sham. Certainly the enthusiasm with which some within the RAC inquiry pursued processes such as CVM undermined the pro-development block's hopes that a process-oriented, rational comprehensive
approach to environmental matters would allow economic rationality to regain the ascendency in decision-making.

This disappointment with the Commission intensified with the release of the draft and final reports of the Kakadu Inquiry and the Hawke Government's subsequent response. Consistent with the theme of ‘marginal’ economic utility deriving from development present in the CVM survey, the final reports stated, as Galligan and Lynch observed, that

On the economic development side, the RAC report made clear that from a strict financial cost-benefit analysis the project would represent an efficient use of resources. But clearly it would be no economic bonanza, yielding only about $82 million in direct net economic benefits...
(Galligan and Lynch 1992:17)

Environmentalists, meanwhile, were outraged by the RAC's finding that the alleged environmental dangers of mining in the conservation zone could be contained with proper management (Australian 6/2/91). The whole environmental issue was to be overshadowed, however, by the RAC's findings on another dimension to the debate - specifically, the demand upon the land area from the indigenous people of the area. After instigating its group-meeting process and hiring anthropological consultants, the inquiry found that a substantial counter-claim on the Coronation Hill area emanated from an indigenous group - the Jaywon people - on the grounds of the area having a high spiritual value (RAC 1991b:xxviii). As the RAC's draft report saw the land-use decision confronting the Hawke Government:

...the Australian Government faces the following choice: either it can set aside the strongly held and expressed wishes of the Aboriginal community associated with the area and the risks to the natural environment and opt for the economic gains that would follow from proceeding with the Coronation Hill project; or it can forgo these
economic gains in recognition of the potential losses to Aboriginal culture and the risks to the natural environment. (RAC 1991b:xxxii)

The release of the RAC draft report was a very significant moment, although the political implications were to take a little time to unfold. The Inquiry had succeeded in undertaking a very thorough investigation of competing land-uses regarding Coronation Hill, and had identified some important issues for Government to reflect upon. In this sense, the thoroughness of the inquiry could have been interpreted as a success. Politically, however, this finding was highly controversial, and the release of the draft report precipitated criticism of the RAC amongst pro-development interests. Three matters were of particular importance. First, the raising of the question of land rights of indigenous people by the draft report linked the Commission with a highly contentious element of mining politics. Indeed, the Commission's position was all the more problematic given the division within the Jaywon people between those supporting the mining company and those concerned about the spiritual value of the place - a battle that was reflected in no small part over the controversy that emerged over the use of anthropological consultants in the RAC inquiry (*Australian* 18/6/91). Secondly, by being seen to have provided the basis upon which the Cabinet would eventually decide to deny mining activity in the disputed site, in the eyes of pro-developer groups such as AMIC at least (and, indeed, in the perception of pro-development ministers), the Commission was now viewed with suspicion as yet another institutional adjunct to the environmental cause and the support initially given to the RAC idea was displaced with hostility and suspicion (*Australian* 19/6/91). These controversies became associated with a rising criticism of the RAC particularly by developer interests - and this, in turn,
represented an attack on the lynch-pin of the Hawke Government's attempt to reform and recast the national environmental policy debate.

The significance of this was to become apparent as the Coronation Hill controversy became inextricably linked with growing leadership tension within the Government. Whatever his motivation for championing a preservationist policy in the name of indigenous peoples' rights, Prime Minister Hawke's support of preventing mining at Coronation Hill had at least three significant consequences for the prevailing political climate. First, in seeking to push through a preservationist policy, Prime Minister Hawke drew upon his authority as leader and on his (diminishing) reservoir of goodwill with Senator Richardson in a bid to overcome the reality that, had it gone to a vote, Cabinet would have supported the mining position. Thus, secondly, Prime Minister Hawke's manoeuvring within Cabinet had the effect of dissecting the standing factional alignments in which the support of the Right and Center-Left had traditionally underpinned the Hawke leadership. Whilst it was absolutely true that the environment generally was one of those policy issues that had effectively divided the Right, the fact that the Coronation Hill proposal broached the issue of uranium mining meant that the issue had the effect of harking back to the type of ideological issue that had historically provided a wide and bitter gulf between the ALP's Left and Right wings (Australian 19/6/91). Given the ideological antecedents of this debate, and given that the 'economic' ministers tended to be from the Right and Center-Left anyway, Prime Minister Hawke found himself turning away from his factional support base in a bid to appeal to the Left for support on Coronation Hill - which, of course, the Left was prepared to provide. It is
interesting to note the proximity of the environmental debate to this emerging factional fluidity which, as it was to transpire, would play an important role in the subsequent leadership struggle between Bob Hawke and Paul Keating.

In the context of all of this, an interesting revisionism of the Hawke approach to politics generally began to emerge from the Caucus, where the Government's propensity to make decisions slowly and as the result of careful investigation began to be viewed as unwarranted incrementalism at best, and hopeless prevarication at worst. As pressure began to increase on the Government to undertake a more robust policy on investment and development, decisions such as that made about Coronation Hill incurred a substantial political cost for the main patrons of the environment position, including Prime Minister Hawke and Senator Richardson. For Prime Minister Hawke the growing threat of a leadership challenge set the context within which previous approaches to policy politics, including the way in which the factional system could be utilised, began to unravel. And in the midst of a changing political environment brought about by increasing rates of unemployment and a growing sense of threat over his leadership, Prime Minister Hawke was in a position to abandon previous policy commitments and even historical factional alignments in a bid to save his leadership. In this context of altering political environments, initiatives commenced under the Hawke administration ran the risk of being as vulnerable as the Prime Minister who had presided over them.
5.2: Reform under pressure: the Resource Security Legislation program

Amidst the development of new processes for discussing and formulating policy, and seeking ways of mediating between industry and environmental interests, the timber and mining industries began to argue that development capital required a greater degree of certainty on resource availability. From this demand emerged the issue of 'resource security' - a concept initially put forward in the Salamanca Process in Tasmania by the timber industry in search for guaranteed access to timber resources prior to undertaking any investment initiatives. This idea derived from one of the main developer complaints about the way in which the creation of environmental policy as an afterthought undermined the ability of companies to plan and carry out development. Developers argued that certainty in governmental decision-making was critical to private investment decision-making, and that, given the way in which land-use decisions had been made recently, developers would only invest where they would be guaranteed that no resource initially conceded to them would be subject to some later denial (see Dargavel and Handmer 1990; NAFI News March 1990).

The Federal Labor Government's interest in Resource Security Legislation (RSL) was the result of a host of sometimes only marginally related developments. Clearly the championing of RSL as an integral part of industry policy reform designed to revive the encouragement of down-stream processing of Australia's timber resource was a continuation of the agenda pursued by the pro-development block, both within
Cabinet and with the support of peak developer interest groups including AMIC and NAFI. The role of these industry groups in the national RSL debate, however, did not appear to be particularly proactive. When the national RSL program was announced, its initial backers - in particular, the then Industry and Technology Minister Senator John Button - foreshadowed a minimum investment level of $100 million being required before any RSL programme would be put in place for an individual development. This minimum investment level was subjected to intense criticism from NAFI, whose constituency included medium- to small-scale forestry companies including sawmillers. Indeed, some of these smaller operators feared RSL as a form of protection for large-scale corporate developers that would deny sawmillers access to timber resources (see NAFI 1990-91:7). Clearly if NAFI had been involved in the initiating stages of the program its contribution must have been haphazard and superficial at best. An alternative perspective put forward by environmental sympathisers was that, far from pressing for such a proposal, NAFI became an unwitting ally in a push to alter the Commonwealth's approach to timber resource policy towards a more developer-oriented position. The real impetus for this program actually came from the ministerial staffs of some of the pro-development block within Cabinet. Thus the whole RSL program emerged as a somewhat haphazard exercise.

As part of the negotiations and, at times, manoeuvring over the RAC's timber industry inquiry and the operation of the ESDWGs, some environmental interest groups used the RSL issue in threats to withdraw their participation from the Government’s incorporationist initiatives. Significantly, by early 1991 environmental leaders began to
feel that Prime Minister Hawke’s position on the environment was beginning to change. This reflected Prime Minister Hawke’s attempt to raise his pro-development credentials both with his Cabinet and Caucus, and with a business sector whose criticism of the Government’s land-use and resource policy approach had increased significantly over the RAC’s handling of the Coronation Hill issue. The timing of the RSL initiative also coincided with Prime Minister Hawke’s growing interest in reforming Federal-State relations with a view to putting them on a more co-operative basis as a prelude to undertaking microeconomic policy reform - an integral part of the Government’s ‘New Federalism’ policy (see Galligan 1992a; Galligan 1992b). Given that the environment had been one of the major sources of strained Federal-State relations, and given, as the Wesley Vale dispute indicated, very large sums of foreign investment were involved, it was to be expected that reform of environmental policy decision-making could also come under the auspices of this policy. Thus, at the same time that Prime Minister Hawke was working on his preservationist position on Coronation Hill (admittedly on the basis of indigenous peoples’ rights rather than on an ecological argument), the Prime Minister appropriated the RSL initiative from Senator Button to include it in his March 1991 Industry Statement (Parliamentary Debates: HOR 5, 1991:1761; and see Jones 1991).

The Commonwealth version of RSL subsequently incorporated in the Forest Conservation and Development Bill (1991) sought to provide the basis upon which large-scale pulp-mill developers could obtain guarantees of access to timber resources to enable their pulp-milling ventures to proceed. In the words of the Industry Statement:
...with RSL in place, companies can proceed with major value-added initiatives with the confidence that governments will not act to inhibit their access to forest resources. (Australia 1991:3.28)

In essence, the Commonwealth bill aimed at establishing careful, integrated evaluation procedures designed to allow pro-active evaluative input by State and Federal agencies. In particular, the program was designed to institute a process by which policy-makers could attempt to formulate decisions with a longer-term perspective. It was also designed to try and bring the complex scientific and technical inputs in any such decision into the decision-making process in a pre-emptive manner (and this included input from bodies such as the AHC and the RAC on matters pertaining to ecological value-inputs).³

The whole program was designed to achieve three important objectives: first, it was anticipated that RSL would become a cornerstone of a co-operative approach to environmental matters between Canberra and the States, thereby solving one of the major problems that had hitherto militated against the Hawke Government's desire to bring consensus to Federal-State relations. Second, the five-stage program based as it was on the central roles played by agencies such as the RAC and AHC as aggregators and filters of the wide range of potential value inputs was designed to alleviate another source of strain and instability. Up until this point the scientific and technical debate associated with land-use matters had become highly politicised. The controversy surrounding the question of effluent disposal at the proposed Wesley Vale pulp-mill had been a major example of how both environmentalists and developers could introduce profoundly conflicting scientific and technical data that could simultaneously sway
public opinion and confound the ability of governmental agencies to deal comprehensively with such matters. Finally, and consistent with the aim underpinning the Federal Government's desire to bring order and stability to this policy arena, the RSL program was an attempt to bring the political dynamics of land-use decision-making under bureaucratic control. Certainly as far as the pro-developer block within Cabinet and Caucus was concerned, environmental politics had previously been dominated by the ability of well-resourced and politically-literate environmental interest groups to campaign effectively in the public realm (see Australian 9/10/90; Age 7/10/90). In the light of this, the RSL program stood as an attempt to bring the otherwise polemical politics of land-use decision-making out of the public realm and squarely into the institutionalised decision-making process.

It was at this point that the RSL program made a critical assumption that was designed to signal the Federal Government's commitment to the developer position and which, consequently, became a major source of environmentalist opposition. The Industry Statement declared that as far as the Commonwealth was concerned, development proposals that satisfied the RSL process would be guaranteed a commitment from the Federal Government that there would be no further application of Commonwealth legislation to the proposal (Australia 1991:5.57-5.58). In other words, once RSL had been applied to a project by both State and Federal Governments, all parties would be locked into the decision and there would be no scope for a reactive campaign by any protagonist interest group to mount a rear-guard action designed to have such decisions overturned. The Commonwealth's RSL program assumed that once
a resource decision had been reached via the five-stage procedure set out by the Industry Statement, the Commonwealth would assume that all outstanding evaluative matters - including environmental, cultural and scientific matters - had been dealt with and resolved.

Implied in the Industry Statement was a message from the Government that it intended to target the ability of the environmental movement to use direct activism as a way of retrospectively attacking decisions to permit exploitation of natural resources. Throughout the period, environmentalist activism in land-use matters had followed a similar pattern - usually, it must be noted, as a result of the failure of particularly state-based institutionalised decision-making structures to address ecological value-inputs to land-use decision-making with any seriousness. Where environmentalist values did impact on the decision-making process, this was either as a result of an afterthought on behalf of institutional actors or, more likely, as a result of a successful environmentalist campaign conducted in reaction to a particular decision. The RSL program mooted by the Hawke Government, however, threatened to severely constrain this political space, and thus the environmental leadership was vehemently opposed to the proposal.

As an example of the Federal Government's continuing interest in reforming the means by which land-use and resource policy was made, the RSL program was entirely consistent with the creation of the RAC, and the AHC's evolution towards self-reform placing greater emphasis on comprehensive, long-term processes as part of the way to achieving 'better' decision-making. When considered in the context of reforms such as
the RAC and the ESD process, the RSL program stands out as another institutional attempt at transforming land-use and resource policy decision-making from a reactive culture to a more careful, integrated (not to say incorporationist) process based on establishing long-term objectives and pre-emptive addressing of as wide a range of value-inputs as possible. It is also important to note, however, that this particular initiative appeared to have emerged from an increasing interest on behalf of the Federal Government in providing additional space for developer interests to have a greater input in decision-making, whilst continuing to find ways of incorporating environmentalist input at the pre-problem stage of a debate rather than attempting to address environmental issues in an *ad hoc* and reactive basis. Indeed, the point at which the RSL initiative was quite different from that which preceded it in the form of the RAC and the ESD process was precisely with respect to the altering political dynamics that were occurring within the Government due to emerging political pressures emanating from a changing economic environment and a not unrelated internecine political struggle. It is to these complex politics that underpinned the emergence and subsequent decline of the RSL program that we shall now turn.

5.3: Return to short-term politics: the RSL under attack

The emergence of Resource Security Legislation at both the State and Federal levels marked an important stage in national environmental policy politics. The program represented an integral part of the on-going attempt by institutionalised policy-making actors to reform the decision-making process. Yet it was noticeable that those
governmental actors who sponsored the program were to pay a heavy political price. In Tasmania, for example, the Field Labor Government's pursuit of RSL was one of the critical issues that cleaved the minority government from its green-independent Accord partners, with Labor subsequently being defeated in the 1992 State election (Haward and Larmour 1993). In the meantime, a fundamental change occurred in federal politics which saw the displacement of Bob Hawke as Prime Minister by the ex-Treasurer, Paul Keating. As in the Tasmanian situation, environmental matters generally, and the politics of RSL in particular, played a role in this transition.

The politics of RSL at the national level was complicated from the outset by a significant shift in intra-Cabinet alliances. As noted previously, the environmental leadership expressed its opposition to the RSL primarily on the grounds that it limited the strategic space within which it could operate on specific land-use and resource issues (Canberra Times 18/3/91). There was also, typically, some spill-over from the Tasmanian situation, where the same leading environmental groups were resisting Premier Field's RSL program and where antipathy between the green-independents and the core environmental groups against Mr Field and members of his staff had been steadily growing. On the other side of the debate, the pro-development block within Cabinet and Caucus set about arguing the case for a greater urgency in the development agenda, particularly in the light of what was perceived to have been a substantial economic cost incurred in the Federal Government's handling of the Wesley Vale proposal (see Australian 14/11/90).
In seeking to exert counter-pressure to the 'economic hardheads' within the Federal Cabinet who were basically in support of the RSL proposal, the environmental lobby was able to count on the support of the Left in Caucus and its usual sympathisers from the right, including Senator Richardson and the incumbent Environment Minister, Ros Kelly (Australian 6/3/91). The essence of the environmentalist opposition - as expressed by both the environmental interest group leadership and Senator Richardson and Ms Kelly - was that pursuit of a policy such as this would lead to a severance of environmental interest group support for the ALP, which in turn would have significant electoral implications (Canberra Times 8/3/91). Up until the RSL debate, it had been precisely this combination of Senator Richardson's factional authority with the leadership authority of Hawke as Prime Minister that had underpinned the Government's decision to adopt preservationist outcomes in a number of specific land-use disputes. On this occasion, however, the Prime Minister was supporting the pro-development block and its desire to have a RSL program put in place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

source: ABS Labour Force papers 6202, 6203, 6354
The shift in the Prime Minister's stance on environmental matters in this debate was due to two important factors. First, as the trends outlined in table 5.1 indicate, the period in which arguably the most significant environmental policy output occurred coincided with a period in which unemployment declined and then stabilised. This table also indicates that the timing of the 1990 Federal election in which 'green' themes were so prominent was quite fortuitous given the surge in unemployment that occurred soon after the contest. Indeed, the rise in unemployment from the mid-1990 level of around 6.1 percent to the quite significant 9 percent by the time of the release of the Industry Statement served to give the policy greater urgency.

The rising unemployment rate provided a critical economic backdrop against which the politics of the RSL debate at the national level were discharged. The deteriorating employment situation was perceived by Caucus in particular to be a matter of great concern, and there emanated from the back-bench a keener interest in pursuing policies designed to encourage economic growth. This perception was also shared by the Cabinet for whom decisions such as the Wesley Vale outcome now stood out as particularly unfortunate in the face of rising levels of unemployment amongst the manufacturing sector. The deteriorating employment situation also galvanised the ACTU's resistance to any further erosion of commitment to the Government's economic and industry policy objectives particularly by the question of environmental protection. This represented an important development in internal Labor politics on land-use matters, for in the previous period in which unemployment had not been a major macroeconomic problem, the ACTU had been content to confine its role to public
expressions of dismay at what it perceived to be as excessive ‘greenie’ hegemony over the land-use debate (Australian 20/9/90). Now, in these changed economic conditions, the ACTU signalled a much firmer resolve to add its weight to the suggestion from Senator Button that the Federal Government seek ways of establishing a resource security program. Moreover, it used its position as participants in the Government's ESD process as a bargaining chip, threatening a withdrawal from the process if the Government did not seriously entertain the idea of providing resource security for the timber industry (Australian 18/12/90).

The growing leadership struggle between Bob Hawke and Paul Keating was the second critical political element present during the RSL debate. Here the leadership aspirants took positions seemingly at odds with their previous track records on environmental matters. Up until the announcement of the Industry Statement and its RSL component, Bob Hawke's role in land-use politics had been one of significant support for the environmentalist agenda as defined by Senator Richardson. In all of the critical issues addressed to this point, Prime Minister Hawke's support for the Richardson position had provided the political authority upon which major conservation decisions had been made. On the subject of RSL, however, Prime Minister Hawke aligned himself with the pro-development side of the debate and later indicated that he was in favour of inducing an administrative culture that would allow for the ‘fast tracking’ of major manufacturing projects.
In taking up the cudgels on behalf of the pulp industry in the RSL debate, Prime Minister Hawke was now at odds Senator Richardson, thereby breaking the very power nexus that had served the environmentalist agenda so well in Federal land-use policy politics. Prime Minister Hawke's position also put him at odds with the Party's Left who, in the main, opposed RSL. It also angered environmental groups with whom the Government, primarily as a result of Prime Minister Hawke's interest in their incorporation in the decision-evaluation process, had previously had close working relations. The reasons why Prime Minister Hawke changed his position to become a champion of RSL were, ultimately, all linked back to the growing leadership tension with Keating. First, Prime Minister Hawke was anxious to publicly indicate his commitment to growth and development in a bid to distance himself from previous preservation-oriented decisions that had been made in more favourable economic times. This was meant not only for Cabinet and Caucus consumption, but also for critical external constituencies including business and, above all, an increasingly restive ACTU.

Second, Prime Minister Hawke sought to assert a much more dynamic leadership approach. During periods of relative economic stability, the consensus-oriented and sometimes highly incremental style of the Hawke Government's decision-making had been lauded as evidence of the Government's effective approach to decision-making (see Gruen and Grattan 1993:4). Now, with unemployment rising and Cabinet seeming to be perplexed by issues such as RSL and Coronation Hill to the point where clear decisions were not possible, the same careful and consensus-oriented approach was now being widely seen as prevarication and as lacking leadership and
authority (Kelly 1992:639). To resuscitate his leadership, the Prime Minister's embracing of a more dynamic style meant a jettisoning of the consensus approach in dealing with Cabinet, a commitment to speedier decision-making, and (importantly for the environment debate) embracing the developer agenda.

Table 5.2: Cabinet Alliances and the RSL Debate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minister</th>
<th>Leadership Support</th>
<th>Land-Use Position</th>
<th>RSL Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hawke</td>
<td>Hawke</td>
<td>uncommitted</td>
<td>pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keating</td>
<td>Keating</td>
<td>development</td>
<td>anti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beazley</td>
<td>Hawke</td>
<td>environment</td>
<td>anti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolkus</td>
<td>Hawke</td>
<td>environment</td>
<td>anti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blewett</td>
<td>Keating</td>
<td>uncommitted</td>
<td>pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Button</td>
<td>Keating</td>
<td>development</td>
<td>pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>Keating</td>
<td>development</td>
<td>pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crean</td>
<td>Hawke</td>
<td>development</td>
<td>pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawkins</td>
<td>Keating</td>
<td>development</td>
<td>pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duffy</td>
<td>Hawke</td>
<td>uncommitted</td>
<td>pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evans</td>
<td>Hawke</td>
<td>development</td>
<td>pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand</td>
<td>Hawke</td>
<td>environment</td>
<td>anti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howe</td>
<td>Hawke</td>
<td>environment</td>
<td>pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>Keating</td>
<td>environment</td>
<td>anti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerin</td>
<td>Hawke</td>
<td>development</td>
<td>pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>Hawke</td>
<td>uncommitted</td>
<td>pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richardson</td>
<td>Keating</td>
<td>environment</td>
<td>anti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willis</td>
<td>Hawke</td>
<td>development</td>
<td>pro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

source: Canberra Times 20/10/90; Australian 7/3/91

Finally, and of arguably the greatest importance, Prime Minister Hawke's shifting position in time for the Industry Statement was in no small part an attempt to shore up his support within the Caucus and the Cabinet by attempting to win back a
significant section of his own Right-wing faction for whom the Hawke style was viewed as a serious political liability, particularly in the light of the Keating challenge. To obtain an insight to the complicated dynamics of this, it is necessary to refer to table 5.2 which lists where Cabinet members stood in relation to their support of the environment, their position on RSL, their support in the leadership question and their factional alignment reveals three important patterns. First, it is clear that, on environmental matters and, later, on the leadership question, Prime Minister Hawke was able to enjoy the solid support of the Left. Second, the table also indicates that the big problem for Prime Minister Hawke was that support for Keating divided his own Right-wing factional base as well as Center-Left and independents who were, in the main, also consistent supporters of the development agenda.

The complicating factor here was the support for Mr Keating amongst the pro-environment Right wingers Ms Kelly and, most significantly of all given his previous allegiances, Senator Richardson. The table indicates that whereas Hawke (who had previously been supportive of the environmental agenda) was now supporting RSL, Paul Keating, notwithstanding his role as a member of pro-development group by virtue of his position on economic policy matters generally, was in fact opposed to RSL. Now, it is critical to note the nature of Mr Keating’s opposition to the proposal for his arguments against RSL were primarily from an economic rationalist perspective that pro-development ministers and even the ‘business’ constituency found politically difficult to rebut. As Jones has implied, the resource security provisions within the Industry Statement sat somewhat oddly with the overall deregulatory thrust to many of
the other initiatives, including a commitment to eliminate a host of tariffs against
Australia's Asian trading partners (Jones 1991:29). To Keating, the RSL program
represented a protectionist policy where industry would be guaranteed access to a
material input in isolation of market forces and, consistent with his political and
ideological commitment to subjecting industry to the exigencies of the market-place, he
would not support RSL. By opposing this initiative on economic rationalist grounds, Mr
Keating's opposition to the bill did not alienate his pro-development supporters in the
Right and Center-Left. On the other hand, the anti-RSL, pro-Keating Kelly and
Richardson were able to put their support behind Keating both as a potential leader and
critic of the Bill.

The complex divisions operating in Cabinet at this time meant that, far from
being a pro-development initiative enjoying the Government's fulsome support and
obtaining a swift passage through the legislative process (and, in so doing, mitigating
the Government's appearance of being directionless and prevaricating), the program was
subject to a long, debilitating debate. As it was, Prime Minister Hawke eventually won
Cabinet and, later, Caucus approval for the initiative. His leadership, however, was not
to survive long enough to see the Bill through the Parliament for, by December 1991,
Bob Hawke was replaced by Paul Keating as parliamentary leader of the ALP and Prime
Minister (see Kelly 1992:615ff).
5.4: From Hawke to Keating: Accordism under strain

The RSL story was one indication of the way in which the altered dynamics of the prevailing political environment had important consequences for the nature and direction of policy debates. Quite clearly, Prime Minister Hawke’s interest in, and pursuit of RSL was due in no small way to his desire to shore up support for his leadership amongst the predominantly pro-development Right-wing faction within his Cabinet and Party. The seemingly prevaricating nature of the RSL programme’s passage through the Cabinet process had once again raised the spectre of Prime Minister Hawke as a weak and indecisive leader. As it was, Prime Minister Hawke was to see off the first Keating challenge allowing the Government to continue with one of its major policy agenda items in the form of the New Federalism. This policy in particular became the focus of a strident denunciation by Paul Keating at a speech delivered to the National Press Club, this time in his capacity as a back-bencher (Keating 1991). Keating’s denunciation as anti-Labor those proposals in Hawke’s New Federalism to allow the States to regain financial autonomy, or to be able to claw back some exclusivity in policy areas that had in more recent times been dominated by the Commonwealth was the foundation-stone on which the next leadership challenge was constructed. Political discourse throughout this period was dominated by speculation that a Labor leadership transition was imminent. In these circumstances, other policy matters were left to drift as Ministers became embroiled in the leadership manoeuvring.
Indeed, it was precisely this context of brewing leadership tension that provided the basis on which bureaucratic actors could take a prominent role in the environment debate, particularly in the light of the creation of the ESDWGs, the RAC, and the nature of the AHC reforms. Other important alterations to the environment in which the debate was going on were also pertinent. The leadership struggle and the shifting alliances that occurred as a result undermined one of the most important sources of influence for the environmental agenda within Cabinet debates - namely, that alliance between Prime Minister Hawke and Senator Richardson that had been critically important to Senator Richardson being able to exercise great authority since his elevation to the environment portfolio in 1987. Also influential at this time was a deteriorating economic situation in which rising unemployment was a major concern for the Government.

Whilst the period after 1983, and especially between 1987 and 1990, was noteworthy for the nature and extent of the Federal Labor Government’s output of decisions that were designed to achieve conservation or preservation of significant ecosystems, this was not the extent of the Government’s activities in this arena. In the midst of the Wesley Vale dispute - arguably the dispute in which the dysfunctionalism of the policy-making process was most obvious - there emerged from within the Federal Government an interest in finding ways in which the Commonwealth might make ‘better’ land-use and resource decisions. The notion of ‘consensus’ was to be central to this search for reform. The Government’s wish to contain and control the rather bitter politics usually associated with environmental matters, and the need to be able to garner
the intelligence necessary to make effective decisions, became the basis of its interest in creating consensus-oriented land-use policy.

Institutional development was an integral part in this reform. In the ESDWG and the RAC, the policy-discussion process was based on the need for mediation and dialogue between groups otherwise antagonistic towards each other in a bid to search out areas of commonality notwithstanding the great normative divide between these groups. The search for consensus through inclusion of the various groups making up the land-use and resources policy community was also present in the operational methods of the ESDWG, the RAC, and in the reform of the AHC. The move towards incorporation of potential protagonists included state agencies. Given that the reform of Federal-State relations had been an integral part of the Federal Government's pursuit of microeconomic reform and its 'New Federalism' (Galligan 1992), this aspect of institutional reform of the environmental policy-making process appeared to be inter-linked with the Government's broader attempt to qualitatively reform the making of policy generally.

As has been noted in previous chapters, the Hawke Government's approach to the environment occurred against a broader policy back-drop dominated by an interest in consensus politics (see Gruen and Grattan 1993, Gerritsen 1986; McEachern 1986; Emy and Hughes 1991:180-183; McEachern 1991:20, cf: West 1984). This was particularly explicit in the way the Federal Government sought to manage the economy with the participation of both business and the union movement as expressed through
the ACTU. It was from the relationship with the ACTU that the whole Accord process emerged and this, by becoming associated with the successful achievement of seemingly impossible economic policy objectives, acted as a model capable of application in other problematic policy areas (Power 1991, and see Beilharz and Murphy 1992:175). The significance of the Accord as a model lay less in the actual content of the agreement between Government and the ACTU, and more on the values and operational features of the process. The Accord stood for the essence of the Hawke Government's approach to consensus politics - that is, that interest constellations could be aggregated into peak organisations who could get together and seek to find common policy ground notwithstanding the normative and/or ideological divide between these groups. The importance of Accordism as a model lay in the assumptions it made about the need for social consensus, political stability, inclusion of the significant interest groups within rather than outside of institutional policy-evaluative processes. Whilst this last point might have been a reflection of the Government's commitment to social consensus, it also made strong strategic sense. After all, one of the essential features of Accordism for the Government lay in the way inclusion of interest groups that were clearly leaders in their policy communities could give the Government more scope to exercise leadership, if not control, over debates in those arenas.

5.5: Conclusion and overview

The environment was a major problem for a Government that had otherwise demonstrated an ability to successfully manage complex and previously conflict-ridden
policy arenas, and which remained quite cohesive when debating policy. The environment issue, by contrast with economic policy and industrial relations, constantly divided the Hawke Cabinet, sometimes to the point of total dysfunction. The Government's apoplexy over environmental issues was in no small part a reflection of the way in which the dynamics of environmental policy politics were profoundly influenced by the presence of very strong and politically competent interest groups from both sides of the divide. Importantly, both the pro-development, and especially the pro-environment interests, could be aggregated into a handful of groups who had the potential to act as 'peak' bodies capable of participating in a neo-corporatist arrangement. Thus environmental interest groups like the ACF, TWS, Greenpeace and the WWF emerged as possible 'peak' bodies that could be incorporated by the Government into policy-discussing forums. Given the issue's capacity to cause real problems for an otherwise highly functional Government, and given the existence of these large, potentially leading interest groups the environment policy arena was well and truly capable of having Accordist principles applied to its management.

Many environmental leaders viewed inclusion as the only way to ensure that ecological rationality could be integrated into the decision-making process proactively rather than as an afterthought (Davis 1985a, Dryzek 1983, Hutton 1987, Buhrs 1991:1). 'Business', meanwhile, argued that investors were being deterred by the propensity for Government to make environmental policy in a reactive fashion. Any reform that would bring more certainty to the decision-making process would, therefore, be supported by developer interests too. Thus the basis for tripartism in land-use matters emerged.
Herein lay a further manifestation of the neo-corporatist tendency in the Hawke Government's management of the land-use and resource policy arena. Traditionally, corporatism revolves around the notion of tripartism where producers, unions and government are enjoined in procedures to make consensual policy decisions (Wilson 1982, Emy and Hughes 1991:556). In the land-use arena, however, ‘business’ and unions tended to form an alliance in pressing the case in favour of resource exploitation, leaving the environmental interest groups as the ‘peak’ bodies presenting contrary value-inputs to the debate. The demonstration of their ability to frustrate the investment program of a major corporate joint-venture in the Wesley Vale dispute indicated the extent to which environmental interest groups now had to be thought of as sectoral actors in resource political economy.

The high value placed by the state on stability and order to the point of seeking to depoliticise the critical issues that cleave society is precisely the basis upon which the interest in neo-corporatist approaches to policy politics is founded. The literature that deals with this theme in the context of the politics of the late-industrial liberal state tends to concentrate on the struggle between labour and capital for a share of the wealth generated by the dominant mode of production - the struggle over wages, conditions and welfare provision that Offe characterised as ‘old paradigmatic’ politics (Offe 1985). Indeed, it has been precisely with regard to this struggle between what must be viewed as key sectoral actors (labour, capital and Government) that the dynamics and normative assumptions of neo-corporatism have been applied in various liberal democratic states. Certainly this was the case in the Australian context as a result of the Hawke
Government's desire to bring consensus to the economic and industrial relations field whilst, at the same time, attempting to maintain control of, and leadership over, the policy arena. The apparent application of this neo-corporatist approach to the land-use and resource arenas, ostensibly as a response to the problems caused by the incursion of an ecological rationality into the value-inputs underpinning the decision-making process, seemed to suggest that rather than being a manifestation of 'new paradigmic' politics, Australian environmentalism was being considered in the same context as economic policy. Indeed, this transformation in the view of environmental policy held by institutional actors became something of a dominant theme particularly as the environmental policy debate began to address the so-called 'brown' issues within the broader context of the international debate on issues such as ESD.

But even within this reformed process could be found the source of strains and tensions that served to re-visit the short-term and politically volatile environment that had previously been associated with this debate. The capacity for internal division over these matters to undermine the Government has been canvassed here. So, too, has the problem of how a social movement such as environmentalism responds to the opportunities that arise to participate in the institutionalised policy-making process. In the Australian context, a major core organisation such as the ACF had long advocated just such a proactive role for environmentalist input in the decision-making process, and it directed a great deal of its energy and time into the RAC and ESD processes. The Wilderness Society, on the other hand, had a much more ambiguous approach. As a group traditionally committed to direct activism, TWS could be more dismissive of
processes such as the ESDWGs. On the other hand, the Society’s leadership was fully aware of the importance of having access to decision-makers when the question of preventing certain policy decisions that might otherwise undermine nature conservation arose. Thus, for all their internal debates about the correctness or otherwise of being involved in such processes, TWS participated in aspects of Labor’s Accordinist framework from the pragmatic assumption that influence is more easily exercised from within the decision-making process. Thus TWS was tied in to the new processes too, although just how loose the Society’s commitment to these new approaches was would become quite apparent in the very strained relationship that developed during the period of Paul Keating’s Prime Ministership.

In addition to these problems associated with finding ways in which environmental and developer perspectives on land-use matters might be reconciled was the capacity for specific disputes to throw up their own set of conflicts that defied a neat environmentalist-developer dichotomy. Policy makers had had a taste of this with the Wesley Vale pulp mill dispute, when primary producer interests helped tip the balance in the Hawke Government’s decision to allow the project not to proceed. The Coronation Hill dispute revisited this matter of new sets of interests entering into the debate and having the ability to influence decision-making. The emergence of the matter of the land rights of indigenous people was clearly the point at which the Hawke Government made its decision not to allow mining to proceed there. That this matter had been raised in the context of the RAC inquiry into Coronation Hill simultaneously underscored the capacity for such a body to fulfil its legal obligations to undertake a full
investigation into resource use in a rational and comprehensive manner (an approach
designed to depoliticise such debates) whilst actually adding to the political controversy
surrounding the debate.

This period of national environmental politics was one dominated by the Hawke
Government’s attempt to qualitatively alter the nature of the debate - and the RAC was
the agency that had been created to be at the centre of this reformed approach. This
chapter has examined the period of the debate in which the RAC, along with the
ESDWGs, was undertaking the work that was envisaged for it by the Government.
However, far from providing the answer to the Government’s problems with a highly
politicised debate dominated by powerful interest groups, the institutionally-oriented
approach was immediately put under strain by, first, the enduringly controversial nature
of the debate, and, second, by changes occurring within the Labor Government itself.
The displacing of Bob Hawke as Prime Minister by Paul Keating would mark the
beginning of another distinct era in Labor’s management of the national debate in which
those two major initiatives - the ESD debate and the RAC - would eventually be
terminated by the Keating Government. In other words, yet another distinct period in
which the Labor-environmental relationship would undergo change was underway.
Interestingly, the contribution that the Keating ascendancy would make to a souring of
Labor-environmental relations was not immediately apparent as a result of the dynamics
of the RSL debate. The decline in the institutional approach to managing the debate
which would become apparent during the time of the Keating Government - itself a
reflection of altered priorities and outlooks associated with the creation of a new
Government - would, again, be an evolutionary phenomenon.

1. The Chief Commissioner of the RAC, Justice Sir Donald Stewart, argued that the Commission's deliberate decision to move away from a quasi-legalistic approach in which the rules of evidence would apply to the conduct of these hearings was designed to make these proceedings as accessible as possible (RAC News No. 7, March 1990).

2. The form and nature of the CVM as applied to a practical case study was clearly in evidence in the Kakadu inquiry in which the RAC sought to quantify the extent to which the community would be prepared to forgo development in favour of conservation in literal dollar terms. And so, in December 1990, as a result of its utilisation of the CV survey, the RAC reported that it found respondents were prepared to pay for either a major environmental scenario (involving prevention of the mine and maintenance of the area), and the 'minor impact’ scenario. In the case of the former, the Commission claimed that respondents were willing to pay $123.80 per annum for ten years to preserve the Coronation Hill area from mining, whereas under the minor environmental impact scenario respondents were prepared to pay $52.50 per annum for total conservation of the region (Galligan and Lynch 1992:20, Australian Financial Review 19/12/1990).

3. The program was intended to bring in a five-stage decision-making process, the key features of which included a co-operative evaluational approach between Commonwealth and State actors, and incorporation not of any particular interest group (with the exception of developer interests at the initial stage by virtue of their role in making the initial investment decision), but rather agencies such as the RAC and the AHC through which interest groups were presumed to have participated in the land-use debate. The program sought to bring a hitherto unknown level of comprehensiveness to decision-making at the Federal level. Agreements that would incur application of RSL would have to occur in conjunction with the States (where RSL legislation would have to be enacted co-jointly) and would involve careful and precise definitions of the areas to be subject to RSL, the exact quantity of the timber resource to be made available, the economic, cultural and scientific costs and benefits to accrue from such a development, and the type of resource management to be undertaken (Australia 1991:5.56-5.59).
CHAPTER 6

NEW PROCESSES, OLD PROBLEMS:
THE KEATING ASCENDANCY AND DECLINE
OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The important role that key institutional actors play in policy politics is highlighted in this chapter as it traces yet another shift in Labor's approach to the environment. This shift was of greater importance even than some of the decisions made by the Government to dismantle one of the key structures created in response to the problems confronting policy-makers in the mid-1980s - specifically, the Resource Assessment Commission, which was not to survive beyond the 1993 Federal budget. It will be argued that the decision to do away with the RAC reflected the altered priorities and outlooks of the Keating Labor Government, particularly between 1993 and 1996. Further, this chapter argues that the leadership transition in the ALP (and, as a result, the transition in the Australian Prime Ministership) from Bob Hawke to Paul Keating was the critical turning point in both Labor-environmental relations, which would culminate in a collapse of the 'red-green' alliance ahead of the 1996 Federal election.

The link between the Keating ascendancy and the notion of a decline in the importance the Government placed on the environmental debate after the leadership change was indicative of the significant role that the Cabinet plays in institutional
politics. This was particularly evident in the case of the Keating Government’s dismantling of the RAC - a major feature of this period. The Labor leadership change clearly indicated that the environment had been reprioritised from its former position as an issue of significant importance (particularly to the party’s election strategy), to become instead a matter of minor importance relative to the reform agenda that the new Prime Minister brought to the debate. The deterioration in the Labor-environmental relationship commenced with the 1993 election, which bestowed electoral legitimacy to the Keating Prime-Ministership. The souring of Labor-environmental relations to the point that the Coalition was able to re-establish lines of communication with at least some environmental interest groups prior to the 1996 Federal election was thus a major legacy of the Keating years. This souring of relations was foreshadowed by the re-emergence of the very bitter type of land-use dispute that the Hawke Government had tried to avoid through its reforms of the national environmental policy-making process.

The notion that old problems in the environmental debate re-emerged to cause the Keating Government significant political difficulties is a central claim. As will be shown below, the very same forestry matters that had featured so prominently in the national environmental debate between 1983 and 1990, and that had solicited so much research effort by the bureaucracy via the ESDWGs and the RAC, re-emerged during the Keating Prime Ministership in their old, adversarial and confrontationist form to undermine the Government’s reputation as sound managers of the policy process. In other words, there was a revisiting of the problems in environmental policy politics that the Hawke Government had tried to solve through the application of Accordist
principles in a bid to depoliticise such disputes. By the time of the 1996 Federal election, Labor-environmental relations had collapsed particularly as a result of the acrimony between the Labor Government and TWS over forestry policy matters. One major consequence of this was the collapse of the electoral alliance between Labor and the core environmental interest groups that, as we have seen previously, was a constant theme underpinning Australian environmental politics since the Franklin dam dispute. In a very real sense, Labor-environmental relations had turned full circle from the Franklin period, to reach a situation after Labor’s defeat in the 1996 election in which the party was in opposition, and the environmental movement was on the verge of losing the access to the institutionalised decision-making process that it had achieved during the years of more co-operative Labor-environmental relations.

6.1: Unfinished business: the Keating ascendancy and the Hawke environmental legacy

The environmental debate between 1991 and 1993 comprised exclusively of initiatives commenced under Prime Minister Hawke - the RAC inquiries, the ESDWG investigations, and the formation of an inter-governmental approach to environmental matters under the auspices of Prime Minister Hawke’s ‘New Federalism’. Of the work being done in these three realms, the New Federalism initiative was to have the greatest long-term impact. In February a draft version and then later, in May 1992 the final report outlining the Inter-Governmental Agreement on the Environment (IGAE)
between Canberra and the States and Territories were released. The aims of this agreement were fivefold: first, it aimed to encourage a co-operative rather than an adversarial approach to Federal-State relations over land-use; second, it aimed to clarify exactly what were the roles to be played by the various levels of government; third, it aimed to reduce the number of Federal-State disputes over the environment; fourth, it sought to provide clarity of roles and certainty of governmental objectives in a bid to assuage ‘business’ interests; and, finally, it sought to provide an enhanced system of environmental protection (Australia 1992a: covering note).

The IGAE was of interest for more than just what it tried to achieve in the Federal Government’s attempt to rationalise and de-politicise Federal-State land-use relations. The IGAE also gave significant indications of the extent to which the ‘brown’ agenda had taken up residence in the preoccupation of institutional actors. Whilst forestry matters did obtain attention under the heading of ‘National Estate’, the overwhelming bulk of the IGAE was devoted to the ESD concept, outlining possible co-ordination of EIA procedures, and discussion of the need for intergovernmental co-ordination on ‘Greenhouse’ issues including vehicle emissions, noise pollution, air quality monitoring and such. Indeed, the IGAE broached the idea of the creation of a national Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to assist in the national co-ordination of monitoring these ‘brown’ agenda items (Australia 1992a:24-25).

The release of the Federal Government’s ‘National Strategy’ for ESD and the formulation of a National Forestry Policy Statement (NFPS) were the end products of
the two other major pieces of business carried over from the Hawke period - the final report of the RAC inquiry into forestry, and the ESDWG. Both of these documents were released in December 1992, and both argued the case for placing procedural emphasis on the need to find ways of making resource decisions capable of addressing the wide range of materialist and non-materialist value inputs in a proactive and consensual way. In addition to the recommendations on forestry matters referred to in a previous chapter, the NFPS sought to link in the Government's response to ESD and the commitments to co-operative decision-making and dispute resolution with the States outlined in the IGAE (Australia 1992b:23). Furthermore, the NFPS flagged the increasing importance of inter-agency co-operation and co-ordination in procedures such as National Estate evaluation (Australia 1992b:25). The ESD paper also echoed previously canvassed approaches particularly with regard to defining ESD as a commitment to

...using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes on which life depends are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased. (Australia 1992c:6)

The final paper to emerge from the ESDWG process maintained the argument about the need for Government and interest groups to view ESD as a balance between ecological and economic rationalities and its articulation of the importance of ‘intra-generational’ and ‘inter-generational’ change - an approach that did not differ greatly from the points made by the DPIE discussion paper back in June 1990. The new paper did, however, broach the idea of further institutional reform in a bid to convert ESD from something other than, at worst, rhetoric or, at best, a broadly-stated set of principles to be tacked on to the preamble of land-use or resource policy legislation. The
paper broached the possibility of, amongst other things, establishing a Commonwealth-NSW ESD standing committee, to include discussion of ESD implications of documents to be considered by Federal Cabinet, to incorporate ESD into Federal legislation, and find ways in which the States and Commonwealth could consider ESD matters in bodies such as the Council of Australian Government (COAG) (Australia 1992c:66-67).

All of this work stood as a monument to the contribution of bureaucratic and interest group actors to the process of transforming the environmental debate away from being preoccupied with specific land-use disputes to discussing how ecological values could be incorporated into long-term decision-making. Staff within the RAC, the ESD process, and within DASET (later to become DEET) held firm to the view that protagonists in the resource policy debate could be mediated, and that a range of ecological values, inputs and insights could be incorporated into decision-making in a comprehensive manner. In interviews undertaken for this study, staff members all indicated their awareness of the capacity for the policy debates at the parliamentary level to be influenced by short-term factors. Bureaucratic actors were fully aware of the short-term approach of Ministers and politicians whose perspectives on the policy debate are profoundly influenced by the electoral cycle. In this circumstance, bureaucratic actors viewed their role as being interested in the medium- to long-term policy-making process, and that the decisions being made on ESD in particular would provide a reference point for policy-makers constructing land-use and resource policy into the future.¹
As Federal bureaucrats, these staff were also acutely aware of the relative lack of Commonwealth expertise on ecological matters particularly when compared with the States. In this context, the information-gathering functions of the RAC inquiries into Coronation Hill, the timber industry and coastal resources inquiries were seen as highly valuable exercises in which the Commonwealth could seek to redress the imbalance in expertise and information vis a vis the States. Similarly, bureaucratic actors in the AHC, as part of their ‘regional assessment’ reform referred to in previous chapters, were concerned about the emergence of a Commonwealth-State rivalry between similar agencies as antithetical to the high value all these staff placed on the idea that policy can and should be made rationally and comprehensively. Under such a view, the AHC, in addition to the RAC, sought to forge much more co-operative relations with concomitant State agencies and departments. In short, bureaucratic actors in this field were amongst some of the most enthusiastic supporters of the Hawke Government’s attempt to reform the environmental policy-making process, although their motivation tended to be based more on the high value placed on the desirability for rationality to dominate the decision-making process, rather than on the value placed on notions of consensus politics by the Government. In the interim period between Prime Minister Hawke’s downfall and the ascendancy of Keating and his Cabinet, these actors maintained the momentum in the initiatives undertaken during the Accordist period in Labor’s management of the environment debate.

The leadership of the interest group protagonists participating in these processes during this interim period were motivated by different outlooks. It is clear from
interviews with the leadership of NAFI and AMIC, as main pro-developer participants in the RAC and ESD processes, that these groups viewed their participation in such forums as a political necessity to meet the challenge environmentalists posed in influencing Government and public opinion. As such, participation in the ESDWG and the RAC inquiries represented a challenge to maintain their position and interests in debates, particularly over ESD. The NAFI in particular viewed the entire range of activities being undertaken in relation to investigation of the timber industry as a forum in which environmentalists had to be challenged and prevented from dominating the debate with what the industry believed to be ‘emotive’ inputs. It is important to note that these interest groups perceived themselves to be the losers in previous land-use disputes, and saw the emerging forums as vital arenas in which they had to, first, defend existing interests and then, later, to try to reassert the industry perspective on mining and forestry matters. Similarly, their perspective on the Labor Government’s approach to these matters was influenced particularly by the outcomes of the Richardson years. In sum, these groups suspected the Labor party of being too close to environmental interests, and, consequently, suspected the newly emerged policy discussion forums like the ESDWG, and the RAC inquiries, of being governmental concessions to their environmentalist constituency.

And yet, at the very same time, environmental interest groups leaders held no less a suspicious view of the emerging process - notwithstanding their successes in a number of disputes. For these leaders, the Hawke Government’s interest in RSL was interpreted as evidence of the fickle nature of governmental interest in the
environmental debate. The opening up of a role for environmental interest groups in the institutional process represented an opportunity for at least some in the movement to realise an objective than had been sought since the Lake Pedder dispute - specifically, to be able to participate in the decision-making process as insiders. This view was particularly prevalent within the ACF, where a number of personnel devoted an enormous amount of time and resources to participating in both the RAC inquiries, and especially in the ESD process. Yet, by the same token, the sheer diversity of the environmental movement, reflected in the different attitude held by the core groups towards bureaucratic processes, meant that there was a certain degree of ambiguity in the environmentalist response to the various forums for debate on environmental matters. TWS, in particular, was highly suspicious of such approaches to the environmental debate, and tended to operate on the fringe of the RAC and ESD processes during the interim period.³

6.2: RSL, the 1993 election, and the death of the RAC

The Resource Security Legislation program was the last bit of unfinished business from the Hawke period that had to be dealt with by the new Keating Government. The influence of the new Prime Minister was evident in the fate of the RSL program in the Senate, although the signal that Mr Keating’s willingness to see the program wither (an outcome much preferred by the environmental movement) gave an ambiguous signal on where his Government stood on environmental matters. As part of the Cabinet reshuffle caused by the leadership ascendancy, two Keating supporters were
pitted against each other when Ms Kelly's position as Environment Minister was 
reconfirmed, and the robustly pro-logging Victorian MP Allan Griffiths was appointed 
as the junior Resources Minister in the Primary Industry and Energy portfolio now 
headed by Senator Cook. Both Ministers, their staffs, and the clientele interest groups 
became embroiled in a rather bitter internecine battle over the Bill, which was due to go 
to the Senate where the Government was in a minority position.

By all indications, the RSL program, in the guise of the *Forests Conservation 
and Development Bill*, faced the very real prospect of defeat in the Senate. Here the 
Australian Democrats implacably opposed the Bill. The Coalition's position, however, 
was slightly more complicated. As the National Party's spokesperson on the second 
reading of the Bill, Senator Grant Tambling explained, whilst the Coalition was, in 
principle, fully supportive of the concept of resource security, it had serious reservations 
about the Bill put before it. In addition to viewing the program as further unwarranted 
Federal intervention in State land-use affairs and as undesirable duplication of land-use 
administration, the Coalition adopted two aspects of NAFI's criticism of the Bill: first, 
that the Bill took a project-by-project rather than a case-by-case approach and that, 
secondly, that the Bill was too specific to the pulp industry. Both features, it had been 
argued, meant that the vast bulk of the timber industry as it stood would fall outside the 
ambit of the Commonwealth's RSL program. The Coalition's position was that the 
Government would have to amend the Bill to overcome these shortcomings or else the 
Bill as proposed would be defeated in the Senate (*Commonwealth Parliamentary 
Debates: Senate 25 March 1992:1099*).
Faced with the prospect of defeat, the office of Resources Minister Griffiths began to explore the possibility of negotiating a compromise with the Liberal and National Parties. Indeed, the Minister was believed by environmental leaders to have been in negotiation not only with the coalition parties, but also NAFI and the Tasmanian Liberal Government in a bid to find an acceptable compromise.\(^4\) The question of how small- to medium-scale sawmilling enterprises might be incorporated into the RSL program was the critical point of contention between the Government and the Coalition that Griffiths attempted to circumnavigate. Griffiths tried to overcome this by offering to include a procedure by which regionally-based resource projects might be included under the auspices of RSL. The Coalition, anxious to champion the NAFI agenda, rejected this overture (Age 5/5/92). As it was, Griffiths' efforts were basically undermined not by the Coalition, but rather by the Prime Minister’s disinterest in the Bill - an extension of Mr Keating’s reservation about a proposal that he had always viewed as unwarranted industry protectionism.

Griffiths' case was not assisted by the release of the RAC's final report which, amongst other things, confirmed the industry view that the program was basically irrelevant to the vast majority of the industry (RAC 1992:40). More significantly, the Inquiry flagged that whilst there would always be room for small-scale, specialised saw-milling operations, the sawmilling industry that Griffiths and the Coalition sought to incorporate into the RSL program was on the verge of experiencing the effects of a market-oriented restructuring. The RAC inquiry argued that the Government's role in
such a situation had to be one of providing adjustments for industries and industry-based towns to assist them in becoming market-competitive. The uncompetitive, inefficient side of the industry, it was argued, would have to disappear to ensure the viability of that sector (RAC 1992:19-24). Moreover, the Inquiry's findings in this area were set against the overarching context that, according to the view of submissions from experts and state-based agencies that

... during the postwar period, overcutting... occurred in most parts of Australia in response to political pressure to extract native timber resource to support construction and economic development. In some areas high rates of sawlog removal continued into the 1970s. All forest management agencies have now adopted strategies to achieve sustainable-yield management ... (RAC 1992:19)

These findings militated against the Griffiths-Coalition-forest industry position on extending RSL to small-scale sawmilling. In any event, neither the Prime Minister, Ministers Richardson or Kelly, nor the Left in Cabinet and Caucus were prepared to alter the Bill to support the Griffiths position (Age 5/5/92). On the 5th of May, much to the dismay of Griffiths, the Tasmanian Liberal Government, and at least one major pulpmilling firm that threatened a review of its investment planning in the light of the program's failure, the Senate defeated the Forest Development and Conservation Bill and Commonwealth resource security legislation was dead (Age 6/5/92).

At first glance, the Bill's death in the Senate represented a victory for the environmental movement in its opposition to RSL. The result had been something of a close outcome, however, depending as it did on the Coalition's role. Prime Minister Keating's apparent lack of enthusiasm for the Bill (due, no doubt, to its origin as a Hawke initiative) did not extend to actually withdrawing the legislation from
consideration, which, in turn, allowed space for internecine squabbling between his Environment and Resources Ministers to take place. Indeed, not long after the RSL dispute, the two Ministers were again in conflict over the issue of export licences to companies harvesting native forests for the export woodchip market. At the heart of this dispute was a lack of certainty over the process by which licences would be issued, and by attempts by environmental interest groups to seek to have what they viewed as environmentally significant forest areas protected from forestry operations by withdrawing or refusing to issue export licences.

Table 6.1: The 1993 Federal Election Result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALP</th>
<th>LIB</th>
<th>NPA</th>
<th>AD</th>
<th>GRN*</th>
<th>others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>primary vote</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swing</td>
<td>+5.5</td>
<td>+2.4</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
<td>-7.4</td>
<td>+2.3</td>
<td>+1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seats</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gains</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALP</th>
<th>L/NP</th>
<th>AD</th>
<th>GRN*</th>
<th>others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>primary vote</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swings</td>
<td>+5.1</td>
<td>+1.0</td>
<td>-7.3</td>
<td>+1.3</td>
<td>+1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seats</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gains</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td></td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

source: Australian Electoral Commission
GREEN vote accumulates all ‘green’ nomenclature candidates and parties

253
Mr Griffiths, anxious to align himself with the forest industry, sought to by-pass the DEST in the decision-making process. The issuing of licences went ahead, but soon after Cabinet met to determine that, in the future, such licences would have to be made with the co-operation of both Departments. That this procedural problem was only glossed over by Cabinet owed much to the proximity of the 1993 Federal election, and the eventual resignation of Mr Griffiths following a personal scandal. The unresolved procedural problem with the licensing system would return to haunt the Keating Government, however.

The notion that the environment had declined as a matter of importance to the Keating Government was reinforced by the 1993 Federal election. In a campaign dominated by taxation, health and industrial relations issues, the environment barely rated a mention in the election campaign (see Bean 1994). The actual result, the broad contours of which are contained in table 6.1, reinforced this sense of a decline in the environment issue’s importance to the national debate. The interesting figures to note in table 6.1 are those relating to swings: the key to Labor’s success lay particularly in the strong swing on primary vote back to the Government on the 1990 result, much of which was garnered in Labor strong-holds in which there had previously been strong rates of realignment (see Economou 1994:67). If nothing else, there lay in these results sufficient ammunition for pro-development forces within the Caucus to counter pro-environment claims of a link between a ‘green’ policy manifesto and electoral success particularly on the back of the 1990 result. This argument could obtain further sustenance from the poor performance of those parties popularly viewed as comprising
the green end of the political spectrum. The accumulated national vote for various green nomenclature candidates for the HOR fell from 2.3 percent in 1990, to 1.8 percent in 1993. In the Senate the accumulated green nomenclature vote stayed steady at 3.3 percent. It was the decline in the Australian Democrats vote for both the House of Representatives and the Senate that was particularly stark, however. From its 1990 apex, the Democrat vote fell to a mere 3.7 percent in the HOR, and 5.3 percent in the Senate in the 1993 contest, and resulting in the party’s failure to win a Senate seat in any State.

Clearly the decline in the Australian Democrat vote was the product of more than just some form of adverse voter reaction to the attempt by its leadership to re-orient the party along more ecological lines. Indeed, many other factors contributed to the decline in the party’s vote, including the problems associated with having experienced a period of internecine strain (Ward 1997). The real significance of the 1993 result lay in what it indicated about the national policy agenda particularly in the light of Labor’s changed parliamentary leadership. And whilst opinion polling on how the electorate perceived the issues continued to indicate a substantial level of public awareness of, and interest in, environmental matters (ANOP 1991), the notion of a decline in the environment’s importance at the institutional level continued after the 1993 election. With the legitimacy of his Prime Ministership assured by the election result, Mr Keating could now recast the policy terrain to correspond with his priorities with much greater authority. Consequently, the environment’s position on the national agenda suffered a further decline.
Nowhere was the effect of this re-prioritising of the national agenda on the environmental debate more obvious than in the Keating Government’s decision in the 1993 budget to close down the RAC - the very centre-piece of the Hawke Government’s attempt to reform the Commonwealth’s land- and resource-use decision-making process. Once again, the Keating Government’s motivation for dismantling the RAC appeared to be a reflection of the lower priority it gave the environmental issue relative to other matters. The RAC’s termination was announced within the context of the 1993 budget speech delivered by Treasurer, John Dawkins, and was included as part of a set of cost-cutting measures to ease the Government’s budget deficit. In one sense, the RAC had been in a very vulnerable position anyway, particularly in the light of its problematic experience with the Coronation Hill inquiry, and given that it had finished its coastal resource inquiry some time earlier. There were other problems with the Commission, too. Founding head Commissioner, Justice Donald Stewart, had been widely regarded both within and outside of the Commission as being far too close to Prime Minister Hawke, and that the appointment of a former head of the National Crime Authority was inappropriate for an environmentally-oriented body. There was also some concern that, beyond Justice Stewart, the RAC’s senior staff were not sufficiently high enough in the public service hierarchy, and thus would be unable to withstand the rationalising designs of other departmental heads during the budget costing process. Finally, there had also been an exodus of people who had been working within the Commission particularly on some of the more radical proposals for incorporating ecological values into the decision-making process.⁶
Notwithstanding these reasons for its vulnerability (and the contributions it made to its own demise), the fact that the RAC was terminated was symbolic of the Keating Government’s devaluation of the environment as a major political issue. Also implicit in the decision was a repudiation of the high value placed on putting decision-making structures in place that could allow government to make careful, well informed decisions based on the accumulation of as wide a range of inputs as possible, and of a system designed to mediate protagonist interest groups. In other words, if the RAC represented the structural manifestations of the Hawke Government’s commitment to consensus politics, then the Keating Government’s dismantling of that body was based on a repudiation of the consensus concept. So, even though the IGAE and the subsequent forestry statements and plans that had been commenced under the Hawke Government were finalised and set in place during Keating’s Prime Ministership, the dynamics of the environmental debate had gone back to an adversarial and, as it was to turn out, highly volatile footing. The emergence of yet another dispute about woodchip export licences demonstrated this quite clearly.

6.3: Return of the woodchip crisis: old problems, few solutions

By the time the 1994-95 round of woodchip export licenses were due again for consideration, important personnel changes had occurred within the Government. Allan Griffith’s replacement as Resource Minister, Mr Michael Lee, had himself departed from resources to be replaced by Queenslander David Beddall. Rather like Mr Griffiths,
Mr Beddall went out of his way to demonstrate his support for the timber industry clientele that his Department served, and attempted to bring a robustly pro-development approach to environmental debates. In the meantime, the political fall of Ros Kelly resulted in the appointment to the environment portfolio of NSW Senator John Faulkner - significantly, the first environment minister of the post-1983 Labor period to come from the Socialist Left faction. Assessing Senator Faulkner’s overall influence in the Government is not easy: whilst it was true that the Socialist Left was arguably the faction with less influence in the Government than the Right, Senator Faulkner himself was a factional leader and not without some influence in internal Labor affairs. On another plane, the Socialist Left had historically been the faction that had been the most consistent and the most solid in its support of environmental policy issues, particularly in Caucus and conference meetings. Presumably the environment movement would find in a Socialist Left Minister an acceptable level of sympathy for their agenda.

The crisis that emerged over the issuing of woodchip export licenses began in earnest just prior to Christmas 1994 when a major rift between the Environment and Resources Ministers, and their clientele interest groups, was reported over the revelation that both the number of forest areas or ‘coupes’ to be available for harvesting, and the total amount of woodchips to be exported were to be increased (Age 21/12/94). The public revelation of the problems associated with the lead-up to the decision taken by Mr Beddall to attempt to increase the export quota was not made until about two months later in question time in the House of Representatives. The Opposition claimed that the origins of the crisis lay in Mr Beddall’s decision to nominate only 30 coupes for
exclusion from forestry activities, and that Prime Minister Keating had argued that this was an insufficient number (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates: HOR 28 February 1995: 1126).

In the reappraisal that followed Keating’s edict to have the number of preserved coupes increased, Mr Beddall’s Department was reported to have increased the export quota by some 6.7 million tonnes. The perception of crisis over this issue was exacerbated by, first, the environment minister going public with his criticism of the decision and press reports of Labor back-benchers demanding that the Prime Minister sack Mr Beddall for the way he had handled the licensing process (Age 22/12/94); second, by the resignation of Tasmanian Senator John Deveraux, a long-time critic of the Tasmanian timber industry in particular, over the decision to grant increased harvest quotas; and, finally, by Prime Minister Keating himself having to issue a policy statement reiterating his Government’s desire to do away with the woodchip industry in the long term, but blaming the States for failing to participate in the Regional Forest Assessment (RFA) process that had been outlined back in the 1992 NFPS (Media Release: Keating 22/12/94).

Another important political consequence of the re-emergence of the impression that critical national resource policy was being made in a clumsy manner was the placement of serious strain on relations between the Government and interest groups in the policy community. The environmental movement was the first to respond with harsh criticism. Whilst it was expected that the Australian Greens (Tasmania) Party, with
whom the Wilderness Society had always shared a close relationship, would announce its intention to actively campaign against the ALP (*Age* 22/12/94), the decision by the Society to test the legal validity of the licenses was based on a leaked report that the Attorney General's Department had advised the Resources Minister that the licensing process might have been flawed (*Age* 23/1/95). In the midst of growing disquiet at the nature of the environmentalist response (which had already involved protest rallies in both Melbourne and Canberra), coupled with the growing criticism of Mr Beddall from within the Caucus, a further complication arose when Senator Faulkner announced that, as far as his department was concerned, there were some 1300 forest coupes that the timber industry wished to log whose conservation value might well have been high enough to warrant protection. Senator Faulkner's advice simply represented a broad list of areas that the department considered to require further investigation, but in the context of the brewing controversy over Mr Beddall's approach, the broader political consequences of the apparent gulf in outlooks between the two Ministries served to undermine the Government's claim to being good managers of policy.

In this political environment of developing crisis, the Prime Minister himself intervened in the process and announced that 509 forest coupes would be withdrawn from logging until their conservation values were further assessed, and that his Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC) would co-ordinate the process by which Resources and Environment would undertake this evaluation (*Age* 31/1/95, Media Statement: Paul Keating 2/2/95). If the Government hoped that this initiative would quell the rising tide of disquiet from within the policy community, it was to be
sorely disappointed. The environmental groups, already angered by what they perceived as their being disregarded by the process from the outset, continued their criticism of the Government. Moreover, the announcement that 509 forest coupes, (rather than the 50 that industry had been expecting) would be subjected to further environmental review precipitated a major expression of anger from the timber industry and the ACTU. By February, the timber industry and the Construction, Mining, Forestry, and Engineering Union (CMFEU) were taking their protests to Canberra in a direct action that included the placement of a blockade on Parliament House (Age 2/2/95). The blockade itself, which became the subject of significant media attention and which caused Parliament some inconvenience, was eventually wound up by promises to the industry and the union that the evaluation process for the outstanding coupes would be expedited quickly. In the end, the Government extended protection to 57 coupes (see Age 10/2/96) - a figure much closer to the number originally proposed by Mr Beddall at the outset of this process.

By the time the woodchip export license process came around for the 1995-95 harvest season, the Government made sure that it had a much more comprehensive and certain procedure in place based on the Wood and Paper Industry Strategy document put out by the DPIE (1995). Arguably, however, the political damage had already been done, particularly with regard to the Government’s relationship with the environmental movement. The Government’s approach to the license issue had provided yet more impetus to those in the movement who had been attempting to form a national ‘green’ party and win representation to the Senate. Primary amongst those seeking to win a
place in the Senate was none other than Dr Bob Brown, the former anti-Franklin dam campaigner and long-time independent/green MHA in the Tasmanian parliament.

Of arguably greater importance, however, was the disintegration of relations between the Government and the core environmental interest groups. Of the disenchchantment that pervaded these core groups, the reaction of the Wilderness Society - and especially its National Director, Mr Alec Marr - was the most acute. Under some pressure from within the group to turn its back on bureaucratic and institutional politics, the apparent return to a pro-industry position on the woodchips matter set the context for the Wilderness Society to rupture whatever remained of its relationship with the Labor Government and the bureaucracy (see Weekend Australian 3-4/2/96). Similar pressures were at work in the ACF, and this, in turn, led to a serious rift developing between Mr Marr in the TWS, and the new national director of the ACF, Jim Downey (see The Age: Saturday Extra 16/11/1996). The Wilderness Society’s preparedness to sever the relationship with the Labor administration was resisted by Mr Downey, but in the aftermath of the woodchip license issue relations between TWS and institutional actors were damaged beyond retrieval.

The decision of former Environment Minister Ros Kelly to resign her seat of Canberra, thereby requiring a by-election, simply prolonged the reverberations of the woodchip license dispute, and the general dissatisfaction that the environmental interest groups had with the Keating Government’s treatment of the issue. Disenchantment with the Keating Government partly accounted for the decision of the then National Liaison
Officer of the Wilderness Society, Dr James Warden, to contest the seat as a ‘green’ candidate. Dr Warden won 12.8 percent of the primary vote in the by-election, whilst the Labor vote fell from a two-party preferred vote of 59.5 percent in the 1993 general election, to 43.4 percent in this contest. The Liberal victory in this hitherto safe Labor seat alarmed party strategists who reasoned that such a poor result might be indicative of a more general realignment of support elsewhere. In the meantime, Dr Warden’s role in the by-election - particularly in his propensity for criticising the Government’s environmental policy record - simply enhanced the notion that co-operative Labor-environmental relations had comprehensively collapsed.

The period following Mr Keating’s election victory thus marked a major decline in the importance the Labor Government was prepared to attach to environmental matters. The decline of the RAC, and then the re-visiting of the very type of bitter resource dispute that the reform of the decision-making process the Hawke Government had attempted to institute simply reinforced the view that, at best, the Keating Government did not attach to the environment the same level of importance as previous Labor Governments. An even more pessimistic summation from the environmentalist point of view was that the pro-development block within the Caucus and Cabinet had finally achieved an ascendancy that they desired particularly after the Wesley Vale dispute. Whatever the views held, it was clear that the re-visiting of the apoplexy over timber resource policy through the woodchip license controversy did much to completely unravel Federal Labor’s reputation as competent managers of the land-use policy field. On the one hand, environmental groups were smarting under their
impression that they had lost an important issue whilst, on the other side, industry
groups and the trade unions still suspected the Government of failing to adequately
support the timber industry. Above all else, the woodchip license controversy
completely destroyed any claim the Government might have had to being the
administrators of a ‘good’ resources policy-making process. In a sense, all the work that
had been done on trying to improve decision-making in this field - as well as attempting
to impose governmental control over its politics - was completely undone during the
years of Paul Keating’s Prime Ministership.

6.4: The end of an era: the 1996 Federal election

The 1996 Federal election marked the end of an era in Australian environmental
policy politics dominated particularly by the interaction of environmental interest
groups and the Federal ALP on a raft of environmental policy issues (McAllister 1996).
Significantly, however, the termination of the era in national environmental politics was
not really marked by the election of the Liberal-National Coalition Government in a
landslide victory. Rather, the fundamental alteration in the dynamics that had dominated
national environmental policy politics from the time of the Franklin dam dispute
occurred during the election campaign itself - and, as has been argued above, this in turn
was simply the logical continuation of the souring of Labor-environmental relations
precipitated particularly by the woodchip export license controversy. In the second week
of the election campaign the Coalition launched its environment policy manifesto - a
significant document entitled *Saving Our Natural Heritage* - at a media event featuring the Liberal leader, John Howard, and held in the temperate rainforests in the Dandenong Ranges near Melbourne. This manifesto comprised mainly of programs designed to enhance a land- and water-way regeneration that, it has to be said, had been attempted under the Labor Government’s ‘World’s Best Environment Statement’ and over which bipartisanship between environmental and farmer producer groups already existed. The manifesto also sought to incorporate the NFPS, complete with its IGAE and the RFA process, also previously formulated by the Labor Government.

These examples of a fairly prosaic approach to policy ideas were completely overshadowed by one major feature of the manifesto, however. The innovative aspects of the policy manifesto were twofold: first, the Coalition proposed to spend a significant $1.15 billion on environmental regeneration programs over three years which, in turn, would be funded from the creation of what would be known as a ‘World Heritage Trust’ which would aim to use profits from investments made under its auspices to fund environmental programs into the future; and, second, that this trust would be established by funds procured from the partial privatisation of the Government’s telecommunications corporation, Telstra (Liberal Party 1996:9). It was this proposal in particular that exacerbated the rift between the ALP and some of the core environmental interest groups, and, in something of a bonus for the Coalition, split the environmental movement as well. The critical moment occurred soon after the policy was released and the various component parts of the environmental movement were sought out for comments. Those with electoral aspirations, such as Dr Bob Brown representing the
Australian Greens, Dee Margetts from the West Australian Greens (WAG), and the Australian Democrats all criticised the policy and committed themselves to opposing it in the Senate should they be returned.

The environmental interest groups were much more variable in their response however. Greenpeace and the ACF were the most critical of this proposal. On the other hand, the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) and, above all the others, the Wilderness Society, came out and declared their support for the Coalition’s proposal. In a response that probably surpassed the Coalition’s expectations of how the core interest groups would react to its policy, Mr Marr of the Wilderness Society was reported to have said:

‘The Coalition’s policy is an excellent package that deserves funding regardless of the sale of Telstra ... The package and what’s in it is better than the government’s.’ (The Weekend Australian 3-4/2/96)

This utterance, and the general impression that such comments gave of a willingness on behalf of key interest groups to give backing to the Coalition’s policy, indicated the extent to which an important change to the dynamics of Australian environmental politics had occurred.

The success with which the Coalition’s manifesto received a positive acceptance by the WWF and the TWS indicated that the Liberal and National Parties had recovered a meaningful role in a debate to which they had been quite peripheral for some time. For nearly the entire period covered by this study, the Coalition’s implacable opposition to using enhanced Commonwealth power on environmental policy matters, and its
antipathy towards the environmental movement itself, made the anti-Labor parties as irrelevant to the national environmental debate. The Coalition’s attempt at re-entering the debate occurred as part of the review of its policy approach following the return of John Howard to the Liberal leadership. In the context of the souring of relations between the environment movement and Labor, the Coalition’s reorientation strategy enjoyed great success. The TWS declaration of qualified support for the Coalition’s manifesto simply served to kill off the last vestiges of co-operative Labor-environmental relations.

Thus it was that the Coalition, rather than Labor, ensured a place for the environment in the 1996 Federal election campaign, although the effect was more one of neutralising debate on the issue. In a sense, Labor’s relative silence on the matter, particularly in the light of its record during the woodchip export license controversy, combined with the Coalition’s new-found enthusiasm for environmental policy matters, all contributed to muting the issue for most of the campaign. The result of the election - outlined in table 6.2 - simply confirmed that a major sea-change had occurred in Australian politics, as the Coalition swept into power with a 4.7 percent two-party preferred swing. Whilst there was a slight growth in the aggregated green vote in the HOR (of 0.05 percent), the really remarkable swing was that to the Australian Democrats which went a long way to restoring the party’s support back to pre-1993 levels. It must be borne in mind that, in response to its poor 1993 showing under the leadership of Senator John Coulter, the Australian Democrats had spent the subsequent three years returning to the themes that had served it so well since its formation. In
particular, the party attempted to re-position itself as a potential receptacle for major party disillusionment in the electorate. The revival in its vote in 1996 vindicated this position.

Table 6.2: The 1996 Federal Election Result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>LIB</td>
<td>NPA</td>
<td>AD</td>
<td>GRN*</td>
<td>others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>primary vote</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swing</td>
<td>-6.1</td>
<td>+1.6</td>
<td>+1.4</td>
<td>+3.0</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>+3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seats</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gains</td>
<td>-31</td>
<td>+26</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>L/NP</td>
<td>AD</td>
<td>GRN*</td>
<td>others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>primary vote</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swings</td>
<td>-7.3</td>
<td>+1.0</td>
<td>+5.5</td>
<td>+0.1</td>
<td>+0.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seats</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gains</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

source: Australian Electoral Commission

* GREEN vote aggregates WAG and Greens Australia vote

In the Senate, meanwhile, the non-Coalition parties continued to hold the balance of power. An interesting rivalry emerged in the contest for Senate seats between the Democrats and the various green candidates. Whilst Bob Brown from the Australian
Greens succeeded in narrowly winning a Senate seat at the expense of the Australian Democrats in Tasmania, the reverse was the case in Western Australia where the Democrats defeated the incumbent WAG senator, Christobel Chamarette. Table 6.2 underscores the fringe status of green voting. Whilst the overall green vote was up by 0.1 percent, the Australian Democrats meantime were able to increase their Senate vote by 5.5 percent. Had the Australian Democrats managed to win the sixth seat in Tasmania, the Greens would have been reduced to one representative in the upper house.

Amongst the interest groups in the environment field, responses to the election of the Coalition varied according to their source. The environmental groups were quite muted, no doubt anticipating their freezing out of the decision-making process by the new Government. Moreover, the ambiguity of the response of the various groups to the Coalition's environmental policy stood in stark contrast to the basic unity and cohesion of the core environmental groups since the Tasmanian dams dispute election of 1983. Here, again, the notion of cracks and fissures opening up within the environmental movement was clearly perceivable. The pro-industry groups, meanwhile, exulted in the Coalition victory, with NAFI celebrating of its tenth anniversary with the observation that the election represented a 'turning of the tide' for forestry industry interests (NAFI News November 1996). With the ALP in opposition, the environmental interest groups at odds with each other over political and electoral strategies, and the Labor-environmental electoral alliance dissolved, a very definite era in Australian environmental politics had come to a close.
6.5: After Accordism: Down with the environment?

As this chapter has shown, the Labor Government’s response to the problems associated with making short-term, *ad hoc* conservation-oriented policy decisions in a context of growing developer disquiet at the direction of land-use and resource debates involved placing emphasis on policy-making procedures. The immediate post-Wesley Vale dispute period was thematically dominated by the Hawke Government’s clear intention to recast the environmental policy debate away from a preoccupation with specific issues, in preference for a debate on ways of reforming the policy-making process. The Federal bureaucracy were willing participants in this reform. The transition of the debate towards procedure, however, revealed the Commonwealth’s relative lack of access particularly to scientific data upon which disputed land areas could be evaluated for their conservation value. Such information tended to be monopolised by the States, and for most of the period under review in this study, the States jealously refused to share this information. The break-through in this particular problem area occurred in 1992, with the signing of the IGAE, the decision by the AHC to undertake ‘regional’ assessments of National Estate areas, and the declaration that, henceforth, forestry decisions would be based on an RFA process involving Federal-State co-operation. The problem with all of this was that the political environment in which these reforms were finally agreed was changing, and substantial parts of the reform process were beginning to unravel as a result.
The re-casting of the political environment in which environmental policy matters were managed occurred within the context of the change in the Labor party’s national leadership. The Keating ascendancy inevitably lead to an alteration of priorities in the Government’s reform agenda which, in turn, impacted on the order of priorities on the national policy agenda. The 1993 election - both in terms of the nature of the policy debate in the campaign, and the eventual result - simply confirmed the re-prioritisation of the national policy debate that resulted in a down-grading of the environment’s position from the almost central role it took especially between 1987 and 1990. Arguably the most explicit expression of the new Keating Government’s altered priorities occurred with the decision to wind up the RAC. Yet this overt sign of the new Prime Minister’s re-prioritising of the agenda did not mean that the environment had ceased to be an important administrative issue. Nor did it mean that there was a total decline in public awareness of, or, indeed, sympathy towards the idea that environmental protection was worthy of national political attention, for subsequent surveys confirmed the persistence of strong community support for national policy action on environmental matters (DASET 1991; Crook and Pakulski 1995). Moreover, institutional actors were required to deal with on-going administrative matters that were now firmly part of the mainstream decision-making agenda thanks, in no small way, to the quantum increase in Federal activity in this realm during the previous ten years.

Of these continuing management issues, the protracted and, in the New Year of 1994-95, extremely bitter series of disputes over the very issues that had been the subject of so much attention by previous Labor administrations in the procedures by
which woodchip export licenses were to be granted was to be the most critical. This matter became the context within which the Labor-environmental alliance, so central to national environmental politics since 1983, completely unravelled. Consequently, it became the context within which the Coalition, so long the peripheral bit-players in national environmental politics, was able to resurrect its role in the national environmental debate. With some of the core interest groups willing to endorse the Coalition’s environmental policy manifesto during the campaign period, the 1996 election was truly a watershed in national environmental policy politics.

The origins of this critical reversal, however, lay in the way in which the tensions that had always been present in relations between the Labor Government and the leading environmental interest groups rose to breaking-point under the Keating Prime Ministership. The 1996 election did not herald the end of the environment’s relevance to national politics. Rather, this period saw the end of a set of political relationships and consequential dynamics that had underpinned the period of national Labor Government - a period, it has been argued, in which so many very significant environmental policy decisions had been made. The presence of a rise-and-fall notion in environmentalism at the national level, then, manifested itself in the form of a rise and fall in Labor-environmental relations, rather than a decline in the national importance of the issue per se.

In this sense, the notion of inevitable decline in the attention that a policy issue can expect to receive from the public and, through public pressure, from institutional
actors that forms a central part of Down’s ‘attention cycle’ model for explaining the rise and fall of the political influence of the environment (Downs 1972), does not apply in explaining what occurred during the Keating Prime Ministership. The alteration in the underlying nature of Australian environmental politics throughout the period studied here was due to the changing view institutional actors had of the policy arena, and the way in which extra-institutional actors responded to these altered institutional approaches. As argued previously, the environment became a major Federal issue from the mid-1980s through to the 1990 election mainly because institutional actors - primary amongst these being the then Minister for the Environment, Senator Richardson, and the then Prime Minister, Bob Hawke - made it so. By 1993, the new leadership was de-emphasising the importance of the environment and undoing some of the structural reform of the previous administration. By 1996, the cudgels for managing the environment had passed to the previously irrelevant (in terms of the environmental debate, at least) Coalition. Clearly an account of these altering dynamics, in the Australian situation at least, needs to rely on more than Downs’ hypothesis that the gradual realisation that the high costs of, and the great degrees in complexity in making environmental policy eventually outstrips the interest of the public and politicians in the issue (Downs 1972:39-40).

Rather, the very real alteration in the entire political dynamics of Australian environmental policy in the period between the 1993 and 1996 Federal elections is attributable to two major factors - first, the altered policy priorities that occurred in the transition in Labor’s leadership from Hawke to Keating, and, secondly, the scope that
this transition provided for the major tensions associated with the Labor-environmental co-operation that had underpinned much of the post-1983 period to reach the point of destruction. In both of these factors the decline in Labor's interest in environmental policy-making under Prime Minister Keating played an important role, for the reform of decision-making procedures undertaken by the Hawke Government using the Accord process as something of a guiding model had involved an attempt to assert institutional leadership over the policy debate. In so doing, the Hawke Government had also tried to exercise control over the key protagonist interest groups involved in the debate. It was at this point that the apparently co-operative relationship between the ALP and the core environmental interest groups became particularly important to the Accordist strategy, for the assumption of the existence of the electoral alliance became the basis upon which the environmental interest groups remained incorporated in the policy-formulating structures put in place.

The consent environmental interest groups gave to participating in these structures, and to be seen to be associated with co-operative Labor-environmental relations, derived from a view that the core interest groups from the environmental movement would be more effective in achieving their land-use and resources policy agenda by working within the policy-making process, rather than attempting to apply pressure from without. The fact that some amongst these groups either assisted in the Coalition's attempt to realign its position on environmental matters, or, at the very least, refused to condemn the Coalition's 1996 environmental policy position, indicated that environmental groups had not been completely subsumed in their relationship with
successive Labor Governments. Positive Labor-environmental relations were no longer possible in a situation where conservation groups found themselves to have lost critical land-use policy battles. Labor had by no means exercised political hegemony over these groups, or, through them, the environmental debate. The core conservation groups could still act independently of each other, and of the relationship with the ALP that had developed since the Franklin dam dispute. As such, the Labor Government’s attempt to exercise leadership over the environmental debate dissipated in the face of the Keating Government apparently taking for granted environmental support for the ALP \textit{vis a vis} the Coalition. Labor-environmental relations collapsed accordingly.

6.6: Conclusion and overview: institutional ascendancy, issue in decline - the Keating legacy

The Keating Government of 1993 to 1996 presided over the final stage of Labor’s management of the national environmental debate - a period that ended with the collapse of the Labor-environmental electoral alliance that had underpinned national environmental politics since 1983. The extent of this altered political dynamic was revealed by the way in which the Coalition parties, who had been fundamental opponents of the environmental movement’s pursuit of conservation issues at the national level, were able to produce an environmental policy platform that was able to obtain the endorsement of at least some within the movement. As has been argued here, the dispute between the environmental movement and the Keating Government over woodchip export licences was a catalyst to the collapse of the Labor-environmental
relationship. This dispute was, in turn, a noteworthy episode that occurred in a period after one of the central pieces of the Hawke Government's attempt to reform the national environmental policy debate - the RAC - had been dismantled. Thus the Hawke Government's legacy to the national environmental debate in the form of the RAC and the ESD debate proved to be very fragile, although the significant amount of attention the issue had received during the Labor period had the effect of confirming the national relevance of environmentalism. The fact that the Coalition saw a need to develop a national environmental policy and seek to at least neutralise the operation of the Labor-environmental relationship in the 1996 election campaign was confirmation of the place the environment now has on the national political agenda.

Thus, whilst there was a deterioration in the co-operative nature of the Labor-environmental relationship under the Keating Government, the environment did not disappear from the national agenda. And whilst the Keating Government's decision to close down the RAC underscored the fragility of the reforms initiated under the Hawke Government, the fact that the nature of the national environmental debate could be determined by the Keating Cabinet's approach to issues serves to reinforce the notion that institutional actors, rather than the environmental interest groups, or even the environmental movement itself, had achieved an ascendancy. The placement of institutional actors generally - and the Cabinet in particular - in a position of leadership in the debate was a much stronger legacy bequeathed by the Hawke Government. And even if the RAC had been closed down, there were other institutional initiatives such as the IGAE and the attempt to formulate forest agreements in co-operation with the States
that were maintained and pursued by the Keating and Howard Governments.

Institutional actors had succeeded in transforming the debate, even if one of the central agencies designed to be pivotal to the way the Commonwealth would make national environmental policy in the future had been dismantled. In short, national environmental politics had become concerned with the politics of policy-making - the bailiwick of institutional actors. When the environment emerged as a major national issue during the Franklin dam controversy back in the early 1980s, the environmental movement had played a key, initiating role in the politics of environmentalism. By 1996, the movement was now required to respond, if not react, to initiatives undertaken by Cabinet. The politics of environmentalism had been transformed.

---

1. See interviews attached to bibliography to this study, with particular reference to personnel working in DASET, the DPIE, and the RAC.

2. Interview with Mr David Whitrow, Executive Officer, Australian Mining Industry Council, Canberra 11 April 1991; Dr Robert Bain, Chief Executive, National Association of Forest Industries, Canberra 9 April 1991.

3. The reasons for such ambivalence on behalf of TWS were varied. First, TWS had been fighting the Tasmanian Government in its bid to introduce a RSL program in that State, and viewed the Federal version as an extension of its Tasmanian campaign. Second, TWS sought to utilise non-compliance in some of the ESD discussions (especially with regards to the timber industry) as leverage on both the Commonwealth and Tasmania to drop its RSL proposals. Finally, a number of activists within TWS were becoming more disenchanted with what they perceived as the bureaucratization of the debate as a result of initiatives such as the ESDWGs and the RAC inquiries. Arguing that TWS was always meant to be an activist oriented movement, these members and sympathisers began to agitate for a TWS withdrawal from bureaucratic processes. This was an important current of tension within TWS that was quite influential in its response to aspects of the debate during the period of the Keating Government.

4. Interview with members of the advisory staff for Ms Ros Kelly, Minister for Environment, Sport, Tourism and Territories, Parliament House, Canberra 3 September 1993.

5. Moreover, Labor’s success in a number of seats (such as Franklin and Lyons in Tasmania, and McEwen and McMillan in Victoria) in which substantial local opposition to Labor’s historical commitment to a conservation-oriented land-use agenda existed, and which had been held after
1990 by the Coalition, hinted at a link with the de-emphasising of the environment that was implied in the Keating leadership.

6. The loss of Mr Clive Hamilton from the Commission’s analysis division to, first, a non-government organisation working in Asia, and then to private enterprise, was a significant loss to the body.

7. By the same token, the core environmental interest groups were to soon become very disenchanted with the new Howard Government, which set out to deny these groups the sort of access to ministers and the decision-making process that they had enjoyed during the Labor years. Disputes soon emerged over the extension of Commonwealth approval for a major tourism development at Port Hinchinbrook in Queensland, and over the Howard Government’s approach to the issue of Greenhouse gas emissions which was to be debated at an international climate forum at Kobe, Japan.
CHAPTER 7

SOCIAL MOVEMENT, INSTITUTIONS, PARTY AND POLICY:
ANALYSING THE POLITICS OF LABOR'S
MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

While the politics of environmentalism in Australian between 1983 and 1996 involved a complex interaction of inputs, including the contribution of 'grass-roots politics' associated with environmentalism as a form of new social movement politics, public policy-making was to emerge as a particularly prominent theme. In an important reflection of the conservation-dominant nature of 'green' politics in Australia, this national debate involved the core interest groups such as the ACF and TWS undertaking a series of campaigns in defence of wilderness and biospheric protection that inevitably involved attempts to impact upon the institutionalised policy-making process. As part of a new social movement, these core interest groups sought to bring qualitatively different attitudes, philosophies and ideas to the land- and resource-use debate. There was even a strong hint of the use of alternative forms of political behaviour in these campaigns, particularly when they utilised non-violent massed protest action (including civil disobedience) especially in their bid to raise community awareness about particular land-use disputes.
Yet, as this study has shown time and again in relation to the major debates that occurred between 1983 and 1996, these core environmental interest groups were firmly committed to seeking to exert pressure on the policy-making process through the very conventionally pluralist methods of seeking to lobby institutional actors, and utilising electoral politics to have its policy-oriented agenda addressed by the national government of the day. Thus environmentalism displayed the characteristics of the ‘new politics’ associated with social movements, and the pluralist characteristics of conventional or ‘old political’ interest group activity designed to impact on the institutionalised political process. This chapter argues that Australian environmental politics underwent a series of qualitative changes between 1983 and 1996, nearly all of which reflected the ascendancy of both the Government and, to a lesser extent, the bureaucracy in determining the nature and direction of the evolving debate. Potential rivalry within the Labor Government, particularly between pro-development and pro-environment ministers, played a major part in influencing the nature and direction of the national policy debate. In part, this simply reflected the central, if not ubiquitous, presence major party politics has in all aspects of Australian politics, and the central role Cabinet plays in policy-making particularly where bureaucratic expertise is not very well developed in a given policy area.

Also relevant, however, was the way in which the Hawke Government in particular viewed itself as a highly competent manager of the policy-making process, through which ‘better’ decisions were being made. This perception of modern Labor instituting a highly capable administrative regime, able to bring consensus to politically
riven policy debates, and willing to develop institutions capable of enhancing the Commonwealth’s role in creating ‘good’ policy, was applied to the environment debate. This was reflected in such innovations as the ESD process, the RAC, and the application of the Hawke Government’s ‘New Federalism’ to the environmental debate. As this chapter further argues, Labor’s interest in addressing the means and mechanisms by which a longer-term approach to addressing environmental issues in broader policy areas could be taken provided the link between the environmental debate and the bureaucracy, for whom instituting such an approach to policy-making was preferable to the government than a more short-term, ad hoc and highly politicised approach.

The fact that a co-operative relationship emerged between the core environmental interest groups and the post-1983 Labor Governments (and, through it, the emergence of a linkage by which the environmental movement could seek to impact on the institutionalised policy-making process) was in itself significant. This is particularly so where the theoretical argument that social democratic trade union-based political parties and the environmental movement might be viewed as potential rivals (especially on the basis of a potential antagonism between a social movement with a middle-class, post materialist constituency on the one hand, and a materialist, trade union-based political party on the other) is taken into account. Moreover, as this thesis has argued in relation to developments in the debate after 1987, the reorientation of the national debate to address the means by which the Commonwealth could make long-term, broad-based policy decisions to which environmental inputs could make a contribution was due entirely to the way in which institutional actors - government and
bureaucracy - sought to direct the debate. It was in the pursuit of this objective that the
government sought to develop institutions capable of bringing together fundamentally
opposed interest group constellations in the development-environment debate in a bid to
create consensus-oriented policies. By the same token, the alteration of the
government’s policy priorities in the face of altered political dynamics could also lead to
a turn-around in the nature of Labor-environmental relations.

7.1: Environmentalism and the politics of land-use: decision-making in transition

In the period from 1983 through to the 1990s (and prior to the recasting of
priorities caused by the leadership transition from Hawke to Keating), national
environmental politics was subjected to a series of transitional changes that culminated
in the application of an Accordist-type reform, complete with newly created Federal
agencies, to undertake dialogue with peak bodies, providing forums in which interest
groups could communicate with each other to find ways of mediating competing
demands, the release of governmental policy ‘statements’, and even the creation of a
‘Forests Accord’. As a result, the Labor Government went from simply responding to
the sporadic emergence of environmentally-based land-use disputes in an ad hoc manner
to attempting to proactively manage the whole land-use and resource policy arena as
best it could given the very real problems associated with fragmentation of
responsibilities arising from Australian federalism.
In moving towards management of, as distinct from simply responding to, environmentalism's impact on land-use politics, the Hawke Government's approaches traversed four distinct phases. The first phase, which corresponded with Barry Cohen's tenure as Federal Environment Minister, was typically incrementalist in the sense outlined by Lindblom's approach to policy politics (Lindblom 1959; Lindblom 1965:144). As the case studies presented in Chapter 2 clearly indicated, the Federal Government's response to the demands of the environmental movement was quite ambivalent. Whilst still willing to exploit electoral support for its role in resolving the Franklin dam dispute, the Government preferred to refer environmentalist demands for intervention in forestry matters and in the management of the Tasmanian south west to that State's Government. In typical incrementalist fashion, the Hawke government was only moved to address environmental disputes in minimal ways, usually in the form of a preference for using ministerial councils for the purposes of inter-governmental discussion or, as in the case of the Southern and Lemonthyme forests dispute, a commission of inquiry in a bid to buy time to broker some middle path between developers and conservationists.

This incrementalist phase in the Hawke Government's response to environmental politics reflected the ascendancy of some important considerations. First, it was clear that, notwithstanding the claims about the contribution 'green' voting had made to Labor's 1983 election victory made by environmentalists and others, the new Government was anxious to avoid alienating pro-development interests and constituencies. There was also clearly a concern about the political consequences of a
national government seeking to articulate the virtues of consensus politics alienating the States - a very real likelihood on the adversarial politics of Federal-State relations over land-use matters. Second, it was also clear that, even if the Commonwealth had wanted to intervene in State land-use matters, there was a lack of Federal expertise in deciding what areas had significant ecological values, and how these might be protected. Finally, it was also clear that, whatever the extent of the Federal Government's commitment to national environmental protection, this was still a secondary policy objective relative to other policy objectives - especially in economic planning and industrial relations.

The replacement of Mr Barry Cohen by Senator Graham Richardson, and the placement of the environment into the super-ministry of ASETT (of which Richardson was later to become senior minister) was the harbinger of the second, crisis-driven, phase of national environmental politics. The incrementalism that characterised the Cohen ministerialship was, as was shown in the case studies in Chapters 3 and 4, displaced by the Hawke Government becoming ever more active in the environmental debate. As revealing as the specific environmental disputes were of a change in the government's attitude on the environment based on a departure from the incrementalism of the Cohen years, they are also important in providing a caveat about the nature of the administrative approach under Richardson's ministerialship. As was indicated by the Federal Government's willingness to negotiate and bargain with the Tasmanian Government over the amount of native forest timber available for harvesting in order to supply new pulp mills, the Richardson approach was hardly an example of rampant
environmentalism succeeding in having an ecological rationality fixed firmly in place within the decision-making process.

On the contrary, even though Senator Richardson's administration of the portfolio provided unprecedented opportunities for environmentalists to gain access to the decision-making process, there was still associated with the management of the policy arena the reality that decisions were made on the basis of *ad hoc*, short-term political considerations rather than as a product of medium- to long-term planning. Whilst Senator Richardson's willingness to take up the cudgels for environmental protection, particularly in conflict with his Cabinet colleagues, represented a period of unprecedented importance for the environment on the national political agenda, the Minister's methods and outlooks were, in fact, antithetical to environmentalist calls for a fundamental, long-term oriented institutional change in the way in which environmental policy was made in Australia from both developers and environmentalists (Saddler et.al. 1980:63-70; Toyne 1989). This coincidence of developer and environmentalist calls for a 'better' way of dealing with environmental matters would be an important basis for the Hawke Government's attempt to change the nature of this debate.

Essentially, the Richardson approach to environmental politics was based on manipulation of crises surrounding the debate. The manipulation of the elements contributing to a particular land-use dispute by the Minister was an important part of this approach. On the one hand, Richardson could engender crisis by provocatively entering a land-use debate with the intention of creating conflict (such as in his relations
with the troubled Queensland Government over World Heritage listing of the Daintree forests, or his intervention in the East Gippsland forests dispute in Victoria).

Alternatively, he could be seeking to manage a crisis with offers of negotiations and deals in which short-term political objectives were of primary importance. Richardson's intervention in the East Gippsland dispute was, for example, a crisis of the Federal Minister's own making which was solved on a short-term basis by offers of Federal funding to undertake more studies of the disputed areas. The Wesley Vale pulp-mill dispute comprised a litany of deals and negotiated outcomes many of which were inconsistent with previously struck agreements. This approach was the basis of Senator Richardson's influence over the debate, and certainly contributed much to the Minister's growing reputation as an important figure in the Hawke Government. Clearly the short term, ad hoc approach - dominated by politicised deals and arrangements in which the Minister was the central player - was a form of politics much preferred by Senator Richardson. Many of his Cabinet colleagues were not so impressed with this approach, however.

It was over the Wesley Vale pulp mill project, however, that the greatest inconsistencies in Senator Richardson's crisis-management approach were exposed, and, as a result, the greatest impetus towards finding a metapolicy panacea to problems in national environmental policy-making was provided. The Federal Government's role in the Wesley Vale dispute was confused and contradictory throughout, ranging from the support it initially gave to the project through to the use of Commonwealth powers over foreign investment approval to have the project deferred. Moreover, the propensity
for Senator Richardson's approach on environmental matters to revolve around immediate short-term political objectives ran counter to what was supposed to be the Hawke Government's clear interest in functional, consensus-oriented reform policies meant to last for the long-term.

The failure of the Wesley Vale pulp mill project to eventuate, and the subsequent 1990 election, were important turning points, however, and precipitated the third phase. The Hawke Government's subsequent attempt to apply the values and structural features of their Accord-oriented approach to managing industrial relations policy represented not simply an attempt to reform environmental policy-making. It was also as a response to the problems that the Richardson style itself had created. As will be argued shortly, severe strain between Cabinet colleagues and between Ministerial Departments were arguably the most significant of the problems caused by the Richardson approach. This was not the full extent of the problems environmental politics were causing the government, however. The very fact that a policy issue could be a source of real and widespread conflict was potentially a source of embarrassment for a Government otherwise committed to consensus politics. Moreover, the major participants in the Accord process as it applied to economic policy and industrial relations - specifically, business groups and the ACTU - were in agreement about the need to institute a land-use and resources policy making process that, in their opinion, would give more attention to the hard-edged economic issues that both labour and business believed would and should override the 'emotionalism' of environmentalism. (Commonwealth
Quite apart from the persistent call for a reform of land-use decision-making emanating from the land-use policy community, the division between pro-developer and pro-environmentalist blocks within the Cabinet caused by the Richardson approach was also lending weight to the interest in reforming the way decisions on land-use and resource matters might be made. In a political context of growing Governmental unease about both the direction land-use policies were taking, and the way in which decisions were being made, the promise of rational, long-term, consensus-oriented approaches to such decision-making appeared very attractive particularly to the pro-development block within Cabinet and the bureaucracy. It was precisely in this context that interest in the processes by which a national approach to considering and applying environmental policies, as distinct from simply the question of environmental policy itself, began to emerge. Critically, this pursuit of innovation (by creating bodies such as the RAC and the ESDWGs), recasting the operation of existing agencies (especially the AHC), and the formulation of long-term approaches to the notions of ecological sustainability in development and the need for co-operative federalism on environmental matters were central to the Hawke Government's management of the national environmental debate.

The notion that a more rational and comprehensive approach was required to circumvent the many political problems that had emerged during Senator Richardson's time as Environment Minister was the political context in which the emergence of the
Accordist phase in Labor’s response to the environmental debate emerged. As argued in Chapter 5, the Accord-type resonance of this distinct phase in national environment politics lay in the way in which the Hawke Government sought to utilise the institutionalised policy-making process to establish government leadership over the debate. Institutional innovation was critical to this process, and thus the development of the ESDWGs and, more particularly, the formation of the RAC were at the heart of the Hawke Government’s approach. Such institutional innovation also allowed bureaucrats an enhanced opportunity to play a role in the politics of environmentalism which, as a result of these innovations, was becoming increasingly linked with a rather conventional interest group-oriented approach in which leading interest organisations sought to exploit institutional channels in a bid to influence government decision-making. Herein lay the essence of the Hawke Government’s success in altering the nature of the environmental debate away from its historical preoccupation with specific land-use disputes to become, instead, a debate about ways in which ecological values could be proactively included into land and resource-use decisions.

7.2: Qualifying the ‘red-green’ alliance: Environment, policy and the Labor ascendancy

In the period of national Labor government between 1983 and 1996, the politics of Australian environmentalism was dominated by the emergence, and durability, of an alliance between the national ALP and the environmental movement’s core interest
groups. The existence of this Labor-environmental alliance defied those theoretical models that forecast inherent antipathy between the manifestations of ‘old’ and ‘new’ paradigm politics (Feher and Heller 1984; Offe 1985a; Schoomaker 1988; Seigmann 1985). Yet, by the same token, the alliance was not of the type or nature desired by environmental movement activists in which an example of old politics - in this case, the political party in government, and, through it, the state - would be transformed by the infusion of alternative, ecological values (see Bahro 1984; Kelly 1984b; Eckersley 1991). Rather, the Labor-environmental alliance was one based primarily on shared pragmatic aspirations - in the case of the Hawke Government in particular, a desire to cement an alliance with the leading environmental interest groups in order to secure the voting support of the environmental constituency, whilst, for the environmental interest groups, a desire to secure greater access to the policy-making process, and the actors who make policy decisions. In this relationship, then, the methods by which the Australian state makes land-use and resource policy was central, for these are the main arenas in which the environmentalist perspective on the need to protect significant land areas, to conserve precious resources, and/or to limit the capacity for industry to pollute the biosphere is most relevant.

This aspect of the national environmental debate thus became the basis upon which Labor and the environmental movement were able to find common ground where a co-operative relationship could be achieved. Significantly, however, this Labor-environmental alliance was a special relationship in which the leadership of the Labor Party, by virtue of its strategic command of executive power, exercised leadership over
the core environmental interest groups. As this study has argued, this situation evolved over a period of time in which the environment enjoyed a position of some prominence in the national political debate, and from which a series of political controversies arose. Significantly, some of the most significant controversies - including the apparent failure of the Helsham Inquiry into forestry, the bitter disputation over forests in Queensland, the failure of the Wesley Vale pulp mill project to be realised, the controversy over Coronation Hill, and so on - were due primarily to the competitive dynamic between advocates of development and proponents of environmental sensitivity within the Labor Government itself.

Whilst the politics of internal party debates on these matters is explored a little further below, the point to note here is that the establishment of the Labor Party leadership's ascendancy over the environmental debate reflects the importance of institutional power, particularly where the matter of creating public policy arises. The Australian environmental movement sought to impact upon the public policy-making process in order to realise its political agenda. This could only be achieved with the help of a major political party in its role as the government. This is precisely the role that successive Labor Governments provided following Labor's election to office in 1983. It is, after all, institutional actors (the executive, the bureaucracy, and major actors such as the political party in government), rather than social movements, who make public policy (see March and Olsen 1989).
The Labor Government’s willingness to continue to address the national environmental issue was the key to the way in which this debate enjoyed such longevity in national politics. Moreover, the nature and direction of the debate was determined by the Labor Government. This was particularly the case in the critical period after the failure of the Wesley Vale pulp mill project to be realised, which, in turn, precipitated a review of the methods and means by which the environment would be addressed by national decision-makers. This was the harbinger of the Accordist period in the national environmental debate, where the Hawke Government sought to apply some neo-corporatist principles in the construction of new forums and agencies that would facilitate a much more broader, long-term and rational investigation of how environmental and developer perspectives could be brought together to allow government to make ‘better’ decisions.

In a very real sense, echoes of Dror’s argument (1968:155-161) about the capacity for institutional actors to attempt to learn from past policy-making experiences, and use these lessons to construct new ways of dealing with subsequent issues are to be found in the way the Hawke Government in particular turned its attention to improving the method of dealing with environmental matters in land-use and resource decision-making. Dror (1964:156) isolated the importance of the decision-making infrastructure of policy-making institutions to the politics of policy-making. In particular, he noted the capacity of institutional actors to ‘brainstorm’ issues or policy problems in ways that seek to utilise alternative approaches to old problems, redefine dominant values, and seek to be innovative in the face of future political challenges. Whilst noting the very
real scope for incrementalism that exists in political systems where the many forces
aligned against change can impact on the political process, Dror (1964:154) nonetheless
drew attention to the fact that institutional actors do address the policy making process
itself as a very important arena within which political reform can take place. Here Dror
emphasises the importance of the metapolicy concept, and the way in which institutional
actors can impact not only on policy outcomes, but also on the way in which decisions
are reached. As Dror himself put it (1971:75):

A single policy decision, even an important one, is after all only a minor event in
the ongoing process of issue recognition, policymaking, resource allocation,
policy decision-making, various forms of feedback, contextual change, issue
reformation, and so on. In other words, policymaking is an ongoing activity.
Therefore, improving the overall policymaking system is more important than
improving any single policy (1971:75).

The centrality of ‘consensus’ as a theme in the Hawke Government’s approach
to policy-making in those areas identified by the government as important - an essential
theme in the Accord model, for example - was also to be present in the government’s
attempt at redefining the nature and direction of the environmental debate (and, through
this process, in determining the nature of the Labor-environmental interest group
relationship). The creation of the RAC, the adoption of the notion of ‘ecological
sustainable development’ from the Brundlandt Commission, the formation of the ESD
Working Groups, and the reform of the AHC, were all part of the Government’s
leadership over the redefining of the national environmental debate. In this redefinition,
the primacy of specific land-use disputes as the major catalyst for the debate was
displaced by much more cerebral matters such as working out ways in which ESD
might be applicable across a range of policy areas, and how environmental costs might

293
be quantified in monetary terms and included in the national accounts (a task undertaken by the Working Groups), how developer, environmentalist and community perspectives on broad resource issues might be brought together, mediated, and reconciled (a task to be undertaken by the RAC), and how Commonwealth and State land-use and resource agencies might be better co-ordinated to allow for a ‘balancing’ of developer and environmentalist demands in land management (a task for the AHC).

In all of these initiatives, the Hawke Government extended to environmental interest groups the opportunity to become ‘insiders’ to the decision-making process. This was an opportunity that was taken up by many within the interest group core of the environmental movement, for whom the demand to participate in such processes had been a long-standing agenda item. But herein lay the capacity for the Hawke Government to exercise its ascendancy over the debate. This occurred in two ways. First, the opportunity for environmentalist participation in the decision-making process was extended on neo-corporatist grounds. This meant that environmental participants had to accept a process based on mediation between themselves and developer (and trade union, it should also be added) interests, and that the Government’s objective was one of finding a ‘balance’ between these competing demands. As such, environmentalists had to forsake the idea of ecological ‘balance’ and participate, instead, in a state-directed process seeking to reconcile competing interest group demands. Moreover, participants in such a process would be perceived to be bound by the decisions made under its auspices, however unpalatable these might be to particular participants. In this sense, incorporation becomes a double-edged sword: on the one
hand, interest groups are clearly able to exercise more influence as insiders to a decision-making process. On the other, incorporated groups may be required to accept decisions they need not necessarily agree with.

Secondly, the development of neo-corporatist mechanisms and forums to which the national environmental debate could be directed had, for the state, great strategic advantage. This was particularly so in the case of the environment, for it allowed for the containment of a hitherto politically volatile debate within bureaucratic structures, within which some of the key operational values of bureaucracy could operate - rationality, comprehensiveness and, perhaps the most important all, the stabilisation of policy debates that comes with the routinsation of decision-making (see Allison 1971; March and Olsen 1975:151; March and Olsen 1989:21; Minnery 1988). The impact of the Hawke Government’s redefinition of the national environmental debate away from specific disputes to address long-term, conceptual issues was quite dramatic on the core environmental interest groups. Instead of being at the forefront of protest action and other direct campaigns in pursuit of a clearly identifiable objective (as they had done in the Tasmanian dams case and, later, in the forests), these groups were now involved in protracted discussions with producers, Government and organised labour over much more ephemeral matters. In short, many within the organisational core of the environmental movement went from being activists to becoming bureaucrats - or, at the very least, participating in a bureaucratically defined and controlled process of trying to find ways in which ecological and developer perspectives could be reconciled and applied to political concerns.
The ‘red-green’ alliance between Labor and the environmental movement’s core interest groups seemingly at work between 1983 and 1996 was, in fact, a rather special relationship created by the Labor Government’s willingness to embrace the environmental issue, and by the institutional design that occurred as neo-corporatist principles were applied to allow the state greater control over the debate. The chief feature of this relationship was the extent to which it was dominated by the Labor Government. In addition to the reasons why the ALP was more open to the political demands from the environmental movement, the fact that Labor held executive power between 1983 and 1996 was the basis upon which it was able to direct the nature of the environmental debate. This was reflected primarily by the way in which that debate was transformed from one dominated by specific land-use disputes, into a much broader, complex and bureaucratic debate about principles such as ESD, and how competing interest group demands could be reconciled in the name of consensus.

Even the perceived decline in the Labor Government’s interest in environmental matters following the leadership transition from Hawke to Keating, and the closing down of the ESD process and the RAC was part of this same dynamic. So, too, was the souring of the Labor-environmental relationship when environmental groups finally decided that what the government was offering in exchange for their compliance with a consensus model was no longer worth accepting. The sense of institutional actors being part of a continually evolving dynamic, in which prevailing political environments alter and old ideas suddenly become rejuvenated by changing circumstances is very much a
part of institutional politics (March and Olsen 1989; Cohen et al. 1972:3). With the leadership transition occurring in the government, policy priorities were altered, and the decline of the environment (and its interest groups) vis a vis the state occurred accordingly.

In the case of Australian environmental politics, the reorientation of the debate to address decision-making processes provided a gateway through which bureaucratic values and input were able to exert influence on the nature and direction of approaches undertaken to environmental matters. There was an important coincidence of the Labor Government's commitment to consensus politics, and the desire on the part of pro-development ministers to reassert control over the land-use and resources debate, with the interest that bureaucratic actors had in seeking to address the procedural challenges to policy-making in areas hitherto seen as the preserve of the States. This was particularly so during that period after the Wesley Vale pulp-mill dispute when the momentum towards a process-oriented approach as a panacea to the politics of environmentalism as it had been discharged up to that point was at its greatest. In this altered political environment, the debate began to broach issues whose parameters were often set by institutional actors. This included the rise (and subsequent fall) of the RAC, the ESD process, and the attempt to find ways to institute co-operative Federal-State approaches to land-use and resources matters particularly where environmentalist inputs were relevant.
It was in the context of seeking to reform the entire decision-making approach that Commonwealth actors realised the limits to their technical and scientific expertise on land-use matters compared with their counterparts in State departments and agencies, and thus the process of seeking Federal-State inter-departmental and inter-agency cooperation was commenced. The reciprocity of State agencies and departments occurred in the context of an acknowledgment that fragmented approaches to decision-making were undermining the confidence of investors. Thus Commonwealth and State agencies shared a commitment to the need for stability and certainty in decision-making - an important area of commonality that allowed scope for the rather adversarial nature of relations between Federal and State politicians to be transcended. The IGAE, and the move towards undertaking regional assessments as a prelude to the Regional Forest Agreement process - both of which stood as important administrative legacies of the Federal Labor Government when it was defeated at the 1996 election, and both of which survived into the new Coalition Government - were the products of this approach.

Moreover, each of these manifestations of institutionally designed structures created to manage the process of decision-making required the participation of the core environmental interest groups. Whilst being mindful of the contradictions such incorporation posed for environmentalism as a social movement, the fact that these core groups had agendas that resonated in the public policy realm meant that the opportunity to participate in such state-dominated structures was too great to resist.
7.3: The national environment debate and Labor: the critical role of party

Notwithstanding the classical Westminster assumption that the Opposition provides policy alternatives to those of the government, the refusal of the Liberal and National Parties to countenance the idea that the Commonwealth could and should play a direct interventionist role in the land-use responsibilities of the States, and the National Party’s total antipathy towards environmentalism, meant that, for much of the period under review here, the Coalition Parties were marginal to the environmental debate. Thus the really critical politics surrounding trenchant and conflicting positions held between the pro-development and pro-environment camps in the institutional debate occurred within the ALP itself. Admittedly the critical point at which these struggles to dominate decision-making occurred was at the upper levels of the party hierarchy - and particularly amongst the Federal Labor Ministry - although, by virtue of its organisational rules and structures, land-use debates also concerned Caucus.

In accounting for the ascendancy of the environment in the national political agenda, however, it is necessary to identify the extent to which the intra-party dynamics of the land-use debate contributed to the national debate. Central to this was the capacity for land-use matters to defy the factional rigidity associated with other major policy debates. The emergence of the Federal ALP’s rigid factional system had become one of the foundation stones for intra-party stability, particularly with regards to debate over problematic issues of policy (see Duverger 1964:148, and cf: Warhurst 1994:150; Lloyd
and Swan 1987). The enhancement of the capacity for large blocks of MPs to be readily marshalled by a handful of faction leaders answerable to the Prime Minister, particularly when these leaders were incorporated into the Cabinet, provided one of the key foundations for this stability. So, too, did the relative cohesion of the Right, Left and Center blocks, and the consistency with which the Center-Left was prepared to direct its support to the Right.

By accepting the space formalised factionalism allowed the party's Socialist Left to legitimise its practice of intra-factional caucusing, the party's Left would find ways of accepting defeats on policy matters as an acceptable part of the process of formalised factionalism. In the meantime, the dominance of the party's Right was really filtered by its dependence on the Center Left to support the pragmatic position with regards to policy-matters in order for policies to traverse the party's external policy-making organs and/or the Caucus and Cabinet. In so many potentially controversial policy debates the usual dynamic would revolve around the party's Center Left and Right being pitted against the Socialist Left. The dynamics of the party's position on the mining and exporting of uranium - an issue very closely related to green politics generally - was a good example of this dynamic: whilst the Party's Left were adamant opponents of any policy designed to expand uranium mining, the combined strength of the Right and Center Left in Caucus and Cabinet decisions, and in debates at National Conference ensured pro-mining modifications to party policy.
The significance of the ALP's role in the ascendency of environmentalism in national politics lay in the way in which this issue managed to defy the traditional rigid tripartist solidarity of the factions. In particular, environmentalism enjoyed the benefits of the capacity for the land-use debate to defy the otherwise solid, cohesive and numerically significant Right faction, as well as providing one of the few wedges capable of dividing the Right and the Center Left. It is interesting to note that from the moment the Hawke Government was elected in 1983, the environment portfolio was placed in the hands of a minister drawn from the party's Center Unity faction - the right wing faction based in New South Wales (see table 7.1).

Table 7.1: Labor's Environment Ministers: National

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>minister</th>
<th>House</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Faction</th>
<th>Tenure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barry Cohen</td>
<td>HOR</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Centre Unity#</td>
<td>11/3/83 - 24/7/87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham Richardson</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Centre Unity#</td>
<td>24/7/87 - 19/1/88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham Richardson*</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Centre Unity#</td>
<td>19/1/88 - 4/4/90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roslyn Kelly*</td>
<td>HOR</td>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Centre Unity#</td>
<td>4/4/90 - 25/3/94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Faulkner*</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Socialist Left</td>
<td>25/3/94 - 3/3/96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* - denotes Cabinet membership
# - note that the NSW Right faction is called “Centre Unity”
That this portfolio area should be in the hands of the more pragmatic, if not powerful, of the factions was probably a reflection of the extent to which the Labor oligarchy viewed the issue as a matter of electoral expediency rather than any particular commitment to placing an ecologically rational overlay to the political and administrative debate. This in itself does much to explain the reasons why environmental policy-making prior to the Accordist phase tended to be sporadic and incoherent. The ascendancy of Graham Richardson to the environment portfolio simply served to politicise the debate to a greater degree than previously, with the consequence being an even more sporadic and ad hoc approach to decision-making. By the same token, the appointment of a minister from the Socialist Left by Paul Keating was something of a sign of the decline of the environment in the policy priorities of the government following the 1993 election.

During the Hawke years the really significant politics on land-use matters took place within the Cabinet and between colleagues in the powerful Right and Centre factions. The intensity of these struggles was enhanced by two critical factors. First, the ascendancy of a powerful Right faction-leader to the portfolio enhanced the issue's transformation to a matter of central importance, although it also acted as a catalyst for the pro-development ministers to seek means by which the debate could be swung back towards their side of the argument without necessarily jettisoning the perceived electoral benefits of being seen to be environmentally sensitive. Secondly, because - as Duverger (1964:151-168) once noted - the question of party factionalism actually relates to fragmentation of the party oligarchy, and because such factionalism readily discharges
itself over matters to do with power and this, in turn, represents a challenge to the party leadership, the capacity for land-use matters to divide the Right dovetailed with another major issue that would also cleave this faction. This was, of course, the whole question of the status of the parliamentary leadership that played itself out in the form of the struggle between Bob Hawke and Paul Keating for the Australian Prime Ministership.

Once again, this most fundamental of political struggles within the governing party saw the cleaving of the very Right-wing faction to which both aspirants belonged. And, as the case studies particularly with regards to the battles over RSL and the fate of mining at Coronation Hill in the aftermath of the RAC findings indicated, debates about land-use and the struggle over leadership could and did dovetail.

In a sense, this coincidence of leadership struggle and the specific policy dispute provided further insight into the way in which the policy of politics can be so fundamentally influenced by party politics, particularly in a political culture where party is so important. The significance of the environment policy debate lay in its ability to place internecine strain on an otherwise highly cohesive and functional policy-making government. Clearly the intersection of the environmental issue with the ALP’s formalised factional system and the leadership imbroglio was arguably one of the more important factors in influencing the form and direction of environmental policy-making. The increase in the Hawke Government’s role in environmental matters particularly after the 1987 election was due to the ascendancy of a powerful former faction-leader and confidant to the prime minister to the ministry and the environment portfolio. So important was this individual’s role as an integral member of the party machine that, as
the post-RAC Coronation Hill debate indicated, even when the environment portfolio had passed on to another minister, Senator Richardson still discharged a critical role in brokering Cabinet outcomes that would not embarrass the Prime Minister's leadership.

By the same token, the decline of the environment as a national policy issue began with the unravelling of the very personal relationships between Senator Richardson, Prime Minister Hawke and the rest of the Cabinet that had underpinned the issue's rise to prominence in the first place. Moreover, as the incumbent Prime Minister began to perceive his leadership to be under threat, particularly from within his own factional powerbase, scope for a re-evaluation of the leader's policy priorities began to open up. In this context the Prime Minister's support for Graham Richardson's side of the land-use argument (which also involved the new Environment Minister, Ros Kelly) began to waver in favour of those pro-Hawke right and Center-Left faction Cabinet colleagues who also happened to be on the pro-development side of the land-use debate. It was in this context that Hawke became willing to entertain institutionally-oriented proposals to reform land-use decision-making, and, later, to support initiatives such as the RSL program to which environmentalists were firmly opposed.

In a sense, Hawke's conversion to the RSL program looked like a significant repudiation of the commitment he had given to environmental policy matters that had made his government so proactive in previous years. In fact, Hawke's commitment to matters environmental was purely pragmatic and based on his perceptions of what short-term gain could be obtained from being seen by the electorate to be sympathetic to the
issue. In the politics of land-use matters, however, and particularly with regards to the institutional reform of the decision-making process, the impetus came from somewhere other than the Prime Minister. The Labor Government's attempt at institutional reform of environmental decision-making may well have been within the Accordist method so successfully applied to other policy areas, but this was primarily at the behest of the pro-development Ministers from the Right and Center-Left who perceived both environmentalists and Senator Richardson as having far too much influence over this policy issue. The pursuit of a method of decision-making based on medium- to long-term approaches in which economic analyses would be an integral part of the methodology was, in effect, an expression of rejection of the very essence of the Richardson approach. Like the competitive dynamic that existed in relations between the DPIE and DASSETT on these matters, the struggle between ministers for ascendancy over the policy debate was an integral part of the politics of environmentalism.

The appointment of Senator John Faulkner, of the party’s Left, as Environment Minister coincided with the onset of the decline in governmental interest in the forums and debates initiated under the Hawke Prime Ministership. It was also to coincide with a souring of Labor’s relationship with the environmental movement overall, including the very environmental interest groups who had participated in the alliance with Labor during the Hawke years. These fundamental changes to the prevailing political environment were less a reflection of the portfolio’s shift from the Right to the Left, however. Rather, they reflected the consequences of Paul Keating’s ascendancy to the Labor leadership, and to the Prime Ministership. As this study has shown, Keating was
not necessarily hostile to the environmental debate, or, indeed, to the environmental movement. The significance of Keating’s ascendancy, however, lay in the re-prioritisation of the political debate that occurred with the emergence of the new leadership. In this re-prioritisation of the key items on Labor’s political agenda, the environment fell from the position of prominence it had held under Hawke. In this sense, the internal dynamics of Labor politics - this time relating to the leadership question - was to have a profound impact on the environmental debate. The occurrence of the woodchip export controversy after Keating’s election victory in 1993 represented a return to the short-term, ad hoc environmental politics of the past that the Hawke Government had tried to change by developing bodies such as the RAC.

The altered dynamics within the Labor Cabinet thus affected the environmental debate - a situation that sufficiently aggrieved the organisational core of the environmental movement that the Coalition - hitherto marginal actors in national environmental politics - found scope to establish communications with the environmental movement as part of its preparations for the 1996 Federal election campaign. The fact that the Coalition was now willing to explore ways in which it could be seen to be sensitive to the environmental issue particularly in anticipation of having an extensive environmental policy platform in place for a future federal election was an important development. In part it reflected the environmental movement’s success in making the matter so important to the national electorate. The Coalition clearly decided that its best electoral interests would be served by responding to the issue rather than standing firm on its previous ‘States’ rights’ position. In this context, the icy relations
that existed between the Coalition and the core environmental interest groups after 1983 began to thaw. By the same token, the relationship that existed between the ALP and these environmental interest groups since the Franklin dam dispute also underwent a major change.

7.4: Harbingers of the new, or the pragmatism of old politics? The environmental movement, interest group politics, and policy

The period under review in this study was one in which environmental matters were constantly being debate in national politics - sometimes with regard to major disputes over land-use decisions pertaining to the nation’s remaining wilderness resource, and sometimes in relation to the more conceptual debates in the context of discussions and forums such as the ESDWGs and the RAC. In these developments, the environmental movement played an important role - particularly through the major interest groups at the movement’s centre, including the ACF and TWS. The environmental movement also spawned a ‘green’ party political wing which succeeded in winning parliamentary representation in the Tasmanian and, later, (via the Senate) the national Parliaments. Unlike the interest groups, however, this manifestation of the environmental movement was quite explicit in the alternative it presented to a politics dominated by parties and their interaction with interest groups in the policy-making process. Thus the environmental movement progressed a long way from a period in which it was viewed as either an expression of middle-class selfishness, or of romantic
extremism. Between 1983 and 1996, the environmental movement emerged as a significant participant in the mainstream political process by running candidates for electoral contests, brokering preference deals with the major parties in various elections, and seeking to influence the outcome of public policy debates by attempting to sway public opinion and by exerting influence on government.

The division of the environmental movement into a more overtly party-political manifestation on the one hand, and its collection of interest groups pursuing specific conservation-issue outcomes particularly by seeking to exert pressure on public opinion and governments on the other, was a key feature. Tension did exist between the more overtly political wing of the movement and the core conservation interest groups, and there were even strains and tensions between the key core groups. Indeed, debates about the strategic wisdom, and, indeed, the ideological validity of the harbingers of new social movement politics being involved in a political alliance with the ALP was a major issue in much of this intra-movement strain and tension. Yet throughout the period, this strain never reached a breaking point that fundamentally altered the dynamics of Labor-environmental relations until the woodchip export licence controversy in 1995-96. The preparedness of the core conservation interest groups to participate in the conventional interest group-type politics of exerting pressure on public opinion and on the governmental processes of decision-making was the key to the longevity of positive relations with successive Labor Governments and a major feature of national environmental politics after 1983. It also contributed much to making these core groups important players in the general political process, although, importantly,
this occurred because the Labor Government was prepared to make room for
environmental interest groups in the newly designed bodies and forums in which the
government-managed policy debate was to be undertaken.

Here, then, lay two important realities about the Australian environmental
movement that were essential prerequisites to their playing a major role in national
environmental politics. First, the emergence of two faces to the environmental
movement through the formation of parties on the one hand, and interest group-type
organisations on the other provided the basis for the movement to be simultaneously a
manifestation of new politics, yet also a continuation of conventional pluralist politics to
which interest groups are so important. In a sense, these two faces of the movement
allowed scope for the practice of both radicalism and pragmatism. The effective
utilisation of protest activity alongside participation in much more mainstream political
activity such as electioneering, institutional lobbying and participation in government-
run decision-making processes was a reflection of the Australian environmental
movements breadth, flexibility, and effectiveness.

Herein lay the second important point. Notwithstanding the seemingly
irreconcilability of materialist and ecological outlooks held by developers and
environmentalists, the Australian environmental movement - or, at least, its nature
conservation interest-group core - were willing to participate in processes dominated by
a traditional pluralist view of the need to achieve ‘balance’ in decision-making. The
nature conservation interest groups, by placing the conservation agenda ahead of
attempts to bring about normative or cultural change, were willing participants in the sort of political procedures characterised by Offe (1985a) as reflecting the ‘old paradigm’. As important as achieving cultural and behavioural norms as a means to being a harbinger of ‘new politics’ may have been to the Australian environmental movement’s more overtly political component, it was the struggle to achieve ever more conservation land-use outcomes that dominated the movement’s organisational core. As a result, the core organisational groups were willing to participate in conventional inter-interest group dialogue, negotiation and bargaining in a bid to achieve ever greater conservation-oriented decisions.

The Hawke Government had attempted to solve problems in environmental policy politics by trying to incorporate the key protagonist interest groups into government-controlled policy discussion forums, and this was an important window of opportunity for the core conservation groups to find a place for themselves within the government’s decision-making process. Once subjected to the process-oriented reform using Accordist principles, the Hawke Government’s attempt at recasting the terrain of national environmental politics implied the creation of something of a policy network or perhaps even an ‘iron triangle’. As Rhodes (1990) and van Waarden (1992) describe it, such situations occur where ‘public-private relations’ between state actors and key interest organisations dealing with policy matters occur to which outside groups find it difficult to gain access. As van Waarden in particular has noted, the ‘network’ concept seeks to provide important channels of communication between decision-makers and organisations that provides a closed system of dialogue, consultation, exchange of
information and ideas, and the co-ordination of policy formulation and implementation (van Waarden 1992:33).

The willingness of these interest groups to participate in such a process is vital to its operation. Given the historical experience primary producer groups, particularly from extractive industries such as mining and silviculture, have had in participating in such policy networks in the past, the real test of the Hawke Government’s political ability to manage the environmental debate in this way lay in its ability to keep the environmental movement incorporated. Herein lay the critical point of tension which later provided the source of the rupture between co-operative Labor-environmental relations under Prime Minister Keating. Clearly the core environmental interest groups were motivated to participate in incorporationist procedures partly because of the historical standing of environmentalist demands to be pro-active rather than reactive participants in the decision-making process, but mainly because of perceptions that the strategy of working within the system was successful.¹

The concern of sceptics within the environmental movement about being seen to be so close to the Labor Government was kept in abeyance by two important considerations. First, the emergence of a green party political wing provided an outlet for those in the movement whose view of green movement politics went beyond simply wilderness conservation. Second, the political terrain was profoundly influenced by the ascendancy of environmental interest group leaders, whose continued participation in
these processes was based on their more positive view of the opportunities associated with the co-operative relationship with Labor. Their support derived from a view that such participation was leading to the achievement of agenda demands, especially with regard to having significant land areas protected from development, or, as in the case of Wesley Vale, preventing a project deemed undesirable by environmentalists. The opportunity to work on the inclusion of environmental value-inputs to the decision-making process provided by the Hawke Government’s reform of the decision-making process was irresistible to the interest group component of the movement. To be included in such a process had been at the forefront of the conservation agenda since the Lake Pedder dispute.

Herein lay a real problem, however, for even in this relationship political costs were incurred alongside the benefits. If institutional actors generally, and politicians in particular, hoped that environmental interest groups and their leaders would be appeased with the successful achievement of their agenda demands, they were to be badly mistaken. Far from subsuming their specific agenda demands in exchange for a pro-active role in the decision-making process, it became clear that an ever-upward spiral of environmentalist demands were being placed on institutional actors upon the resolution of each specific issue. Whilst pro-development interests tended to portray this upward spiral of demands as the insatiability of politically greedy interest groups, the real root of this phenomenon lay in the competing rationalities at work in land-use matters. As argued at the outset of this study, the ecological rationality that underpins environmentalism as a movement places the problems of ecology at the center of
political considerations. The struggle for environmental protection is more than just some political game in the pursuit of power, prestige or, even more remotely, the idea that the partial achievement of an agenda item will suffice. The persistence of the centrality of the ecological rationality, notwithstanding the willingness of some core environmental groups to participate in seemingly bureaucratic, or neo-corporatist or policy networked configuration, would ensure that there would always exist a pressure on such groups to opt out of any system that could not deliver sufficient ecologically-based outcomes.

And this is precisely where relations between some important parts of the environmental movement and the Labor Government under Paul Keating soured. From the 1990 election onwards, national environmental policy politics increasingly became bogged down in what amounted to highly bureaucratised activity, particularly with regards to the various RAC inquiries and the ESDWG process that were under way. Additionally, the various environmental interest groups were participating in conferences, seminars and forums on a plethora of environmental issues, including the burgeoning debates about ‘Greenhouse’ gas emissions and the extent to which the ozone was being depleted (see Pfueller et.al. 1993). In short, a movement that had its origins in activist-oriented politics discharged in the pursuit of specific land-use demands usually associated with a spectacular single issue had become completely bogged down in seemingly endless bureaucratic debates and activities. The strains placed on the environmental movement (which manifested themselves, amongst other things, by tension between groups within the movement) was exacerbated whenever these groups
perceived themselves to be losing the procedural or bureaucratic struggles in which they were now involved. The strains created by the RSL program was an example of this, although its resolution to the satisfaction of the environmental movement deferred a disintegration of Labor-environmental relations.

The incorporation of the core groups into bureaucratically-operated and controlled processes raised another major source of strain. Such institutionalised politics operates under the traditional pluralist assumption that policy politics is about dialogue, and, above all else, negotiation and bargaining. Such an assumption is also important to the neo-corporatist policy-making models. These models require groups and institutional actors to be able to accept that winning and losing are part of the process, and that groups are willing to bargain on policy positions. Most importantly, it assumes they will remain within the corporatist configuration even when a policy loss is incurred on the understanding that the benefits of staying within a state-sanctioned configuration outweigh the costs of having lost a specific policy debate. Under the Accordism period of Labor’s management of environmental policy politics, environmental interest groups had to constantly face this problem. The difficulty of the choice about staying in or opting out of such processes was exacerbated by the environmentalist position on environmental matters, based, as it is, on the ecological rationality to which Dryzek (1983a; 1987) refers. In an approach in which biospheric and ecological phenomena are inter-linked, and where ecological crisis is ever near (thus reducing the environmental movement’s scope for compromise on specific issues), negotiation and compromise was always going to present environmental interest groups with a difficult political choice.
In some ways, the prevailing political climates determined the willingness of the core environmental groups to participate in the bureaucratic process. This was particularly true when, with Senator Richardson as Environment Minister, the Labor Government seemed willing to respond to the specific-issue agenda. Even after Senator Richardson’s departure from the portfolio, the implacable nature of the Coalition’s disdain for environmentalists and environmentalism did much to encourage the environmental groups to retain their relationship with the national ALP. However, the failure of these groups to achieve anything on the specific issue agenda after 1990, and, even more acutely, their apparent failure to influence the woodchip export license controversy that dogged the Keating years placed intolerable strain on the environmental movement. Nowhere was this more obvious than in the collapse of relations between groups within the environmental movement, and between these groups and the ALP after 1993. The rehabilitation of the environment as a policy matter worthy of a Coalition response beyond reaction simply completed the altered political environment that was to see the arrangements that had been in place since 1983 finally collapse comprehensively. The inclusion of the core conservation groups in this process was revealing, however, of the extent to which they had now become important actors in the land-use policy debate.
7.5: Conclusion and overview

The nature and direction of environmental politics in Australia between 1983 and 1996 was guided primarily by the Australian Labor Party in its incarnation as the governing party in Australia, particularly during the tenure of Bob Hawke as Prime Minister and the persistence of the key dynamics surrounding the Labor-environmental movement electoral alliance that emerged during the anti-Franklin dam campaign. This occurred because the environmental movement - and, particularly, its organisational core of nature conservation interest groups - sought to achieve political objectives that involved the realisation of public policy outcomes. In pursuing such objectives, environmentalists needed to make an impact on the institutionalised policy-making process. The Labor Party, with its willingness to maintain the electoral relationship that emerged during the anti-Franklin dam campaign, with its centralist orientation, and with its social democratic tradition of using the state to intervene in the operation of the market, was perfectly poised to provide the conduit in to the institutionalised policy-making process that the environmental movement’s nature conservationists were seeking.

By being the conduit by which the environmental movement could impact on the policy-making process, the Labor Government had strategic command over the nature and direction that the debate would take. Thus the qualitative changes in the nature of
the debate between 1983 to 1996 outlined in this chapter and, indeed, by the case studies presented in this study, were a reflection of the way in which the Labor Government itself altered its approach to the issue. Similarly, these qualitative shifts in the nature of the debate - from incrementalist to activist, the bureaucratically-oriented Accordist, and, finally, the decline phases - were due in no small measure to battles within the Labor Caucus and Cabinet over the development-versus-environment debate. By the same token, important attempts at institutional design in a bid to provide a basis for more rational, comprehensive and long-term approaches to considering environmental inputs to land-use decisions reflected the high value placed on a depoliticised, bureaucratised approach to addressing the policy-making process by the Hawke and, to a lesser extent, Keating Governments. These initiatives were particularly important in bringing a conventional form of politics based on interest group-oriented interaction with institutional actors to environmentalism - a political discourse that is often theoretically viewed as a manifestation of unconventionality. In the politics of environmentalism in Australia during a period of sustained relevance to the national political debate, the role of party - in this case, the Australian Labor Party - was central to maintaining the issue's national relevance. It was Labor, as the party of national government, that provided the means by which the environmentalist agenda could realise policy outcomes at the national level.

1. It must be remembered that, right from the very start of the period of co-operative Labor-environmental relations when the NSWC endorsed Labor as a 'no dams' party in the 1983 election, members of the environment movement expressed disquiet at being seen to be too closely aligned with the party political process. The reasons for this scepticism varied: some
within the movement wished to see environmentalism as part of the social movement political alternative to mainstream or 'old paradigmatic' politics - including party politics. Associated with this view was the argument that social movement politics was a politics based on participation and massed activism, whereas the politics of co-operative Labor-environmental relations tended to be viewed as a recreation of the sort of bureaucratic politics despised by social movement activists. This issue was particularly important to the Wilderness Society which viewed itself as an activist-oriented organisation. Meanwhile, a second, pragmatic argument emerged that the appearance of being too closely aligned with the ALP in particular could prove to be politically costly in the event of a Coalition electoral victory (Wooten 1987).
CONCLUSION

Once an issue of lesser importance on the national agenda (due mainly to the fact that land-use matters were historically viewed as the concern of the States), the environment's status as a major national political issue was entrenched during the years of Labor Government between 1983 and 1996. Commencing as a series of disputes over the appropriate use of wilderness areas, the national debate evolved during this time into a complex dialogue between Government and interest groups about such broad concepts as ecological sustainability, how economic planning could address the real value of environmental protection, and the means by which ecological values could be applied to general policy-making. All of this occurred under the direction of Federal Labor Governments who, particularly between 1983 and 1991, were committed to notions of consensus politics, and who sought ways in which competing demands from environmentalists and developers could be reconciled and 'balanced' through the national policy-making process.

In this period, two distinct sets of protagonists played important roles in bringing the environmental debate onto the national policy agenda, and keeping it there. The environmental movement - or, more specifically, the movement's organisational core of environmental interest groups - was responsible for bringing the issue to the attention of the public in a dynamic corresponding closely with Downs' attention cycle model.
(1972). The Federal Government was responsible for keeping the issue at the fore of the public policy debate, however. It was also responsible for sustaining the issue over the long term, including the qualitative transitions of the policy debate into, variously, its incrementalist, crisis-oriented, neo-corporatist tending 'Accordist', and, finally, relative decline stages during the thirteen years of Labor Government in Australia. In this way, the politics of national environmental policy-making corresponded with Dror's normative optimum model (1964; 1968) where state actors review previous decisions (and the method by which they were made) with a view to improving decision-making in the future. As this thesis has shown, the long-term presence of the environment issue on the national agenda reflected the way the matter became the source for institutional innovation and design as the Federal Government attempted to address ways in which it could undertake 'better' long-term policy creation in this arena - an approach designed to reflect the Labor Government's commitment to 'consensus politics'.

In order to be relevant to the public policy debate, environmentalism required a conduit by which its concerns could make it on to the national political agenda. This was precisely the function that was discharged by the Australian Labor Party in its role as the major political party in government between 1983 and 1996. From the point during the latter stages of the anti-Franklin dam campaign (which, significantly, coincided with the onset of the 1983 Federal election) in which the Labor Party's parliamentary leadership made the strategic decision to project a firm anti-dams policy, environmental politics in Australia become inextricably linked with the emergence of a co-operative relationship between the national ALP and the core environmental interest
groups. An electoral arrangement, in which environmental interest group endorsement of the ALP in successive Federal elections, until the 1996 contest, was exchanged for commitments from Labor to address the environmental agenda via the public policy-making process was the basis for what appeared to be a ‘red-green’ alliance. By the same token, the collapse of this arrangement reflected the souring of the Labor-environmental relationship during the period in which Paul Keating was Labor leader and Prime Minister.

Although based on mutual political considerations (with Labor coveting the ‘green electorate’, and environmental groups seeking to become insiders to the policy-making process), the Labor-environmental alliance that underpinned the period was one dominated and, eventually, defined by the Labor Government. This thesis has traced a period of environmental politics in Australia where the role of government was critical in sustaining the debate over the long term. The various Hawke Governments played a particularly important role in this evolutionary process. Here, the neo-corporatist tendency perceivable in the Hawke Government’s approach to politics generally was an important element, and contributed greatly to the transition of the national environmental debate from its crisis-oriented to institution-dominated, or ‘Accordist’ phase. Whilst, at one level, the formation of the RAC, the undertaking of the ESD process, the reform of the AHC’s analytical process and so on were examples of institutional design at the Federal level which aimed to enhance the Commonwealth’s ability to garner the necessary information to make land-use decisions, each of these initiatives were also geared towards achieving the type of state-dominated inter-interest
group mediation seen as a necessary precursor to achieving consensus-oriented policy outcomes foreseen by Schmitter (1979; 1982) as integral characteristics of neo-corporatism. The environmental issue at the national level had become highly politicised, and the Hawke Government’s response was to utilise institutional design and innovation to reassert the authority of the state over the debate. It was precisely under the auspices of these innovative institutions and forums that the Hawke Government did assert control over the issue, thus providing the basis upon which Labor was able to manage the national environmental debate notwithstanding its limited constitutional authority to legislate over land-use and resource matters.

The importance of the environmental issue to Australian politics lay not only in the ability of the issue to maintain public interest, but also in the willingness of the state to undertake the creation of environmental policy. These were achievements that the environmental movement could not, and did not, attain on its own. Rather, the successful involvement of the Commonwealth on land-use matters depended greatly on the preparedness of government to be so engaged. And it was precisely at this point that the relationship between the ALP and the nature conservation groups was so important. The reasons why Labor, rather than the Coalition parties, figured so prominently in the politics of environmentalism broach more than simply a happy coincidence of timing where the ALP, as the national opposition, sought to align itself with the popular anti-Franklin dam campaign in 1983. Labor’s ability to respond to this issue also depended on its traditional commitment to use the state as a mechanism to achieve political outcomes, the existence of some sympathy for the environmental cause within its ranks.
(both at the branch level and within Caucus), and its past willingness to seek to expand the powers of the Commonwealth *vis a vis* the States on policy issues.

Significantly, these factors militated against resistance to the environmentalist agenda from within the party. Thus Labor's record of consistently addressing the environmentalist agenda included the making of some major conservation-oriented decisions. This contrasts with theoretical literature that either argues that the blue collar composition of trade union-based social democratic parties will create the context for poor Labor-environmental relations, or casts the politics of environmentalism as a 'new politics' alternative to the 'old politics' of hierarchy and materialism associated with rather traditional behavioural forms such as party politics. Notwithstanding the potential for disputes, and despite the criticism of 'old politics' inherent in the development of alternative 'green' parties, co-operation and alliance characterised relations between Labor and the core environmental groups such as TWS and especially the ACF between 1983 and 1996. For these groups, this alliance presented an opportunity for the environmental movement to become 'insiders' to the process in which land-use policy would be made. The desire to become insiders to the decision-making process (and to participate in long-term debates, rather than simply responding to specific land-use disputes if and when they arose) influenced environmental interest groups to enter into a co-operative relationship with the ALP.

The formation of this Labor-environmental alliance was assisted by some other factors. The Federal Coalition, for example, remained implacably opposed to both the
environmental movement’s preservationist agenda and the argument that the Commonwealth should override the land-use policy powers of the States right up until the watershed 1996 federal election. And whilst the environmental movement enjoyed close relations with the Australian Democrats (whose presence in the Senate had historically given the environmental movement access to the parliamentary process even in the days preceding the Labor-environmental alliance), they were a minor party who could not offer direct access to executive power. Such a conduit to the institutionalised decision-making process could only be provided by a major political party - and between 1983 and 1996, this was precisely what the alliance with the Federal Labor Government offered the core environmental interest groups.

It is clear that the Labor Party’s willingness to enter into an alliance with the environmental movement was based in no small way on strategic considerations. The environment was viewed as an issue of importance to a significant middle-class component of the electorate whose support Labor considered to be vital in electoral contests. Yet this alone does not account for the degree to which the environment grew in significance in the context of the national political debate. Rather, the salience of the environment in the post-Franklin period owed as much to internal politics within the Government as it did to the ability of the environmental movement to conduct environmental campaigns. Indeed, it is argued in this thesis that the environmental movement was to be displaced by the Labor Party as the primary force in environmental politics. This was particularly the case when the debate was transformed from its preoccupation with specific land-use disputes to become instead a series of complex,
long-term deliberations about ecologically sustainable development, and how long-term resource policies might be made. The Government’s creation of the ESD Working Groups, the RAC, and, later, its linking of a rational, long-term decision-making process on forestry matters with the States with the New Federalism policy were the agencies and mechanisms by which this transformation occurred. By accepting the invitation to participate in these processes, the environmental movement became respondents to, rather than initiators of, the debate as it moved into its institutional phase.

The institutionalisation of the environmental debate was the Hawke Government’s major achievement, and reflected the neo-corporatist approach the Labor Party took to policy politics generally during the Hawke years. It is important to note, however, that this transition owed much to the politics of the environmental debate that was going on within the Hawke Cabinet, where clearly identifiable pro-developer and pro-environmental blocks had developed. Importantly, these blocks transcended the Right-Left factional divide that usually determined the direction policy debates would take in the Government. In this dynamic, the role of Senator Graham Richardson, the Environment Minister between 1987 and 1990, was of critical importance. Indeed, it was during his period as Minister - a period described in this study as the ‘crisis oriented’ phase - that the Hawke Government undertook its most significant decisions to extend Commonwealth protection to a number of disputed land areas.

It was this phase in which the environment became firmly entrenched as a national matter that generated great controversy. And if the Wesley Vale pulp mill and
East Gippsland forest disputes were any guide, this was the period in which the Government’s approach lacked any sense of long-term planning or attempt to coordinate environment policy with other policy objectives. It has been argued in this study that the Hawke Cabinet moved to transform the environmental issue away from volatile specific disputes to become a much more complex debate about the longer term implications of applying ecological values to general policy-making. This was the product of pro-development ministers seeking ways to redress what they saw as an imbalance in the Government’s approach to environmental matters during Senator Richardson’s tenure as Environment Minister.

The transition of the environment debate into its institutionalised phase marked the ascendancy of the Labor Government over all of the other actors, including the environmental movement, in the politics of environmentalism. This was even true during the period of troubled, and then deteriorating, relations between the core environmental interest groups and the Keating Government. The souring of the Labor-environmental relationship during the Keating Prime Ministership confirmed that the environmental interest groups now responded to initiatives undertaken by the Government. In this case, the environmental interest groups had to face a new reality in which the Prime Minister and his Cabinet were not as interested in the environmental issue to the same extent as their predecessors. Indeed, some of the initiatives undertaken during the Hawke period were dismantled. This included the RAC which was intended to be the centrepiece of the reformed environmental policy-making process.
What all this indicated about Australian environmental politics was that, notwithstanding the importance to Australian political life of the emergence of the environmental movement as a new social movement (particularly with regards to the alternatives that the ‘new politics’ may bring), institutional actors remain the more important particularly where the debate seeks to impact upon policy-making. It is institutions, rather than social movements, who have the power to make policy. Because Australian environmentalism was primarily mobilised to impact upon land-use and resource policy-making, the environmental movement’s political objectives were always defined in terms of impacting upon government, bureaucracy, and the policy-making process. And because environmental activists have felt State Governments to be resistant to the idea that development should be constrained in the name of environmental protection, the major environmental campaigns have increasingly focused on the Federal Government. When environmental debates do make it on to the national agenda, the Federal Government is faced with an administrative reality that the Commonwealth is not as well endowed with agencies, and the bureaucratic expertise within them, that can assist in the decision-making process that may be found in the States.

This was certainly a reality that confronted Federal Labor Governments between 1983 and 1996, who responded to the comparative lack of bureaucratic expertise by trying to develop agencies at the same time that they tried to respond to the environmentalist agenda. In the light of this, it became clear that Cabinet became the dominant institutional actor in the politics of environmentalism. This was reflected in so
many ways, including the degree to which conservation-oriented decisions were made, the way in which institutional design was adopted as an alternative to a debate dominated by specific issues, and the way in which a new Cabinet - the Keating Cabinet - went about dismantling the things that had been put in place by the previous regime. Between 1983 and 1996, a significant ‘greening’ of Australian politics took place in the sense that the issue of environmental protection (in the form of, first, wilderness conservation and then, later, concern about industrial pollution) became a major issue on the national political agenda. Notwithstanding the relationship between ‘new politics’, social movements and environmentalism, the reason why this greening of Australian politics occurred had everything to do with the willingness of the post-1983 Federal Labor Governments to address the issue. Where environmentalism seeks to find expression through the policy process, environmentalists need to find ways in which they can impact upon, or have access to, institutionalised policy-making. Between 1983 and 1996, the Federal Labor Governments became just such an avenue for environmentalists, although the reality would soon transpire that it would be Government, rather than the movement, that would dictate the nature and direction of the debate.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABARE (1990) *Australian Forest Resources* AGPS, Canberra


*ADVOCATE* (Devonport)

*AGE* (Melbourne)


AHC (1992) *National Estate Values in the Southern Forest Region of Western Australia -Draft Report* Volume 1, AGPS, Canberra


AUSTRALIA, Parliament of (1992a) *The Inter-Governmental Agreement on the Environment* AGPS, Canberra


AUSTRALIA, Parliament of (1992d) *The Budget Papers* AGPS, Canberra

*AUSTRALIAN* (Sydney)

*AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW* (Sydney)


330


CALLAGHAN, B. (1977) *Inquiry into the Structure of Industry and the Employment Situation in Tasmania* AGPS, Canberra


*CANBERRA TIMES* (Canberra)


COUNTRY TASMANIAN (Launceston)

COURIER MAIL (Brisbane)


DASETT (1988-89) *The Department of Arts, Sport, Environment, Tourism and Territories: Annual Report* AGPS, Canberra


333


EXAMINER (Launceston)


335


Galligan, B. (1992a) ‘Australian Federalism: Rethinking and Restructuring’ Australian Journal of Political Science 27 (Special Issue) 1-6


336


337
HAY, P. (1987) ‘Will the Tasmanian Disease Spread to the Mainland? The Politics of Land-Use’ *Current Affairs Bulletin* 64 (3) 4-12


HAY, P. (1994) ‘The Politics of Tasmania’s World Heritage Area: Contesting the Democratic Subject’ *Environmental Politics* 3 (1) 1-21


KELLY, P. (1984a) *The Hawke Ascendancy* Angus and Robertson, Sydney


LCC (1990-91) *The Land Conservation Council: Annual Report* GPS, Melbourne

LCC (1986) *East Gippsland Area Review: Final Recommendations* GPS, Melbourne


341


*MERCUROY* (Hobart)


MUNDEY, J. 91987' 'From Red to Green: Citizen-Worker Alliance' in Hutton, D. (ed) *op.cit.*

NAFI (1990-91) *National Association of Forest Industries: Annual Report* NAFI, Canberra

342
NAFI (1989-90) *National Association of Forest Industries; Annual Report* NAFI, Canberra

NAFI (1990) *Submission to the Resource Assessment Commission Forestry Inquiry* NAFI, Canberra

*NAFI NEWS* (Canberra)


O’CONNELL, D. 91983) ‘Proportional Representation and Intra-Party Competition in Tasmania and the Republic of Ireland’ *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 21 (1) 45-70


PAINTER, M. and CAREY, B. (1979) *Politics Between Departments* University of Queensland Press, St.Lucia

343


RAC (1991a) *Forest and Timber Industry Draft Report Volume 1*, RAC/AGPS, Canberra

RAC (1991b) *Kakadu Conservation Zone Inquiry Draft Report* RAC/AGPS, Canberra

RAC (1990) *Australia’s Forest and Timber Resource: Background Paper* AGPS, Canberra
RAC NEWS (Canberra)


Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration 62 23-27

SEIGMANN, H. (1985) The Conflicts Between Labor and Environmentalism in the
Federal Republic of Germany and the United States of America Gower, Berlin
53 (9) 15-23


Factionalism and Electoral Crisis’ Politics 15 (1) 81-88

SOLOMON, R. (1972) Tasmania Angus and Robertson, Sydney

SPRETNAK, C. and CAPRA, F. (1986) Green Politics: The Global Promise Paladin,
London

Allen and Unwin, Sydney

Occasional paper No. 2, RAC/AGPS, Canberra


STILLWELL,F. (1986) The Accord ... and Beyond Pluto Press, Sydney

University Press, Cambridge

) op.cit.

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD (Sydney)

TASMANIA, Department of Environment (1989a) Department of Environment
Assessment Report on the Export Pulp Mill Project, Wesley Vale, Tasmania:
Environmental Impact Statement TGPS, Hobart

TASMANIA, Department of Environment (1989b) Assessment Report on the Export
Pulp Mill project, Wesley Vale, Tasmania TGPS, Hobart

of Parliament Paper No. 9, TGPS, Hobart

THOMAS, J. (1975) *The Decline of Ideology in Western Political Parties* Sage, Bervely Hills


347
VON BYME, K. (1985) Political Parties in Western Democracies Gower, Heidelberg


WARD, I. (1987) ‘Labor’s Middle Class membership: A Profile of the Victorian Branch of the ALP in the Eighties’ Politics 22 (2) 84-91


348
WILSON, F. (1983) ‘Interest Groups and Policies in Western Europe: the Neo-Corporatist Approach’ *Comparative Politics* 16 (1) 105-123


**INTERVIEWS**

Mr Leigh Holloway, ACF Fund Raising Director, Australian Conservation Foundation, Melbourne 21 September 1987

Senator Bob McMullan, past National Secretary of the ALP, Canberra 2 September 1988

Mr Barry Cohen, former MHR for Robertson, former Minister for Home Affairs and Environment, Canberra, September 1988

Senator John Button, former Minister for Industry and Technology, Melbourne, 13 February 1989

Dr Bob Brown, MHA, Hobart 16 November 1988

Mr Alec Marr, Forests Campaign Director, Tasmanian Wilderness Society, Hobart 18 July 1989, and Canberra, 3 September 1993

Mr Doug Lowe, MLC, Hobart 19 July 1989

Ms Christine Milne, MHA, and former Convenor, Concerned Residents Against the Pulp Mill Siting, Devonport 20 July 1989
Mr Bill Hare, Policy Director, Australian Conservation Foundation, Melbourne 18 March 1991

Mr Michael Heatley, Assistant Director, Tasmanian Conservation Trust, Canberra, 7 April 1991

Dr Robert Bain, Chief Executive, National Association of Forest Industries, Canberra 9 April 1991

Ms Barbara Belcher, Assistant Secretary Corporate research Branch, Resource Assessment Commission, Canberra 10 April 1991

Mr Richard Mills, Head of Office, resource Assessment Commission, Canberra 10 April 1991

Mr Alec Nicholson, Secretary of Forest and Timber Inquiry, Resource Assessment Commission, Canberra 10 April 1991

Dr Clive Hamilton, Head, Corporate Policy Branch, Resource Assessment Commission, Canberra, 10 April 1991

Mr Richard Kenchington, Secretary, Coastal Resource Inquiry, Resource Assessment Commission, Canberra 10 April 1991

Mr John Hartwell, Assistant Secretary, Department of Primary Industry and Energy, Canberra 11 April 1991

Mr John Karas, Assistant Director - Uranium, Coal and Minerals Division, Department of Primary Industry and Energy, Canberra 11 April 1991

Mr Stephen Irwin, Director, Mining Industry Policy Branch Coal and Mineral Division, Department of Primary Industry and Energy, 11 April 1991

Mr David Whitrow, Executive Officer, Australian Mining Industry Council, Canberra, 11 April 1991

Mr Ross Dalton, ESD Secretariat, ESD Working Groups, Canberra, 12 April 1991

Mr Francis Grey, Economic Consultant to the ESDWG and RAC, Australian Conservation Foundation, Fitzroy 19 April 1991


Mr Peter Christoff, Consultant, Land Conservation Council (Victoria), Melbourne 17 August 1992
Mr David Scott, Chairman, Land Conservation Council (Victoria) and Commissioner for the Environment, Melbourne 21 August 1992

Ms Kay Setches, former Minister for Conservation, Forests and Land in Victorian Government, Croydon, 7 May 1993

Mr John Kerin, MHR for Werriwa, former Minister for Primary Industry and Energy, Melbourne 26 July 1993

Mr David White, MLC, former Minister for Manufacturing and Industry in the Victorian Government, Melbourne 16 August 1993

Ms Anne-Marie Delahunt, Deputy Executive Director, Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra 1 September 1993

Ms Jennie Ludlow, Secretary, Department of Arts, Sport, Environment, Tourism and Territories, Canberra 2 September 1993

Mr Daryl King, Director, Sustainable Land-Use Division, Department of Arts, Sport, Environment, Tourism and Territories, Canberra 2 September 1993

Mr Tony Bigwood, Assistant Director National Forests Strategies, Department of Arts, Sport, Environment, Tourism and Territories, Canberra 2 September 1993

Dr Michael Pearson, Deputy Executive Director, Australian Heritage commission, Canberra 3 September 1993

Mr Phillip Hoystead, adviser to Minister Ros Kelly, formerly Campaign Director with the Tasmanian Conservation Trust, Canberra 3 September 1993

Mr Mark O’Neil, adviser to Minister Ros Kelly, formerly Campaign Director with the East Gippsland Coalition, Canberra 3 September 1993

Mr Peter Matthews, adviser to Minister Ros Kelly, and formerly Secretary with the Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra, 3 September 1993

Senator John Faulkner, former Minister for Arts, Sport, Environment and Territories, Canberra, 4 November 1996

Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk, former adviser to Mr David Bedall, Minister for Resources, Canberra 4 November 1996

Senator Cheryl Kernot, former Leader of the Australian Democrats, Canberra, 4 November 1996
Minerva Access is the Institutional Repository of The University of Melbourne

Author/s: 
Economou, Nicholas Michael

Title: 

Date: 
1998-07

Citation: 

Publication Status: 
Unpublished

Persistent Link: 
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/38812

File Description: 

Terms and Conditions: 
Terms and Conditions: Copyright in works deposited in Minerva Access is retained by the copyright owner. The work may not be altered without permission from the copyright owner. Readers may only download, print and save electronic copies of whole works for their own personal non-commercial use. Any use that exceeds these limits requires permission from the copyright owner. Attribution is essential when quoting or paraphrasing from these works.