Understanding Public Participation in Forest Planning in Australia:

How Can We Learn From Each Other?

*M. Buchy & **S. Hoverman
with the contribution of *C. Averill

 *Australian National University,
**Environmental Protection Agency, Queensland

Disclaimer

Acknowledgments

It is to state the obvious to write that any research observing social phenomena relies on the collaboration of people. A wide range of people from across four States have contributed to this work through various means, with different degrees of interest and different agendas. The forestry debate is a very emotive one and it is not always possible for the neutral observer to record and analyse situations for what they are, as opposed to what we may think they are. The people who helped us had often opposing views of the process we were trying to understand and this paper may not always reflect individual people's contributions. So at the same time that we acknowledge the effort and the time many people have taken to tell us their story we must apologise for presenting a picture which may not always translate the angst, the frustration and the anger we have come across. Rather than a "compromised" version of the story, let us see this as the first step towards achieving a mutual understanding, a modest contribution to disentangling the gridlock of the bigger picture.
To you all, thank you.

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Introduction

A round table discussion on public participation in forest planning, during a meeting of the Forest Planners Working group in February 1997 at the ANU, revealed a wealth of unexplored and unrecorded experiences of public participation across the country. It became clear that public participation, which is a legal requirement in most states, was perceived and implemented in different ways by different government agencies to various degrees of success. The first author who attended part of the meeting, could sense some ambient frustration at the ever increasing energy and resources devoted by the various forest agencies to involve the public in planning matters, while the very same "public" never seemed to be satisfied and was making more and more unreasonable demands.

Subsequent discussions with NRE Victoria, DNR Queensland, Forestry Tasmania and CALM WA reiterated that a collaborative effort to systematically record and analyse the experiences of public participation in forestry planning could deliver concrete learning outputs valid for all. Thanks to a grant from NRE Victoria, DNR Queensland and the ANU we designed a research program. It was based on reviewing relevant literature on participatory management processes and conducting field surveys to

1) develop an analytical framework ,
2) record field realities in 4 states Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, Western Australia
3) analyse the processes in those states and
4) put forward ideas and recommendations for further consultation processes.

This paper reports on the various findings of the study.

Methodology

Based on a literature review and interviews with major stakeholders and individuals involved in the process at different stages in various states the research aimed at addressing the following areas of interest:

- historical understanding of the participatory process within the legal, political and institutional framework of each State and the nation as a whole;
- an understanding of the perception of participation and motivation in consultation at various levels of management and how these perceptions affect strategic decision making;
- an identification of the conditions under which a party may lose or win from the process;
- an understanding of whether different participation strategies work better or worse for different types of forest management issues or biophysical environments.
- strategies of states to develop and implement participation, including resources available - man power, appropriate training, time frames, costs - communication, consultation and mediation methods;

Each of the states was visited by the authors who engaged in extensive interviewing of various groups of stakeholders: the state agencies, the conservation bodies, local communities. Ideally we would have wanted to follow identical processes in each state but as forest planning processes were at different stages in the various states at the time of the field work, we had to adapt our approach to the local situation. For example in Tasmania, the Forestry agency was in the process of consulting the general public on the draft management plans in various districts,

while in WA the more recent planning process, at the strategic level had happened in 1992. So while in the former case it was possible to interview people recently involved and even to attend local "Meet the planners" public meetings in the later it was more a question of recording oral histories. Similarly, although Queensland's pilot project quoted here as a case study has yet to be publicly available, significant public consultation feeding into the pilot project took place in late 1996, and so the study has been a matter of recording oral histories.

It is also important to note the shadow cast on current and past consultation processes by current or past RFA processes in various states. While in Tasmania there was never a confusion between the two, in WA it was constantly necessary to emphasise that the focus was on specific forest planning rather than strategic planning. It is therefore likely that the perceptions and comments of the interviewees may have been tainted by more recent conflictive situations. Forestry issues are highly political in Australia and we would be naive not to acknowledge that our respondents presented very specific views, often influenced by the degree of "perceived success" their respective party gained or lost in being involved in any participatory process. Nevertheless, from experiences in other research and from information provided by the literature we should not exaggerate the weight of partial comments in distorting the truth. The issue was not to find out who was right or wrong, but to know and understand what people feel about their experience without attaching, - as far as possible! - a value judgement. The first step in conflict management is to accept people's views for what they are and not to try to undervalue their opinion either in a patronising or in an aggressive way.

Although we may have obtained information following different processes we were consistent across the states in the nature of the information sought. We conducted semi-structured interviews addressing broadly the following areas:

• understanding the values and the perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of public participation from the professionals' and the wider community's points of views;
• identification of what may or may not work ; and
• identification of concrete mechanisms for dealing with any specific situation in order to prevent potential crisis in the consultative process.

Most of this information was collected through semi structured interviews, group meetings, written questionnaires in Tasmania to contact individuals who had sent a submission about the draft plans, observation of public meetings.

In each state we tried to meet a wide range of stakeholders more or less directly involved in or concerned by the forest planning processes: those were state agencies staff (forestry, environment, aboriginal affairs), forest industry representatives, conservation body representatives, forest protection representatives and the wider community.

The involvement of indigenous Australians in any of the forest planning processes across the country has proven problematic. We therefore dedicated a specific study, undertaken by an Honours student C. Averill, to the investigation of issues of participatory processes within the context of aboriginal communities.

After preliminary investigation and considerable literature review, it was decided to focus the indigenous Australians research in Victoria and Queensland. In each of the States a variety of stakeholders groups, indigenous and non-indigenous, were interviewed by phone or at meetings and workshops. These surveys were complemented by making two closer case studies. As little is known and understood by non indigenous professionals about consultation

processes within aboriginal communities the research was not restricted to issues related to forest planning *per se* but was slightly enlarged to follow up concerns and interests highlighted by key informants at the time (*e.g.* key elders) or specific events or projects (*e.g.* an ecotourism project at Koombooloomba Forest). The lessons drawn from consultation efforts outside the forest planning sector should nevertheless help to understand how to design more appropriate planning processes to involve indigenous Australians in a more meaningful way.

Note on terminology: to avoid any longer confusion about the meaning of "participation" as opposed to "consultation" we wish to clarify that the former term is a broad umbrella sheltering various types of community involvement of which "consultation" is only but one.

The Lessons From the Literature

The literature on participation and participatory processes stems broadly from two major areas: 1) political sciences with discussions around democracy and citizenship especially within the context of regional and local planning (Davis, 1996; Munro-Clark 1990; Pateman 1970) and 2) development theory especially within the context of sustainable land use (Chambers 1997; Nelson & Wright 1995; Rahman 1993; Vettivel, 1992; Wignaraja *et al*. 1991). Interestingly most of the literature concerned with participatory natural resource management stems from developing countries and in the last decade or so, various countries have tried out different models of participatory forestry. From these diverse development and management experiments and theoretical reflections on "participation" the emerging themes in the literature can be largely amalgamated within two bodies of knowledge: 1) participation as an approach, an ideology, a specific ethos for community development and 2) participation as a method, a set of guidelines and practices for involving communities or the general public in specific planning activities. In other terms this distinction could be summarised by the question: is participation an end or a means to an end? This distinction has been described by Nelson & Wright (1995) as the distinction between 'instrumental and transformative' participation.

Participation as an end

The nature of democracy

An interesting starting point would be to look at Pateman's distinction between what she calls "modern or contemporary" democracy and participatory democracy (Pateman 1970). For her, participation refers to "equal participation in the decision making process and 'political equality' refers to the equality of power in determining the outcomes of decisions" (Pateman 1970:43). By contrast, in non-participatory democracy "it is the participation of the minority elite that is crucial" (Pateman 1970:104). We can operate in two different paradigms: either we believe that representative democracy offers effective means of community involvement in public affairs through elections and accept that the number of votes legitimises representivity or else we believe that powers should be devolved to the local level to allow local communities to make decisions about affairs of consequence to them. In the first framework, institutions and professionalism regulate and organise public affairs in a centralised manner designing policies for the "common good". In the second framework institutions and professional agencies recognise local heterogeneity and operate as catalysts or facilitators for development process (Chambers 1997).

The role of power

The role of power is central to participatory processes (Slocum *et al.* 1995). It is also one of the major reasons why people may decide to get involved in forest management issues while at the same time forestry agencies are reluctant to relinquish their control over the resource (Snowdon & Slee 1996). Although Painter (1992) questions the overemphasis put on power in decision making, the nature and the levels of participation in a policy or a development process are often measured in terms of power and the role that the different stakeholders have in the decision making process. This seems to be a constant theme in participatory literature and has inspired a number of typologies of participation (Arnstein 1969; Cornwal, 1995; Pretty 1995) which present a scale of participation (hence the image of the ladder in Arnstein's paper). Along the scale of participation from "Co-option to Collective action" (Cornwall 1995) or from "manipulation to citizen control" (Arnstein 1969), from "passive participation to self mobilisation" (Pretty 1995) the greater the control by outsiders (*e..g.* those outside the local community, the professionals) the less local communities tend to be involved at critical decision making stages.

Alternatively, as the involvement by the local communities increases, such as by playing an active role at strategic points in decision making (resource evaluation), or at an executive level, the nature of their role changes from being 'subjects' to 'directors' of the process. Different processes may benefit from different methods. The point of the typology is not to decide which level of the scale is "better" or "worse" but rather to provide an analytical frame to enable distinction between processes. It is often implicitly assumed that the more people participate the better the outcome for the community (Munro-Clark 1992). In fact in the political game, being involved has its caveats too and, as Painter (1992: 25) points out, "the other face of participation as an encounter between outside groups and authority structures is the 'co-option' the 'buying off' of opposition through taking spokes-people on board".

The Canadian Model Forest program (see Box 1) offers an interesting example of a partnership between various interests to investigate and develop more sustainable forest management practices. Yet despite a strong emphasis on bringing people together to identify priorities and models of management, the people at the ground level never get a chance to take part or to influence forest policy in their respective States. There are no mechanisms within the process for stakeholders groups to influence the integration of their findings into policy and practice, nor has the program been set up for this purpose (Sinclair 1999). On the other hand this process has been acclaimed for providing the opportunity for traditional enemies to collaborate and learn from each other.

Therefore if an evaluation of the process was limited to the frame offered by typologies focused on decision-making power, it would dismiss the Model Forest programme as being non-participatory. With cynicism one could even question the motives of the Federal government in promoting a participatory process at province level, when the Federal government itself has no direct power to force change upon state governments. Yet the education dimension of the experience seems important and beneficial (Poffenberger & Seli, 1998) and that may, in the long term, be more important.

Consultation

In all those typologies "consultation" is presented as a process of involvement where people's opinion is sought, may influence the perspective, but in no way guarantees an input in decision-making. Of course the timing of the consultation will often determine in itself the weight of the outcome. When people are consulted before the preparation of a new project their opinion is more likely to be incorporated than if they are asked to comment on an already identified and designed project.

Empowerment

"Community empowerment", "the empowerment of the grassroots" is a common rhetoric in participatory development and indeed in participatory forestry projects. What is meant is not clear. Like "participation" the term can be misused or misunderstood. At some level it may mean that power has been devolved or decentralised and that people have a more effective say in the running of their affairs. At a more strategic and individual level though, empowerment reflects more a state of personal development, a state of the mind through which people engage in a learning process, increase their self esteem and confidence and are better able to use their own resources (Chambers 1997). Empowerment frequently also implies an aspect of increased

critical awareness. In the context of successful empowerment, the meaning of "power" has shifted from power "over" to power "to", designating an enabling power (Claridge 1997).

The educative dimension of taking part in the running of the democracy is a very strong attribute of participatory democracy theories (Davis 1996). Pateman claims that "evidence has now been presented to support the argument of the theory of participatory democracy that participation in non-governmental authority structures is necessary to foster and develop the psychological qualities (the political efficacy) required for participation at the national level" (Pateman 1970:50). In other words the whole nation would benefit and the running of the state would improve as citizens, learning to be involved in civic duty, would themselves become better citizens. Similarly Putman emphasises that for a vibrant civil society, active community networks supported by a strong "social capital" are needed to protect the democracy (Putman 1995). The more people are involved, the more they will take part. If communities reach the "burn out stage" it may rather be due to a lack of sense of "political efficacy" (Pateman 1970). This is more likely to happen when participation is construed as a means to an end rather than as an end itself (Warburton 1997).

Changing the relationship pattern

The other positive aspect of engaging in a participatory management approach is the improved rapport between the community and the respective government agencies. As different people get involved in a consultation, discussion or negotiation, different parties start to know and understand each other, sometimes even start trusting each other. The improved knowledge certainly improves communication channels which are crucial in participatory processes (Chambers 1997). At the end of the six year old "participatory forest project" in Sri Lanka, a project which by many definitions would be qualified as anything but participatory, the major positive outcomes commented upon by all parties was the improved relationship between the forestry staff and the wider community as well as the gradual change in attitude amongst some staff (Tacconi *et al*. 1998). Similar results come out of Victorian research (Hoverman 1997).

Box 2: Participation as an ethos...

- "Participation" means different things to different people and to avoid potential conflict, disappointment or "burn out" it is important to clearly state or agree on a common definition.

- People participate in part because they want a greater control and participation stops being meaningful when there is no transfer or share of power in decision making.

- Participation can stimulate an ongoing learning process increasing the awareness of collective responsibility within the community. This should be seen as an asset by professional agencies rather than a threat.

Participation as a means to an end

The growth of participation

Although not a new concept, there is no doubt that participation as a management approach or methodology has grown considerably in the last decade or so and the growing bulk of

literature especially from the development field testifies to this renewed interest. Although Davis thinks that this is due to a mixture of circumstances - increased access to information, a more intrusive media, alienation from traditional structures, protest movements and a new sophistication amongst interest and lobby group" (Davis 1996: 2), it could also be due to the realisation that other approaches used in the recent past have failed to deliver. This is very clear in development literature which abounds with examples of failed development projects, misused resources and disillusioned communities in which examples of failed development projects abound (Chambers 1997; Rahman 1993; Warburton 1997).

It may also be that with a shrinking resource base and increased environmental degradation, competition of views and principles as to how resources should be managed has lead to increased conflictive situation between government agencies and the wider community. Conflict resolution and conflict management literature highlights how participation processes based on similar principles play an increasing role in diffusing tensions or entangling crisis (even though conflict may not be resolved) (Solberg & Miina 1997).

The forestry sector has not escaped the influence of the "new managerialism ethos" which talks about "clients, stakeholders and interests groups, and asks the private and public sector to identify their clients groups and their needs and to respond with services that will support these groups." (Hobley 1996:9)

Benefits and costs

Amongst some protagonists there is a tacit perception that participation is a positive and welcome change (delivering efficiency and effectiveness, Warburton 1997: 27) with little, if any drawbacks. The appeal of participatory planning or management resides in the assumption that communities' views having been taken into account, the policy or the projects will respond better to real needs, fit into a social and economic reality and that people, feeling a sense of ownership, will be more compliant to bear the costs (Chambers 1997; Davis 1996; Rahman 1993; Warburton 1997). Yet the costs are not insignificant and the risks can be high. Davis (1996:14-15) lists these as follow:

• increased time and administrative costs;
• allowing opposition to develop;
• raising exaggerated expectations;
• limited view points expressed through consultation; vocal and organised groups overshadowing viewpoints; problems of representation and legitimacy;
• wrong or biased information;

From our experience those concerns, though real, are as much the product of mis-implementation of participation by inexperienced agencies as they are manifestations of the limitations of participation itself. Unfortunately the monitoring and evaluation of participatory processes and programs have been neglected and we have at hand very little information to assess the real impacts of participation on community development of instances of sustainable natural resource management.

A lot to do with the implementation...

Clearly, like any good idea, the benefits will be lost when there is a mismatch between the theory and the implementation. Before reviewing the "does and don'ts" of participation, we should consider the diagram proposed by Creighton (1986 in Priscoli 1997) where he draws

the relationships between the types of techniques used (1. Public information, 2. Public hearings, 3. conferences, 4. Task Forces/Advisory groups, 5. Facilitation/Interactive workshops, 6. Collaborative problem solving, 7. Assisted negotiation, 8. Conciliation mediation, and 9. Joint decision-making) and the levels of participation. He classifies levels of participation in relation to the impact on the decision showing that various techniques will respectively allow an impact "before" the decision (techniques 5 & 6), "on" the decision (techniques 6 & 7), or "to" the decision (techniques 8 & 9) while at the bottom of the scale, public information techniques (1,2 & 3) will have no impact as they allow only a "knowledge about decisions". Of course, in reality, the cutting points between the techniques used and the level and nature of participation are not so sharp and a lot will depend on the individuals using the various techniques.

HIGH

Levels of Participation

Forming/Agreeing to Decisions

Having an Influence **On** Decisions

Being Heard **Before** Decision

Knowledge **About** Decisions

Techniques

Joint Decision-Making

Conciliation/Mediation

Assisted Negotiation

Collaborative Problem Solving

Facilitation/Interactive Workshops

Task Force/Advisory Groups

Conferences

Public Hearings

Public Information

LOW

Figure 1. Participation levels matched to various techniques (Creighton 1986)

Evidence shows that people from the wider community often come to the participatory process expecting greater control over the process while, at the same time, government agencies rarely want to relinquish control. On the one hand while people expect an outcome towards the upper half of the diagram or at least expect to be heard before the decision, most consultation processes use techniques like community meetings to divulge knowledge about the decision rather than to seek opinions or to allow influence. This may also warn the planner that if s/he wants to engage in processes with outcomes leading towards the upper half of the scale, specific resources may need to be marshalled, particularly skills.

Principles of good practice

As already highlighted it is important to choose the appropriate technique for public consultation. Warburton (1997: 44-47) lists about 150 different techniques and approaches that can be applied depending on what the agency is aiming for. Whichever mode of public consultation is chosen, certain general principles of good practices have to be observed. Most of these principles relate as much to attitudes or behaviour as to specific processes or resources allocated (Davies 1996; Messerschmidt 1995; Warburton 1997).

Principle 1. *Commitment and clarity*:

The agency seeking people's involvement has to be very specific at the onset about what it is prepared to achieve to avoid misleading the public and raising false expectations.

- *Is it informing people, seeking opinion or proposing to share control?*

Clearly government agencies have their own mandate to fulfil and have to operate within their own constraints (Warburton 1997:6). The agency involved and its staff have to be committed to the process and this may mean the development of institutional incentives, "develop the corporate culture", as well as providing the staff with adequate resources.

- *Does the agency maintain specialised staff to deal with those issues?*
- *Are the staff who engage in consultation issues accorded the same status as their peers within the company, for example, in career opportunities?*
- *Will the staff be paid appropriately for extended and unusual hours of work?*
- *Will the staff undergo special training?*

In her comparative study of consultation processes in the Bob Marshall (BM) wilderness complex (USA) and Fitzgerald River (FR) National Park (WA), Moore identified the need to develop a *shared understanding* between the partners which required the agency to develop a specific environment "where people were able to talk and listen to each other" (Moore 1994: 122). Participation is about partnership and implies that all the partners take their share of responsibility: Whenever an agreement has been reached "participants should hold themselves accountable for implementing the resulting recommendations" (Davies 1996:40).

Principle 2. *Time and group dynamics:*

One measure of commitment is the amount of time allocated to the process. The issue of time is mentioned by most authors either because there is not enough time or the timing is not appropriate. If the participatory process is perceived as an educative process then of course the learning can only happen over time. The theory on group dynamics identifies four stages through which any group usually passes (Pretty *et al*. 1995):

- *the forming stage* at the beginning of the collaborative process
- *the storming stage*, which is the crucial one as it will determine whether or not the group will go on to the next stage; this is the phase where personal values and principles are challenged, roles and responsibilities are taken and objectives defined. If there is too much conflict of values and interests, the group will collapse.
- *the normative stage* when the group has settled down isand ready to focus on the task
- *the performing stage* when the group is discussing, designing and completing the task.

In her study, Moore (1994: 141) used Swanson's (1973) analytical frame to identify eight stages of working together:

Stage I: People defined the problems
Stage II: People weren't sure what to do
Stage III: The BM Task force/FR Advisory committee developed an agreed
               way of doing things
Stage IV: People realised they had to work together
Stage V: People got excited about the opportunities
Stage VI: People became committed to working together
Stage VII: People represented the BM Task Force/FR Advisory Committee
Stage VIII: The managing agency organised implementation of the plan

Several major lessons can be drawn here:

- Given the personalities of the people involved and nature and complexity of the issues those stages will take more or less time, but in any case the process will be a long one;
- Considerable facilitation skills will be needed for either an external professional or the staff agency to bring the group from one stage to another. Often very antagonistic groups come to the process with a lot of baggage and bearing grudges;
- This analytical frame is built on the assumption that the people in the group itself will decide on the way to proceed (stage III), as opposed to the agency having designed the process beforehand;
- Representativity of the consultative bodies is important;
- Responsibility for the implementation of the plan rests in the hands of the managing agency and is not, as it sometimes believed, transferred to the communities themselves (Sarin 1998).

Principle 3. *Representativity:*

The question of "stakeholders" is always very controversial as it is difficult to know when to stop considering a group that wants to be involved as a genuine or minor stakeholder (Colfer 1995). It is also related to the concept of "community" which sometimes has a geographical, and sometimes a cultural or an ideological meaning (Brand *et al.* 1996; Woodgate *et al.* 1996). The safest way may be to identify the most obvious potential stakeholders without ruling out any groups. The process of selection has to be open and transparent so that at least people are aware of the process being put in place. The next step is then to be cautious as not to choose processes which will *de facto* exclude some groups. The comment "anybody interested had a chance to participate" is all too common, though unhelpful. The design of the consultative process itself may exclude some groups. Classic groups to be excluded, for example, from 7 pm meetings will be women and young parents who cannot afford alternative childcare. Writing submissions requires resources that are not readily available within all segments of society. Indigenous groups are often excluded as the communication process chosen will be alien or even perceived as offensive. People relying on public transport cannot attend meetings outside specific timetables.

The other important issue to consider is to ascertain the power relationships between the stakeholders (Kelly & Alper 1995).

- *Some stakeholders have more power: will their voices carry more weight?*
- *Does the agency in charge, as the main and often the more powerful stakeholder, not only carry more weight but also listen to smaller voices?*

One important principle of good practice is that "the outcome of consultation should not be pre-determined" (Davies 1996:40). It may be valuable to ask:

- *Have the stakeholder groups been clearly defined? (and by whom?)*
- *Have all the members of a stakeholder group the same voice and opportunity to express their views?*
- *How have the views within stakeholder groups been obtained?*
- *Have issues of equity been clearly defined and agreed upon?*

Principle 4. *Transfer of skills:*

Operating as we are in a positivist framework where the "expert" knows and others often just listen, the value of transferring skills to the community is often overlooked or undervalued.

Although a lot of learning happens "organically" through the involvement of communities in the participatory process itself, many more specialised skills may need to be specifically transferred. If we recognise that knowledge is power then we understand that communities able to assess their resource base, for example, are in a better negotiating position than those who don't even know the extent of their resource.

A growing number of participatory forestry projects in Developing Countries have especially focussed on developing appropriate tools and techniques of resource inventory for communities to use in their community forests management plans (Carter 1997). Also in California in the Trinity Bioregion, efforts are being made to rehabilitate former timber communities after the industry decided it was no longer viable to maintain an activity in the area. A strong focus is made on developing skills within the community using for example GIS and GPS systems (Danks 1996; Everett 1996). In Australia one of the spin off effects of closer collaborative working relationships between natural resource management agencies and community groups which have been fostered under the Natural Heritage Trust arrangements has been a dramatic increase in the acquisition of technical and strategic planning skills within the community.

The measure of success

Unfortunately it is impossible to answer categorically whether participation is successful or not as this judgement depends on the definition of "success" and is very much linked to the purpose of participation in the first place.

Moore (1994) identified five categories against which success could be measured: products, politics, interests, responsibilities and relationships.

In the first two categories the focus is on getting a concrete result, an action plan which will be politically viable; in the third, the focus is still on a product but with a shift towards the importance of the process to get to the product, while in the final two the focus is on the process, with the product only incidental.

This categorisation is interesting as in a way it translates the differences between participation as a means to an end (product focus) and participation as an end (process focus). Stakeholders come to the table with a specific agenda: some groups will be focused on the delivery of a product while others may be focused on experiencing a developmental process. This is why, Moore (1994: 81) tells us, it is important to develop a "shared understanding of success". Criteria for the evaluation of success need to be negotiated between the stakeholders (Warburton 1997).

The other reason why it is difficult to measure "success" *per se* is because of the often intangible nature of "success".

- *How does one measure whether a "transformative" process has occurred within a community?*
- *Is it possible to objectively measure whether relationships have improved ?*

Unanticipated outcomes may sometimes be as important as unplanned ones. One gap in methodological knowledge has been the absence of monitoring in most participatory projects in the past, and it is only recently that researchers have started to focus on measurable indicators and participatory processes in measuring those (Guijt 1998; Abbot & Guijt 1998).

From her review of the literature Warburton (1997:48) concluded that, in order to measure success, one needs to consider, "*efficiency* (ratio of inputs and outputs), *effectiveness* (measuring outputs against targets set) and *equity* (to ensure actions do not affect some people less favourably than others, within an understanding of direct and indirect discrimination and the role of positive action)"

Box 4: The measure of success

- develop a shared understanding of success

- include at the onset of the process a monitoring and evaluation process with criteria agreed upon by the stakeholders.

What does "participation" mean for forestry?

Guijt (1996:57) identifies four major issues for foresters to consider while embarking on a participatory process:

1) Understand participation: clarify objectives, definitions and choose appropriate techniques and processes.
2) 'Look for conflict': conflict will not be resolved just by consulting or even collaborating. It may be that a participatory process will offer a forum for conflict to develop or escalate. It is therefore more prudent to anticipate potential problems and not hide away from them.
3) Build complementary skills: facilitation, conflict resolution or communication skills are not necessarily part of the standard forestry training and need to be considered as "essential complementary skills" as opposed to "optional social skills".
4) Set realistic time frames: Although forestry operates within medium to long term time frames, agencies tend to expect "quick and easy to use" methods to involve the public. This is not realistic as developing "a shared understanding" in an atmosphere of trust among different stakeholders is not easy and is extremely time consuming.

Accepting the shift

Following on from the Indian experience of participatory forestry (see Box 5) it is clear that the major meaning of Joint or Participatory Forests Management requires a total paradigm shift. Joint Forest Management is here only described extremely briefly. The program has had mixed results across the country but the lessons drawn reinforce most of the points already highlighted above.

Box 5: What is joint forest management?

Joint Forestry Management (JFM) is a forestry policy designed by the Government of India in an attempt to foster an alternative management model of degraded forests across the country. Through this policy, formulated in 1988, respective State forest Services are legally entitled to enter in a contractual relationship with Village Forest committees (VFC) who become responsible for sound forest management of their village forest. On a voluntary basis, villagers get together, form a VFC (1 member per household) and elect a board who makes decisions in agreement with the results of a micro-plan established in consultation with the VFC members, following a participatory rural appraisal exercise. The VFC can for example, directly sell locally collected non-timber forest products (which in the past were collected by external contractors) and use the proceeds as it sees fit (either by paying a better price to the collectors, distributing benefit among VFC members or re-investing into forest management tasks, like paying a patrolling guard) for the benefit of the community. The land still remains under the control of the forester, who also has some rights in regard to the formation of the VFC. The forest department also provides a starting fund of "seed money" to support initial management activities by the VFC. Most States in India have adopted JFM as a policy with various degree of interest and success.

Although JFM was developed in a top down manner its inspiration came from a successful spontaneous grass-roots initiative in West Bengal in the 1970s where, with the agreement of the local foresters, villagers developed their own management option and as they directly benefited from the forest started to protect the environment and foster regeneration.

Joint management where stakeholders collaborate in an equitable fashion respecting each other is easier to design than to implement in practice. Despite the opportunity created by a change in legislation, issues of power struggles, increased conflicts, stakeholders representativity and the need to call upon new and different skills are still central concerns to this experiment (Hobley 1996; Saxena *et al*. 1997) . The challenge for the forestry sector is to develop the supportive institutional structures which will accommodate the needs expressed by the wider community. This cannot be limited to using new consultation processes but must reflect through new forestry practices, mandates accorded to forest management agencies.

Although separate individuals may have divergent opinions about what forestry is or should be, it seems that on the whole a growing number of people are interested not only in having more control over the decision making process but also would prefer to see a "different kind" of forestry practiced. This in turn does not just mean that the wider community expects to dictate to the forestry profession what they should or should not do but rather that the community recognises that various sections of the society can play complementary roles in forest management. In their latest publication on "Shaping Forest Management: How coalitions manage forests?", DFID (1999) insists that the three sectors (State forest service, Private sector and Civil society) all have a role to play in the three different capacities of "enablers", "deliverers" and "users". To be able to endorse those roles the forestry profession needs to consider changes in its practices and especially, in the education of the new generation of foresters. Most of all, the challenge will be to foster the development of a genuine collaborative practice to support the emerging conviction that State forests ultimately belong to the "community" from which in increasingly direct ways the forest management agencies derive their mandate.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Box 6:  Changes in forestry practice                                     │
│                                                                           │
│  Conventional approach              New approach                          │
├─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┤
│                                                                           │
│  Objectives:                        Objectives:                           │
│  Revenue focus                      Resource focus                        │
│  Production focus                   Sustainability focus                  │
│  Single product                     Multiple products                     │
│                                                                           │
│  Decision Making:                   Decision Making:                      │
│  Centralised                        Decentralised                         │
│  Forest Department, Government Agency  Multiple stakeholders               │
│  Decision at higher levels within   Decision at field level               │
│  organisation                                                             │
│                                                                           │
│  Focus on control                   Focus on planning, innovating, analysis │
│                                     and change in practice                │
│  Can't do mentality                 Can do mentality                      │
│  Department's responsibility        Sharing the responsibility            │
│                                                                           │
│  Management practice:               Management practice:                  │
│  Target oriented                    Process oriented                      │
│  Assumed homogeneity                Recognised diversity                  │
│  Simple pre-set options             Multiple need based objectives        │
│  Area management                    Site specific                         │
│  Large Working Plans                Micro-planning                        │
│  Fixed procedure                    Experimentation                       │
│                                                                           │
│  Human resources:                   Human resources                       │
│  Staff equipped with "traditional" skills  More holistic training; focus on all-rounders; │
│                                     facilitation and enabling skills       │
│                                                                           │
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Adapted from Shield (1994) and SPWD (1992)

Aboriginal involvement in forest consultations

Aboriginal peoples in Australia[1] have a unique heritage and interest in the land, and a correspondingly unique interest in the social, environmental and economic aspects of forest use. However, although Aboriginal peoples have specific rights and interests in forests relating to tenure, access to areas and to resources, and to the protection and management of cultural heritage, these rights and interests have been largely unnoticed in the forest debates of the last twenty years (Cane 1990; Lane 1999), or have been distorted in the fracas (Anderson 1989). Aboriginal people may face particular difficulties in accessing, and in participating in, mainstream[2] forest planning and management programs (Lane 1997). The 'invisibility' of Aboriginal interests, is a major theme of the literature in the field[3], and is experienced by Aboriginal people as a denial of fundamental human rights (Australian Science Technology and Engineering Council 1998:40).

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[1] The terms 'Aboriginal peoples' and 'Indigenous peoples' are used interchaneably, and instead of the term 'Aborigine' in order to minimise pan-Aboriginalist gloss. Both of these terms refer to diverse Australian Aboriginal peoples unless otherwise indicated.

[2] The word 'mainstream' is used in this paper simply to imply that there is an alternative 'stream', which in this case refers to Aboriginal Australia, and that the 'mainstream', as used in this context, is usually derived from the non-Indigenous context.

[3] See, for example, Cane 1990; Chase 1998; Craig *et al.* 1996; Crisp and Talbot 1999 and Lane 1997.

This section of the report summarises some of the findings of an honours thesis on the same topic submitted to ANU forestry in June 1999. The broad research questions regarding Aboriginal inclusion in forest management and planning include: What types of opportunities exist for Aboriginal participation?; What types and levels of participation are desired?; and What is the difference between the opportunities available for participation, and the extent of the desire for participation? These questions are addressed throughout this section of the report in terms of the social, cultural and institutional interactions which create the context for participation.

Aboriginal aspirations for forests

The consultative processes currently in place for Aboriginal participation in forest planning and management are largely perceived by Aboriginal people to be unsatisfactory. The perception of many Aboriginal groups regarding participation in forest management and planning processes to date, is that opportunities provided for Aboriginal consultation are tokenistic [4] (Crisp and Talbot 1999; Seiver *pers. comm.* 5 June 1999).

Despite the local and regional variation in what may be appropriate forest management practices, and despite the diversity of interests that Aboriginal peoples have for forest management areas, there are some common themes upon which to assert the shared aspects of Aboriginal interest and Aboriginal identity. Understanding the shared aspects of Aboriginal identity is an important step toward gaining a broad understanding of the shared context within which diverse Aboriginal interests in forest management exist.

In order to recognise the unique rights and interests of Aboriginal peoples in forest and natural resource management, it is first necessary to understand the relationship between place and people, and between nature and culture, which is fundamental to Aboriginal identity (Young *et al.* 1991). The former chair of ATSIC, Ms Lois O'Donoghue, explains the inseparability of Aboriginal culture and identity in these words: "It is impossible to isolate the different elements that make up Indigenous identity and culture - land and art and heritage are inter-woven with dispossession and marginalisation and lack of rights" (Mathieson 1996:1).

One of the core components of Aboriginal heritage is a belief that the environment is not an entity separate from humanity (see Coombs *et al.* 1983). The maintenance of a relationship with traditional land, or country [5], is necessary in order to revitalise and strengthen Aboriginal culture. It is widely perceived by Indigenous peoples that the denial of land rights and the environmental degradation of lands go hand in hand. Aboriginal cultural beliefs support concepts of nature which are inseparable from culture and people. In addition, Indigenous peoples often have practice-based land management skills that non-Indigenous science emulates in order to conserve valued 'natural places' (Australian Heritage Commission 1994). For these and other reasons, Aboriginal cultural perspectives can provide inspiration toward solving broader societal and environmental problems (see Knudtson and Suzuki 1992).

However, it is imperative that we seek to establish just relationships with Indigenous peoples, rather than merely appropriating Indigenous knowledge. In seeking to establish just relationships, it is important not to misconstrue or misinterpret Aboriginal identity. An example of misconstruction exists in traditionalist interpretations of Aboriginal identity which have

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[4] In other words, participants may hear and be heard, but have no ability to ensure that their views are acted upon.

[5] See Young *et al.* (1996) for a discussion of the central role that 'caring for country' holds for Aboriginal people.

been used as a measure of Aboriginal authenticity. As Finlayson (1998 in Edmunds 1998) explains, "…a commonly held non-Indigenous view is that land rights are acceptable for remote area Aboriginal people, but anachronistic for 'assimilated' groups in south-eastern Australia". The affects of these misinterpretations of Aboriginal identity can be seen by the lack of recognition of Aboriginal rights in south-eastern Australia (see below).

These constructions and expectations have also been associated with changes in the way Australians under twenty-five have been educated about Aboriginal peoples (see Hollinsworth 1997), and with the conservation movement (Anderson 1994; Jones 1996). The 'Otherness' of Aboriginal peoples was read as positive in comparison with a cynical stance on 'whiteness'. Hollinsworth (1997:133) describes the dichotomy whereby "…'they' are spiritual, 'we' are materialistic; 'they' value family and community, 'we' are individualistic". Although these dichotomies are not without merit, they have fed into misplaced notions of authenticity, and should be rejected. The dynamic, adaptable and heterogeneous nature of Aboriginal peoples should be recognised.

Inclusion of Aboriginal rights and interests in the forest planning processes

When forest or other natural resource managers consult with Aboriginal custodial owners and other 'stakeholders' in the development of management plans, perceptions of marginalisation can be reinforced (see Woenne-Green *et al*. 1994). This is because Aboriginal people with traditional associations to country regard themselves as the original owners of land, and can therefore be further alienated by inadequate formal acknowledgment of their custodial relationship to the area in question. Therefore, strategies for Aboriginal participation need to include Aboriginal rights and interests relating to their relationship with traditional country which traditional owners [6] maintain, and must recognise that Aboriginal cultural interests differentiate Aboriginal peoples from the rest of the stakeholder list.

The implications of policies designed to further Aboriginal self-determination [7], and of land rights tools for Indigenous participation in forest management, are still not clear. Land rights legislation such as the *Land Rights Act* 1976 and the *Native Title Act* 1993 have led to an increase in Aboriginal access to land through the various claims processes and through the establishment of organisations to pursue these claims. Negotiated agreements between Indigenous parties and others as a form of conflict resolution have become more prevalent since the advent of native title (Jones 1996; Padgett 1999). However, despite the *Native Title Act* 1993, few cases of recognition of Aboriginal land rights have occurred in southern and south-eastern Australia. In fact, no native title claims have been recognised in Victoria or in the South East Queensland region (see Crisp and Talbot 1999; Padgett 1999). There also remains uncertainty within both Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups about what the legal and political recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples (which are slowly being incorporated into statutes and policies at all levels of government) will mean in practice (Crisp and Talbot 1999).

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[6] The term is used loosely, to mean 'traditional owner' as recognised by their community, rather than to refer to a Native Title Holder or other holder of tenure. The term is used whenever the right to participate on the basis of being a likely 'other owner' is being emphasised.

[7] Aspirations of Aboriginal peoples are sometimes described in terms of empowerment, self-management and self-determination (Aboriginal Affairs Victoria 1999). These concepts mean many things, including the belief that the access and behaviour of Aboriginal people with regard to natural resources should be limited by guidelines and protocols worked out at the community level.

Experiences of marginalisation from forest planning and management processes have continued throughout even the most recent planning processes. For example, although the ongoing Regional Forest Agreements (RFA) process is designed to divide up the public forest estate and to provide a framework for the future management of Australia's forests, for the most part the RFA process excludes proper consideration of the land rights of Indigenous peoples (see Dargavel 1998; Docker 1998).

The main avenue for the recognition of Indigenous issues in forest planning exercises has been through the identification and management of Aboriginal 'cultural heritage' through the *Register of the National Estate* [8]. The assessment of cultural heritage, however, varies in adequacy from region to region. It has been indicated during the course of thesis research (including through the attendance of consultation processes and semi-structured interviews), that the processes currently in place to protect cultural heritage (in both Victoria and Queensland) do not have the capacity, both in terms of departmental resources for site identification and in terms of adequately involving Indigenous people, to protect and appropriately manage Aboriginal places of significance.

In addition, definitions for Aboriginal cultural heritage are often restrictive (see Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management Expert Panel 1999). Recognition and protection of cultural heritage in practice is often restricted to physical artefacts (*i.e.* 'bones and stones', or other physical remains). The Indigenous Land Interest Model explains however, that so called 'archaeological sites' often have ongoing cultural (*i.e.* religious, social and economic) significance to Aboriginal peoples, and that:

> These and other physical places of significance…are only one element of cultural heritage which…is holistic and constantly evolving. Forests themselves are part of Indigenous cultural landscapes (Social Impact Assessment Unit 1996b:8).

Barriers to participation

Barriers to Indigenous participation can be grouped into three main areas using categories developed by Smyth (1993) in his report to the Resource Assessment Commission on the Coastal Zone Inquiry. The conflicts which Smyth identified as obstacles to participation were grouped into the following categories:

- Conflicts resulting from the perceived failure of current government decision-making processes at local, state and Commonwealth levels to provide a meaningful opportunity for Aboriginal participation in decision-making;

- Conflicts arising from what are regarded as inadequate responses from government when administrative or legislative mechanisms have been established to involve Aboriginal peoples in the decision-making process; and

- Conflicts relating to the lack of benefits (financial, social, vocational, *etc.*) flowing back to Aboriginal peoples from projects which commercially exploit what are regarded by Indigenous people as their resources.

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[8] Cultural Heritage protection is overseen by the Australian Heritage Commission, which is the statutory authority responsible for advising the Commonwealth Government on the 'National Estate'. The National Estate is made up of those parts of Australia's natural, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and historic heritage, which have been listed as worth keeping for the future. Since the signing of the *Natural Forest Policy Statement* in 1992, the Commonwealth Government, in making decisions concerning forests, must consider National Estate cultural heritage values in the suite of assessable forest values.

Institutional barriers to meaningful participation

The first group of barriers include the social, institutional and political environments which fail to provide adequate participatory mechanisms. These can be described as: the legislative or administrative barriers to meaningful participation in forest management; the absence of adequate or appropriate mechanisms for the identification, assessment and management of sites of cultural significance; and the absence of land rights in many areas. Negotiations for involvement in the first place may be limited to areas where Indigenous people have tenure or some other substantially recognised land rights.

Various barriers of these types exist in both Victoria and Queensland. To illustrate this, some of the legislative mechanisms for participation in each of the States, as identified through a literature review, are outlined below in terms of their ability to meet Aboriginal rights and interests in forests:

Land rights:

- There is no general land rights legislation in Victoria, and Aboriginal landholdings amount to about 0.001% of total land in Victoria (Smyth and Sutherland 1997). Legal rights to harvest subsistence resources in Victoria are highly variable and are still constrained by the Victorian *Wildlife* Act 1975 and the *National Parks* Act 1975, which can only provide management agreements to Aboriginal groups who already have access to protected areas through lease agreements (Fourmille and Marrie 1997).

- Land rights Acts in Queensland are not having substantial results for Aboriginal people (see Crisp and Talbot 1999). The Queensland *Nature Conservation Act* 1992 is the primary mechanism for Indigenous ownership and joint management of protected areas in Queensland. The Act, however, only provides legislative mechanisms to protect the interests of Indigenous communities who already have access to national parks through co-management agreements (Altman and Allen 1991:17), and requires the government to gazette land for claim, which does not occur without government will (Crisp and Talbot 1999). In addition, it does not explicitly address the obligations to Indigenous people specified in the *Convention on Biological Diversity*, and which are further articulated in the *National Strategy for the Conservation of Biological Diversity* (see Fourmille 1996:14).

Access (and access to resources) in protected areas:

- With regard to rights to hunt and gather in or off national parks or protected areas in Victoria, no Act specifically mentions Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal land-owners may, however, obtain permits to kill kangaroos on privately-owned land (see Altman and Allen 1991:18).

- Under the Queensland *Nature Conservation Act* 1992, Aboriginal peoples cannot hunt or take up residence in a national park unless approved in a management plan.

Protection and management of cultural heritage:

- Legislation to protect 'traditional' (non archaeological) sites does not yet exist outside of the Northern Territory (Australian Heritage Commission 1985; Fourmille and Marrie 1997).

- If mechanisms and models to improve the management of Aboriginal places of cultural significance are to be developed with Aboriginal participation, they will need to be fully transparent and accessible to Aboriginal participants and sensitive to diverse Aboriginal concerns.

- The protection and management of cultural places requires Aboriginal people to have a greater say in forest management, rather than only in the identification of National Estate values (Environment Australia 1999).

Involvement in management:

- Despite the desire expressed by Indigenous people to have a greater say in the management of forests, and despite the inadequacy of current processes to appropriately identify and manage areas of cultural significance, the main avenue for Aboriginal involvement in the Victorian RFA processes remains the development of strategies for the management of cultural heritage (Environment Australia 1999).

- There is no mechanism to enable Aboriginal people to own or solely manage land as a national park in Queensland. The Queensland Forestry Act 1957 does not include any legal mechanism for Aboriginal involvement of forestry lands, and the Community Services Aborigines Act 1984-90 (Qld), under which Deeds of Grant in Trust lands continue to operate, prohibits the use of forests or forest products for economic gain (Crisp and Talbot 1999).

Inadequate response from government

The next group of obstacles relate to inadequate responses from government when administrative or legislative mechanisms have been established to involve Aboriginal peoples in decision-making process. These barriers include inadequate timeframes, follow-up processes, and resources for the participation process. Institutional insensitivity or ignorance of the diversity of Indigenous interests are also related to these barriers. This area of concern includes the ability of Indigenous peoples to continue to control their affairs and information once they are part of the process. These obstacles can also relate to cross-cultural communication and to the complexity and/or inaccessibility of institutional environments.

Lack of benefits flowing back to Aboriginal people from forest use

The third group of obstacles to participation relates back to the lack or absence of benefits flowing back to Aboriginal peoples from projects which commercially exploit traditional resources. This group should be noted with special regard to the continuing socio-economic disadvantages of Aboriginal Australians, and to the importance which 'having a say' in the management of traditional country holds for Aboriginal Australians. Whilst this area relates to improvement of employment prospects and cross-cultural training programs, it should also be considered in terms of benefits-sharing from the use of traditional lands and/or equity arrangements for forest developments.

The stakeholder hierarchy

Accessibility of consultative procedures is an issue in most community consultation processes. However, opportunities for meaningful Aboriginal participation in natural resource

management, especially in forestry, are particularly inadequate (see Crisp and Talbot 1999). The ability of Aboriginal peoples to effectively participate in natural resource management practices affecting their traditional lands is affected by a number of underlying factors relating to the history of contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and to the current state of socio-economic disadvantage which Indigenous people continue to experience (see Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996; Lane 1997).

As previously explained, consultation with Aboriginal groups and other stakeholders without the adequate recognition of Aboriginal rights to participate on the grounds of traditional association, can further marginalise Aboriginal participants. Thus, an obstacle to meaningful Aboriginal participation is the employment of the 'stakeholder hierarchy' (Altman *et al.* 1993) by resource management organisations. This hierarchy concerns who is recognised as a stakeholder and what status or role they are given in relation to the management of the resource. Indigenous peoples have in the past been perceived as "non-core negotiators" for the negotiation of tenure in some forest planning processes, rather than as key stakeholders [9]. By employing this stakeholder hierarchy, those in natural resource management organisations and government who are responsible for consultation processes ignore the right of traditional owners to participate on the basis of being a potential other owner.

Socio-economic disadvantage

In order to meaningfully include Aboriginal peoples in forest management decision making, existing socio-economic and political disadvantages will need to be considered. Lack of resources has been identified as a major obstacle to the achievement of full Aboriginal consultation within forest planning processes including RFA processes in both Queensland and Victoria (Crisp and Talbot 1999; Dale 1993; Environment Australia 1999).

In addition, the current state of socio-economic disadvantage which Aboriginal people experience is compounded through negative social impacts associated with changes in forest use including: 1) damage to significant places; 2) insufficient involvement in management of traditional lands; and 3) regulatory and management regimes which marginalise Aboriginal people (Lane 1999). In Queensland, Indigenous peoples are a significantly socio-economically disadvantaged group within society (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996) and could benefit from the better integration of their interests into forest management. Some details are provided from the conclusion of the Indigenous Social Profile Report for the SEQ RFA region to illustrate this disadvantage:

> Aboriginal people have a life expectancy more than two decades less than that of the rest of the Queensland population and therefore, the Indigenous population has a significantly different age structure, including a large proportion of young people and a small proportion of old people. The demographic profile shows that Indigenous people have lower incomes, higher rates of unemployment, lower levels of education and higher rates of housing rental than the Queensland population as a whole (Crisp and Talbot 1999:14).

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[9] From Seiver (*pers. comm.* 5 June 1999) regarding the negotiation of the upper North East NSW Regional Forest Agreement, in which Indigenous stakeholders were referred to as non-core negotiators by conservation representatives.

Conceptual framework for change

In the inclusion of Aboriginal peoples in forest management, it is of crucial importance that the unique rights and interests of Aboriginal peoples in their traditional lands be adequately recognised. If a forum is not available to communicate the fullness of Indigenous concerns in natural resource management, then the process is inherently flawed, and for this reason Indigenous people may choose to withhold participation to avoid losing important aspects of their interests within the forum for participation. Achieving recognition of Aboriginal rights and interests is inherently a process of social transformation.

It has also been identified that these gaps can be associated with the social, political and institutional environments which create the context for participation. For this reason, in order to include Aboriginal people in forest management and planning, it is important for the participants of a planning process to recognise:

- the relationship between place and people which shapes Aboriginal identity
- the dynamic, adaptable and heterogeneous nature of Aboriginal peoples
- the status of traditional owners

It should be recognised that meaningful Aboriginal participation will necessarily involve recognition of Aboriginal rights and interests relating to tenure, access to areas and to resources, and to the protection and management of cultural heritage in forests. Addressing these rights and interests will involve an increased Aboriginal role in forest management. The types of existing opportunities for Aboriginal participation are not concurrent with the types and levels of participation desired and there is a wide gap between the opportunities available for participation and the expression of interest in meaningful participation.

Although there are principles and attributes for meaningful participation and/or consultation which are useful in determining the effectiveness of a given participation process, meaningful Aboriginal participation cannot occur without recognising the unique cultural, institutional and political environment which constrains meaningful Aboriginal involvement.

The Consultation Process in Four States

Although all Forest agencies in the four states maintain a staff of planners the preparation of the management plans can differ and so does the role played by the general public in the planning activities. We present here the formal process followed in each state.

Tasmania

Before the current process...

The current model for public involvement in forest planning in Tasmania has its origin in the 'Salamanca agreement' between the Government, farmers, industries, unions and the conservation movement in Tasmania (Manidis 1993). The stakeholders involved in this agreement committed themselves to a 12 month working collaborative period to address some of the conflict and uncertainty surrounding forest management issues at that time. The Forest and Forest Industry Council (FFIC) was established to progress this process.

The FFIC opted for the formation of regional advisory groups (RAG) (see Box 7) as units of consultation and each member of the Council elected local representatives to sit at the 14 local RAG. In June 1990, the Council released a draft report, "Key Issues and Principles Likely to Shape a Forest Industry Strategy", for public comment (Manidis 1993). The final document, "Secure futures for forests and people" was signed in September 1990, by all parties except the Combined Environment groups which had withdrawn from the consultative process at a late stage.

Box 7: Ellendale forest advisory group, Tasmania
(With the contribution of J. Copeland)

Australian Newsprint Mills (ANM) holds a Crown Forest Concession and owns freehold land to the north of Mount Field National Park. Increasing negative public opinion about forest operations including pine plantations in the early 1990s lead ANM to review it's plans to harvest native forest near Ellendale, a small rural township. ANM held public meetings to inform the community of its plans but as the area was State forest it was decided by the then Forestry Commission that the District should prepare a forest management plan aided by a local advisory group to take into account the needs and views of the local population. Private pine plantation establishment was seen as a threat to the local economy and life style by displacing smaller land holders and as compromising the ecological and tourism values of the region.

The beginning of this process coincided with finalisation of the Tasmanian Forest Industry Strategy which had received input from Regional Advisory Groups. The Forestry Commission engaged in a process of consultation and resource assessment involving other Government Agencies; with the advisory group meeting monthly over nearly 2 years. The plan produced, with the group's agreement, was sent to all local households and the advisory group ceased to meet.

This group process had its up and downs, with conflicts between different stakeholders resulting in the withdrawal of conservation interests. The process has now been replaced by the statewide production of District based Forest Management Plans.

In accordance with the Forest and Forest Industry Strategy, the Forest Act 1920 (*Tas*) was amended to introduce more substantive public participation into forest planning.
The legislation now sets out in some details the process by which Forest Management Plans are to be prepared. The legislation only broadly specifies the content required in management plans.

Planning

Looking at the Planning hierarchy chart (Figure 2) we can see the public has the opportunity to voice their opinion and concerns at various stages of the planning process. Here we are focussing on the public input into the preparation of the District Management Plan. This is partly because it is at this stage that the consultation process has been the more concrete and formal. We also decided to focus on this step as at the time of the research management plans were being prepared making our observations timely.

Forestry Tasmania has draft or final Forest Management Plans in place for each of its seven Forest Districts. It was decided that as far as possible, the Plans should avoid re-stating background information available in a range of other documents publicly available from Forestry Tasmania or other sources. Instead the Plans were intended as a concise policy document, establishing prescriptions for the management of the District at a strategic level. Forestry Tasmania prepares separate plans at tactical and operational levels, that are not subject to a public consultation process (*e.g.* publicly available Three Year Wood Production Plans, and Timber Harvesting Plans, and unpublished Fire Management Plans and Visitors Services Plans). The Forest Management Plan is a public document, which may serve some public relation purpose (informative for example for potential investors) as well as for the creation of awareness within the community about forestry practice.
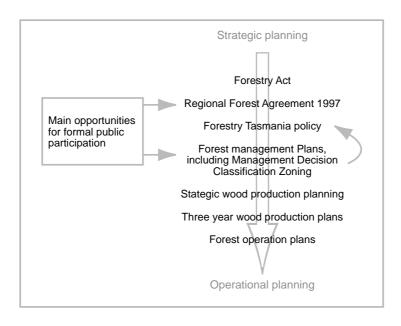

Figure 2. Plan Diag 8-v1

The preparation of Forest Management Plans is primarily a responsibility of each individual District office. A team of planners at the head office act as a support unit to respond to the needs of the District offices as they arise and to maintain levels of consistency and quality between the plans. This increased local "ownership" is considered essential for the Plan's success and for the integration of local content. Forestry Tasmania states that they see the greatest benefits of Management Plans as arising from the process of establishing lines of communication with local communities rather than in the production of a final Management Plan document.

District responsibility for management plans usually rests with the senior forester in the District, who will draw upon other staff as required. On occasion, tensions can arise between the growing complexity of operational requirements and the requirements to meet longer term strategic objectives such as the completion of the Forest Management Plans. To some extent, the preparation of the plan and thus the interpretation of the levels and nature of public participation is left to one or two individual officers in the District.

The first Plan to be prepared (Huon District) was used to develop a model for the content of the remaining Plans. At the time of its preparation in the early 1990s, one planner was fully dedicated to the preparation of the Plan, and considerable resources were invested; this is no longer the case although the consultation process itself still requires considerable mobilisation of resources as for an average plan it is estimated that 36 person hours /per week are devoted to Plan preparation over the busiest stages of the process. This is without accounting for occasional contribution of District staff to local meetings (FMP workload chart 1997).

The consultation process

The same formal consultation process is followed throughout the state. Three periods can be identified:

1. Preparation of the draft plan when the general public can register interest and be put on a mailing list (30 days for registering interest). People are informed of this process in the local press as well as through leaflets. People or groups included in the mailing list are sent copies of the draft.
2. The draft plan is released and the general public has 60 days to comment and send submission to the district office. The draft plan is sent to those who registered, deposited in local libraries and Council offices and made available on Forestry Tasmania internet site and is available for purchase (at a small cost) at the District office. Publicity varies from district to district, but involves press releases, formal public notices, fliers posted in public places, 'a travelling display' and in some instances, a series of newspaper articles submitted for publication in local papers. During this period the district office organises "meet the planners" public meetings where people have a chance to come to meet local Forestry Tasmania staff and discuss the Plan. Submission received on the draft Plan, are analysed and the amended Plan and the analysis of submissions documents are forwarded to the Minister responsible for forestry.
3. A second comment period, of 30 days duration then takes place, with comments sent directly to the Minister. Copies of submissions are forwarded to Forestry Tasmania, which then also prepares a response that the Minister also considers.

This entire cycle notionally takes 12 months, however in practice it may take 18 months or longer as factors such as the completion of the regional Forest Agreement are accommodated.

During this cycle the most important opportunity for the public to express their views is to attend the public meetings and to make submissions.

"Meet the planners" meetings: these are an occasion for Forestry Tasmania staff and the general public to meet in an informal manner, usually in a neutral location, for the public to air their concern or ask questions. The meetings are set up as "informative mobile exhibitions" with maps and posters, reports and books displays; the public can wander around the room from one Forestry Tasmania employee to another with the particular expertise and responsibilities of each summarised in an information package provided to attendees. This package also details the context in which changes to the Plans are possible, and suggest pathways for dealing with specific types of concerns. The set up is purposely aimed at avoiding polarised conflict situations that, in the view of Forestry Tasmania, impair constructive dialog.

The value or effectiveness of these meetings is difficult to gauge: some meetings are well attended (average 20), others not; several have become quite antagonistic, others are a simple public relation exercise or an opportunity for genuine dialog; some people come to the meeting out of curiosity, others to air their anger and frustration. Some earlier surveys commissioned by Forestry Tasmania on assessing effectiveness of those meetings didn't give conclusive results (file 58330 (3)). From the 19 respondents to our questionnaire survey only 2 attended one of the meetings. The main reasons stated for not attending were inconvenient timing, distance to travel and lack of confidence in the meeting's ability to resolve an issue.

Although conflicts of views are not necessarily resolved during the meetings, they can be a valuable opportunity for contact and exchange. Forestry staff have been exposed to conflict resolution training and although empathic listening helps unlock conflictual situations it can also at times be construed as manipulative, hence the attempts at some meetings by some stakeholders groups to hijack the process and dismiss the friendly chit-chat atmosphere.

During the meetings we attended, the tension among the staff was evident as the foresters felt that they were exposing themselves to the front line, so to speak, without knowing who would come and with what intention. Forestry Tasmania suggests that attendees can usually be broadly classified into several groups: those with general and wide reaching concerns regarding forestry, supporters of forest industries and individuals with specific interests or concerns (*e.g.* bee keepers). Most of those who attend do not want to discuss specific issues in the plans but rather have other more general issues of forestry practice and land use, or specific matters of details to discuss. Although those meetings may or may not serve their explicit purpose, they are still valuable as they provide by default the opportunity for the public and the foresters to meet.

To some extent, 'Meet the Planner' sessions are being supplanted or supplemented by daytime forests visits. Forestry Tasmania is finding that these often result in more constructive dialog and allow participants to see on the ground what is happening.

   - the submissions:
This is an important step in the process as it provides the formal opportunity for individuals and interests groups to articulate their concerns. While it is possible for someone to make a submission orally the public are encouraged to put something in writing. The numbers and the length of submissions for any one draft plan will vary from 10 to 25 and from a half a page in length to a 20 page document. Some groups employ qualified lawyers to prepare their submissions.

Each submission is summarised into a series of dot points within a single 'Analysis of Submission document'. The submissions are then reviewed in a formal process involving a broadly based panel of Forestry Tasmania staff. The submissions are addressed in relation to a set of pre-established criteria which broadly falls into two categories: issues which will lead to a change in the Plan ("A" codes) and issues that will not lead to a change in the Plan ("R" codes). Additional comments are added to explain some decisions. Some decisions are deferred while expert opinion is sought, usually from the Forest Practices Board.

The Plan is amended in accordance with the outcomes of the assessment process and then this 'Analysis of Submission document' and the individual submissions are forwarded to the Minister.

In the past, little feedback was provided to those that made submissions, reinforcing a perception for some that only token attention has been given to them and that their efforts have been wasted. More recent Plans have a summary (6-8 pages) outlining the content of submissions made on the previous version of that Plan. Changes made to the Plan are underlined in the text, or in the case of the final published version, are available in a separate draft of the Plan available from Forestry Tasmania. Some submissions also prompt direct responses from Forestry Tasmania. The Analysis of Submissions document, while publicly available, has not been published or actively promoted.

It is fair to say, looking at the nature of changes to the Plans, that issues of presentation, clarity, correction of errors and communication will readily be incorporated into amended Plans while issues of content are more sensitive. Reviewing the Analysis of Submission document for the Circular Head district draft plan (1996) R8 (is an expression of a personal view) is by far the most common ground for rejection, followed by R4 (is adequately dealt with under current prescriptions), R7 (is not an issue for the plan area or is outside the scope of the plan) and R9 (is considered inappropriate level of detail for the plan). The most common reasons for changes in the Plan were A2 (highlights a lack of clarity in policies and/or actions proposed) and A7 (is agreed with and Plan already caters for recommendation and no change is required).

R8 (is an expression of personal view) would be considered by the conflict resolution literature as a conflict of values and categorised as an "unnecessary source of conflict" (CDR 1989), in the sense that although views can differ, two parties can accept each others views and try to accommodate them. While the forest agency may decide not to take those comments into account while amending the draft Plan, these are precisely the type of concerns that the organisation should address as a first step towards conflict management. It may well be that those views can be considered and discussed in other fora like the "meet the planners" sessions, but not everybody will for example attend the meetings and use the written submission as the main channel to express themselves.

The measure of success

As we mentioned before the measure of success in public consultation is a very subjective outcome, as each party will have a different perception or interpretation of the process depending on their agenda, expectation and assessment of what is at stake. It is nevertheless important to test (as objectively as possible) whether or not the public feels comfortable and convinced by the process made available to them. We are presenting here two different situations; one experiment with the Forest Advisory Group of Mount Field as well as the latest public submission process for the Murchison and Derwent districts. In the case of the Forest Advisory Group we have mainly used written documents, minutes of meetings and reports. In

the case of the current submission process we have used a questionnaire survey sent to 38 persons or interest groups who had prepared submissions for either of these plans. We received 19 answers (50% response).

The aim of using these two different examples is not to assess one against the other but simply to present a palette of different processes and try to identify and assess areas of potential problems.

• The Ellendale Forest Advisory Group
Looking at the Ellendale FAG file, two major issues seem to have considerably jeopardised the process: representativity of the group members with issues of perception of unbalanced representation and a mismatch between different party's agenda.

   - representativity:
Particular members of the Forest Advisory Group and other community members sent a total of seven acrimonious letters to the Forestry Commission or the Minister of Forests, questioning the perceived over-representation of the Forest and Forest Industry interests. These criticisms arose after four individuals withdrew from the Group and declined invitations to rejoin, out of frustration with the direction the process was heading. The letters also questioned the roles of Forestry staff as chairman or secretary of the Forest Advisory Group. In response to these concerns, a non-forestry chairman was elected and an independent secretary hired. While the Forestry Commission staff may have seen their role as mediating between ANM and the wider community, also keeping in mind that the Forestry Commission was at the end the only member in a position to make any decision, the wider community perceived the Forestry Commission as being on the side of the Industry. There were allegations of mis-recording of meetings discussions which stakeholders exploited to question whether the Forestry Commission was genuinely interested in seeking advice from the wider community or not. The group members who had made those allegations later declined an invitation to propose corrections to the minutes and clearly felt disenfranchised by the process. This, at times venomous, situation reflected a lack of experience about group dynamics and conflict management, but also difficult relationships the Forestry Commission and the Forest Industry experienced with some members of the wider community. The representativity of people who do engage in the forest debate could also be questioned. A review of the anti-forestry letters published in Tasmanian papers over the past 10 years shows that the bulk have been written by a relatively small number of people, potentially reinforcing the suggestion that only a minority of Tasmanians fundamentally disagree with the current forestry practices.

However, whether or not one considers the representativity of one group or another being more genuine than another, one has to recognise the importance of "transparent" representativity as a crucial issue in participatory processes. If the community representatives sitting on the Forest Advisory Group were not representative (or not considered as such by some stakeholders) of the wider local community why were they chosen to sit on the committee?

This reinforces the message that when an Agency decides to change its approach and develop a working relationship with the general public, the process has to be carefully thought through and properly resourced. In this case it seems considerable resources were made available for the resource assessment side (*e.g.* provision of a helicopter for a day to assist with botanical surveys) but limited resources were allocated for the facilitation of the group process (for example an independent facilitator with appropriate group dynamics and conflict management skills was not hired).

It is interesting to note that problems with consultation processes such as this one led to changes to the legislation in relation to Forest Management Plans in the early 1990's and a move away from Plans for particular controversial sites to broader regional (District) Plans.

- the different agenda:

The Forestry Commission was seeking advice to resolve a local deadlock; the community group saw this as an opportunity to negotiate broader land use decisions. This is not an unusual situation of course and this difference in agenda is often used by opposed parties to discredit each other's genuine intention to contribute constructively to the debate. However it is important for an effective facilitation process to establish at the onset the agenda of the different parties, accept the diversity and differences of views and priorities while at the same time trying to work towards a common platform. This process of mapping issues too is an important step in conflict management (Cornelius and Faire 1989) and simply dismissing it will only create more problems in the long run.

• Public consultation through submissions

As, at the time of the research, two district management plans (Murchison and Derwent) were under public scrutiny it seemed logical to try to get a sense from the end users' point of view about the effectiveness of this process. The results of the questionnaires have also been analysed in the light of other interviews and discussions held in Hobart with Forestry Tasmania staff. The questionnaire (see Appendix A.) was focused on people's perceptions about the quality of the process (drawbacks and possible improvements), and the benefits and usefulness of preparing submissions.

- a divided "local" community:

Respondents were involved in the process for one or more of three main reasons:

1. they feel strongly that they have to protect their environment, the quality of their life style and have strong suspicions and concerns about the sustainability of forestry practices;
2. they represent (and want to protect the interest of) a specific user group, (industry, tourism.);
3. they want to "counterbalance" the power of influence in the community as they feel in some way threatened by the power (or perceived power) of another group competing for the same resource.

The Forest Agency is perceived as a partial stakeholder with more power than any other party and this decreases their credibility as an agency genuinely interested in involving people in a meaningful way.

- the consultation process:

In fifteen of the nineteen submissions, the process was described negatively mainly because the outcome was perceived as "a forgone conclusion". In the four remaining submissions the process was described as "genuine, constructive and balanced". In general people appreciate that they have had a chance to voice their concerns but they feel "alienated" as "they were not listened to". The process is "routine" and inadequate and some people have raised issues of inequity and representativity of the stakeholders. More specifically the drawbacks of the process can be categorised into 3 groups:

1. the Agency is reactive rather than pro-active; little encouragement and no feed back is given and the plan is not user friendly,
2. limited issues can be meaningfully addressed or considered; issues of management *per se* cannot be discussed,
3. the process is biased

One respondent commented that the process was "constructive and genuine…while some of the submissions were manipulative and credit had to be given to Forestry Tasmania for representing the view of the majority rather than bowing to the pressures of the extremes". Other positive comments recognised that the process provided an opportunity for a wide range of opinions and issues to be incorporated as well as "the development of good relationships between all users of the forest".

As a response to suggestions for improvement, respondents focused on stimulating a more user friendly process: this would include to encourage people to participate, discuss more directly with smaller interest or local groups, move the process towards "more genuine participation", give some indication that senior management staff will listen; involve field level staff in discussions (rather than just planners) and make the process independent from the Agency.

- the benefits:

Despite its drawbacks the process is still perceived as providing benefits even though those may not be the ones expected. Preparing submissions is in itself perceived worthwhile in about half the questionnaires, not because people felt listened to or were satisfied with the outcomes, but because they valued being able to voice their concerns (being to "correct facts", "exposing manipulation", "having a chance to talk " or "simply being involved"). It "forces information in the public domain" and indeed the increased availability of information was very much valued by the respondents. With this first step towards more transparency comes the opportunity to meet FT staff, to develop an understanding between the users and the FT staff and "to get more insight into how FT operates".

So, although most respondents were disappointed with the outcomes and are critical of the process they still recognise that this process, at least as a first step, offers the potential for a different kind of relationship between the parties and possibly different roles for them too.

While it is clear that many of those who responded to the survey were dissatisfied with the process, the potential for views about the content of the Plan to colour views about the process should also be acknowledged. Some individuals may reject (or support) the process on principle, because they reject (or support) the outcomes.

Box 8:   Forestry Tasmania's view on public involvement in the planning process

Forestry Tasmania was invited to contribute its point of view regarding the role and effectiveness of its public consultation process. It made the following points:

Forestry Tasmania recognises the importance of fostering broad community support for its activities and regards public consultation processes as an important element in achieving that support.

Apart from the now completed Regional Forest Agreement, Forest Management Plans have been the major formal opportunities for public input into forest management decisions in recent years.

Forestry Tasmania has been working to make its consultation processes more accessible and transparent. The intent has been to better explain the contexts in which changes to Management Plans are possible and to more clearly document those changes that have occurred. Alternatives to 'Meet the Planner' sessions such as smaller meetings and forest visits are being used in some instances as a means of fostering greater dialog and mutual understanding. Forestry staff, including managers, technical specialists and operational staff are available to also talk informally with individuals.

Some land use and forest management decisions are made at a legislative or State political level or reflect central policy directions of Forestry Tasmania. Individuals that object to those decisions sometimes feel disenfranchised by the public consultation process for Forest Management Plans as these issues are outside the scope of the Plan. Submissions are also received from individuals praising the current process.

Forestry Tasmania regards the consultation processes leading up to the finalisation of a Forest Management Plan as, in some ways, more important than the final document itself. Issues frequently arise that are too specific or detailed to warrant inclusion in the Plan, but can be progressed and resolved separately at a local level.

Forestry Tasmania will have Forest Management Plans completed for all State forests by the end of 1999. Annual Forest Management Plan reviews are one way of fostering on-going communication between local communities and forestry staff. Forestry Tasmania is also entering into a series of Community Forest Agreements that commit Districts to regular consultation with particular interest groups that use State forests.

The completion of the Forest Management Plan process represents an opportunity for Forestry Tasmania to reassess how it interacts with members of the public on forest management issues. The challenge is to find ways to improve public consultation from the point of view of both the public and Forestry Tasmania without also making it unsustainably expensive or compromising the organisation's commercial charter. This report will be used as an opportunity to revisit these consultation processes in the light of those used elsewhere in Australia and internationally.

Western Australia

At the time of the research, various stakeholders and government agencies in Western Australia (WA) were actively involved in the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) process. The most recent public consultation in the State prior to the RFA process was carried out in 1992 and therefore, given the current issues, it was difficult for the participants to dissociate their analysis of the previous planning process from the on-going RFA process. This overlap and confusion has made it more difficult to fully understand the process in this State and more on-the-ground work would be needed to achieve a fully detailed assessment of the whole picture.

Before the current proprocess…

Prior to the 1980s little, in terms of public consultation in forest planning was achieved. A plan was produced in 1977, apparently in two parts with the second part dealing with detailed operational plans and maps not readily available. A series of documents, such as, the General Working Plan No 87 (1982) for State Forests in WA, a forest department document " Conservation in the Karri forest" (1981) and an EPA commissioned paper "Karri forest conservation" (1982) were made available for public comment (Walker undated).

The consultation process

Under the CALM Act of 1984 the Conservation and Land Management Agency is responsible for the State forest Estate whilst the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is responsible for private forests. The EPA as well as the Wildlife and Parks Commission and the Land and Forest Commission (L&FC) are three commissions independent from CALM which act as advisory bodies to the Minister. The L&FC, of which the Director of CALM is a sitting member is constituted of 3 members. The EPA specifically acts as a technical and administrative advisory body and its major role is to conduct evaluation of the forest management plans through Environmental Impact Assessments. On release of this report members of the public had the opportunity to submit an appeal to the Minister within 14 days in case of disagreement with the EPA report. During the revision process of 1992, twenty one appeal cases were lodged. Given the fact that two different agencies are involved and that the process is complex and fairly confusing for the general public, the current planning process is under review.

The CALM Act of 1984 made the consultation process mandatory and in April 1987 three draft Regional Forest management plans and a draft Timber strategy were released for public comment. The consultation was open for a period of three months. Submissions were analysed and a statement of submissions was produced. The submissions were analysed following a pre-established code fairly similar to the one used in Tasmania. A summary of the public submissions was released in December 1987 and the final Regional Forest Management Plans and Timber Strategy were published in December 1987.

This plan was revisited in 1992 and a number of community workshops, public briefings and consultations were held prior to the preparation of the plan. Again, the draft revised plan was published for public comment in 1994 together with a summary of publications as well as the final Forest Management Plan.

At a much more local level, the harvesting plans and the fire management plans detailing what in fact happens in the field, although public documents, are not submitted for public comment. For example the public may be informed through the local press that fire management operations will happen. It seems that recently, a monthly list of operational activities are published in the local press too.

Few of the local staff have been specifically trained to deal with public consultation issues and department policy dictates that the employment of trained facilitators would happen only in cases of extreme need.

The measure of success

As mentioned before we would need more extensive field work to capture with more certainty the public's perception of the consultation process which happened in 1992. We interviewed a number of stakeholders from industry, conservation groups and government agencies to try to evaluate the effectiveness of the process.

   - a fair opportunity:
All the people interviewed concurred to say that the public consultation process provided an opportunity to hear about the Agency's plans and possibly to express concerns and views. However they also all comment on the fact that this process provided a forum for a one way communication where the various stakeholders were informed about decisions already made rather than providing the opportunity to genuinely influence the process. This analysis extended to the community workshops held in various parts of the region where it seems that attendance at workshops (as opposed to open public meetings) were by invitation only. Conservation groups as well as some industry groups questioned the quality and validity of information provided for public comments reinforcing the feeling that the process is mainly a public relations exercise.

Queensland

Before the current process...

Until quite recently, forest conflicts in Queensland have tended to centre more around issues of forest tenure than issues of forest management. The tropical rainforests in the area known as the Wet Tropics were the focus of perhaps the longest running dispute, with contention over land use dating back to a Royal Commission on the Development of North Queensland in 1931. Conflicts through the 60s and 70s came to a head in June 1987 when Prime Minister Hawke announced the Commonwealth Government's intention to nominate the Wet Tropics for World Heritage listing.

Under the Commonwealth Government's *World Heritage Properties Conservation Act*, the Commonwealth has the right to prohibit certain types of activity in listed areas, but management of the listed areas remains the responsibility of the respective states. Therefore Queensland, with a conservative Coalition government, set about demonstrating its ability to put in place adequate management arrangements for the Wet Tropics which would protect World Heritage values but at the same time would retain a viable timber industry in that part of the State.

The proposed management plan introduced a system of land use zones, a system that was claimed to be "in line with recognised world conservation strategies and provide[d] for a range of options from preservation to carefully controlled development" (Qld Government 1989). At the same time the State government launched a case in the High Court challenging the scientific basis for the inclusion of large areas of the Wet Tropics as World Heritage standard (Holzworth 1999). However, before this case could be heard, Queensland voters replaced the State Coalition government with the Goss Labor government in December 1989, and a political settlement amenable to both State and Commonwealth Labor governments, involving the establishment of a Wet Tropics Management Authority was made.

One of the best known instances of public consultation on forestry issues arose out of pre-election promises of the Goss Labor Government to review Queensland's National Park reservation system. The Conondale Range in the hinterlands of the Sunshine Coast region is an area noted for its scenic and conservation values and in the early 1990s there was considerable local interest in expanding the area of land being conserved as National Park.

The Goss government undertook to increase the size of the National Parks, but in a significantly novel approach, established a Consultative Committee of government, industry and community interests whose task was to recommend specific areas for further inclusion. Interests represented included the Queensland Forest Service, Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service, representatives of regional environmental and conservation groups and the Queensland Conservation Council, and the timber industry including local, regional and state representatives.

The decision making process was aided by a Zoning Working Group composed of a selection of these same representatives with a mandate to collect and analyse both the existing land use data as well as public comment and concerns for the Conondale Range area and to make recommendations on the best possible options for the Committee's consideration. Given the history and diversity of values represented on both the Consultative Committee and in the Zoning Working Group, facilitators from the Community Justice Program of the Attorney-

General's Department were used to ensure that all parties had the opportunity to present their views fairly, and that subsequently those views were then either 'accepted, modified or rejected by the agreement of the Group as a whole' (Holzworth 1999).

Wider public input into the deliberations was sought after the release of the initial Consultative Committee's recommendations in mid-1991, which also featured regional tours and displays extending even to Brisbane. The eventual resulting increase in National Park area and loss of some productive timber harvesting areas nevertheless signalled a generally accepted successful outcome from deliberate attempts to establish a new standard of cooperation and consultation between traditionally polarised forest interests.

The completion of the novel Conondale consultative process can be seen to have coincided with a rising national and international consciousness of the importance of working towards a true sustainable management of forests, informed by public input. Internationally, Australia signed the Global Statement of Principles on Forests from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Within Australia, the National Forest Policy Statement was signed in December 1992 by the Commonwealth and all State and Territory governments, except Tasmania (Commonwealth and State Governments 1992). The latter bound the signatories to develop a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of reserves and, in areas producing timber for export, to undertake a series of comprehensive regional assessments of those forests. Both of these agreements formally and significantly increased the legitimate role of the public in forest management planning.

Up until this point, the Department of Forestry in Queensland had been engaged in producing a comprehensive set of Draft Management Strategy Plans using the Management Priority Area Zoning (MPAZ) system. Ten of these were eventually published and a further 20 or more were finished to draft form. Standard practice had been for the District Forester and the Assistant District Forester to sit down and write the management plan for their forests. These plans began with a resources section, moving into prescriptions for managing the various sections of the territory for its primary and secondary uses. There was no statutory requirement, though it was departmental policy, to consult with the key stakeholders.

The extent of public participation which nowadays accompanies the production of management plans was limited within the MPAZ system. District offices were under no statutory obligation to notify the public when there was a new Management Plan available, however, it was standard practice that the existence of draft plans be advertised, and an opportunity for public comment on draft plans scheduled. If a member of the community came into the office, or rang and asked for a copy it would be provided, if one was available.

From about 1991-92 the production of forest management plans dwindled. The spectre of uncertain tenure arrangements arising from forthcoming comprehensive regional assessments and the subsequent Regional Forest Agreements fostered a reluctance to undertake a regular regime of management planning in the short term. In addition dramatic organisational change meant that the interim goals and objectives of the organisation were less certain and the resources available for management planning were minimal. It was obvious that any new system of planning would need to facilitate significantly greater public input than had been incorporated historically, but the Conondale process had called upon extraordinary local and state resources which were now in short supply, and required a range of skills and capacities in consultation and facilitation not traditionally associated with State forestry departments.

Consequently, the ensuing years have been used to enhance the capacity of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to undertake future forest planning actions and to think strategically about the most efficient method of incorporating public values into the planning process. Capacity building has included:

• The creation of a multi-disciplinary planning system development team;
• The appointment of Regional Forest Planners to build linkages with regional communities and inter-agency/departmental representatives;
• Fostering skills development in the areas of group facilitation, conflict management, mediation and information technology; and,
• The progressive trial and review of elements of the enhanced planning system.

From the perspective of the community, the core objectives have been to develop a more efficient planning process which will:

• Provide for structured, meaningful stakeholder and community involvement and for accountability to the community;
• Ensure that assumptions and evaluations as well as conclusions are clearly detailed and visible;
• Provide for information/outputs to be available in user friendly forms (*e.g.* GIS layers, maps, reports, databases etc. depending on circumstance);
• Minimise planning bias by using planning teams (rather than individual planners), balanced advisory groups and standard processes.

The end result of these deliberations is an evolving forest planning method, the Multiple Use Management Planning (MUMP) process, incorporating public consultation with forest planning through a method which is quite unusual and possibly unique in Australia. As such it is also still under development, using a number of resource allocation issues which have arisen between 1991 and 1999 as opportunities to apply and test various elements (phases) of the process. This has required integrating MUMP system elements as they have developed with the planning processes.

The range of planning initiatives between 1991 and 1999 include:-

1992 - Brisbane District SF Management Plan;
1996 - Whitsunday Open Space Plan;
1997 - Kroombit Tops Management Strategy;
1997 - Danbulla-Tinaroo Management Strategy;
1998 - Gold Coast Hinterland Landscape Strategy Plan;
1999 - Koombooloomba Ecotourism Project.

Planning

Queensland is committed to a policy of multiple use forest management, in which timber harvesting is of equal concern with issues of recreation, water use or biodiversity values. There is a growing realisation that there needs to be a diversity of tenures of forested land in Queensland where management caters for the widest possible range of compatible uses. The outcome of this policy is that, for example, land which may be managed primarily for its conservation values, may still allow a number of alternative uses, provided the impacts of those uses do not conflict with the core attributes of the inherent conservation values.

Engaging or facilitating the participation of a range of target groups is central to the MUMP process. This approach differs from standard public consultations in that to provide structured opportunities for the range of target groups to be consulted or participate, the planning process is broken down into a distinct sequence of procedures which are best approached as separate phases.

Each phase contributes to the process of determining the mix of compatible uses for a particular planning area, meeting the demands of the various interested parties in separate forums rather than simultaneously.The eight phases of the MUMP process are summarised in Table 1.

Case Study 1 - The Gold Coast Hinterland Landscape Strategy Plan

The need to resolve resource allocation issues in the Springbrook area provided an opportunity to trial and test Phase 5 (refer to Table 1) of the MUMP process.

A Steering Committee made up of representatives from each of Queensland's land management agencies was put together to look at planning for open space across all tenures - State forests, National Parks and Local Government - in the Springbrook area as part of the Gold Coast Hinterland Landscape Strategy Plan.

Box 9:   Gold Coast Hinterland landscape strategy plan

The impetus for the study arose from a number of pressures and planning opportunities within the South-east Queensland (SEQ) region. Planning for future open space needs, their use and management is an important component of the Regional Framework for Growth Management which provides a strategic framework for the sustainable growth of the region.

Some of the catalysts for the study were :

- A need for a more coordinated approach to public open space planning across different tenures;
- A strong and increased interest in accessing natural areas for recreation and tourism;
- Rapid population growth;
- Extensive natural and scenically appealing areas in the Gold Coast hinterland in close proximity to large, urban populations and centres of tourism.

The study aimed to develop a comprehensive and integrated strategy for the identification and management of a regional open space system within the Gold Coast hinterland area. An important outcome was to identify and prioritise open space values on public land within the study area, to ensure protection of nature conservation, scenic amenity and water catchment values whilst accommodating compatible sustainable levels of recreational use, access and economic activity.

Privately owned land was outside the scope of the study because the plan had no statutory capacity to influence their management. Private lands were thus not included in site assessments or management recommendations.

Table 1. Primary Phases and Consultative components of the MUMP process

Phase	Activity	Target Group/Participants
Phase 1 (Steering)	Setting the scope and establishing Operational Protocols for a particular Planning Activity. The steering committee is expected to have very little involvement in the context of the plan. Its role is to project manage the process, ensure it isaccountable, ensure equity and be a first step in the resolution of any frictions that may arise.	Agency/Community Leaders
Phase 2 (Methods)	Review and finalisation of site specific Planning Methodology. Every circumstance is subtly different and will require some adjustment. Adjustment may be as simple as adding or subtracting an open space value to the standard model for consideration, or as complex as adjusting the entirety of the interaction between participants and the information support system. Current experience suggests the planning system will be able to cope with all planning needs with minimal modification.	Planning Group
Phase 3 (Issue Identification)	Identification of issues relating to the plan area through both random (ads, flyers etc.) and targeted (direct contact with known interested parties) interaction with the Community. Issue submissions will be categorised spatially and thematically to aid interrogation and incorporation into decision making.	• General Community • Specific Interest Groups
Phase 4 (Interpretation and Extension of Methodology)	Introduce the Plan Methodology to Target Groups and foster an acceptance/consensus among likely participants. Modify process as necessary.	• Agency Leaders • General Community • Specific Interest Groups • Expert Groups
Phase 5 (Analysis)	1. Participation of Experts in the inventory of the resource values/characteristics of the plan area	Experts (Inventory)
	2. Participation of targeted community representatives in the assessment of the generalised values which the community place on the range of open space relevant to the plan area. Community values should not be dependent on a knowledge of either the details of the plan area nor the compatibility of open space values with each other.	Targeted individuals within:- • General Community • Specific Interest Groups
	3a Assessment of Compatibility and Impact. Using information gathered in Phase 5 Sections 1. and 2, each potential activity on or adjacent to a site must be assessed for its compatibility with higher order values on the site. The resource management skills of the group deciding or managing compatibility will have considerable bearing on the quality and credibility of the plan. 3b. Analysis and Response to Issues. Issues identified in Phase three need to be specifically addressed by the management team. Responses should be considered an integral part of the management decision making process. 3c. Compilation of Draft Plan. To a large degree the notes of the management group generated while resolving incompatibilities and making use - allocation decisions will be the substance of the management plan.	Experts (Management)
Phase 6 (Review)	Release of Draft for comment.	• General Community • Specific Interest Groups
Phase 7 (Finalisation)	Completing final plan incorporating comments where appropriate. An appeal/grievance/complaint resolution process is necessary.	Experts (Management)
Phase 8 (Approval)	Approval and adoption of planning outcome.	Agency Leaders

Under the Nature Conservation Act, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (formerly Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH)) is responsible for the management of the Protected Area Estate, which consists of National Parks and Conservation Parks. At the time the EPA agreed through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) to include the Protected Area Estate as open space, setting conditions which recognised the EPA's legislative responsibilities to produce appropriate management plans and to implement them. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) agreed to do the same.

Inventory – potential open space values

As per Phase 5.1 of the MUMP process, all land in the area under consideration (Plan Area) was divided up into 60 to 70 Planning Units (PU) and each of these PU was then assessed and rated for its potential relative to a range of uses. Due regard was given to the tenure of the PU, that is, assessed for all values legally permitted. Land in National Park was assessed for most uses but not for wood production which is not permitted in National Park.s. Land in State forest was assessed for all possible values.

This process was applied to each "planning unit" across all council land, State forest, and National Park. The ratings attached to the PU uses were determined by relevant expert groups, *e.g.* foresters rated the value of that land for its potential as a timber resource on a scale of 1 - 10; outdoor recreation experts rated the PU for its recreation potential, etc.

Phase 5.2 of the MUMP process was applied to gauge community values pertaining to the relative importance of the range of uses within the plan area.

The community values assessment (CVA) process consisted of a workshop in which a select committee of community members was given the task of allocating relative importance to the many potential uses of open space. The 19 participants of the workshop were chosen to represent a wide and diverse range of interests and to reflect a fair background knowledge of Southeast Queensland. Interests represented included the timber industry, horse trail riding, outdoor education, representatives for nature conservation and the conservation of aboriginal cultural heritage, bee keeping, extractive industry, outdoor pursuits, commercial and general water production.

The community values assessment procedure
The community value assessment procedure consists of two key components. They are:-

- A procedure to establish a quantitative indication of what a participant means when they describe a forest use as being either *Extremely* more important, *Very Strongly* more important, *Strongly* more important, *Morerately* more important or *Equally* important than/as another forest use;
- A pairwise comparison where participants are requested to indicate which forest uses are more important than others, and to what extent, when considered generically, across all land tenures.

The procedure was assisted by *Expert Choice*, a computer-based eigen vector calculator. The forest uses compared in this first pilot application were Nature Conservation, Mining/ Quarrying, Water Production, Wood Production, Outdoor Recreation, Outdoor Education, Grazing/Honey Production, Cultural Heritage, and Landscape Amenity. The limitations of the

technology required that the number of comparable uses be limited to nine and consequently grazing and honey production were lumped together as minor forest industries.

A balance between the range of values of the participants can be achieved by synthesizing a group value set (establishing a mean). In the Gold Coast Hinterland Strategy Plan conservation values were uniformly ranked high, with recreation ranked slightly lower, and with mining fairly low down.

Establishing utility values

Integrating expert inventory ratings for each use in each planning unit with the results of the community values assessment process (*i.e.* combining the results of phases 5.1 and 5.2) produces a weighted rating (Utility Value) for each use in each planning unit.

The Utility Values combine the relative importance that the community place on the range of forest uses with the purely scientific results of inventory to provide an indicator of community benefit to assist decision-making by management experts in phase 5.3.

Planning Unit Use Ratings	Community Valuation	Utility Value
Conservation = 8	Conservation = 1.0	8 x 1.0 = 8.0
Recreation = 5	Recreation = 0.75	5 x 0.75 = 3.75
Timber = 2	Timber = 0.5	2 x 0.5 = 1.0

Figure 3. Combining community valuation with planning unit ratings

Management and compatibility

Phase 5.3 of the MUMP process was applied to provide a format and structure for decision-making by an inter-agency team of management experts, and was assisted by a prototype of the Planning Information System presently being developed.

The information system manages the information compiled in the previous phases and presents the utility values for each forest use within each planning unit to enable comparisons to be made to identify the most valuable elements of the plan area.

Starting from the highest utility value, ripple effects of decisions made to secure the most valuable uses can be assessed sequentially. The planning information system facilitates this process by presenting appropriate planning unit information for adjacent planning units or planning units with like attributes.

For example, if a decision is made to secure a planning unit for Conservation, the information system enhances the representativeness of those particular ecosystems within reserve systems and the subsequent demand to conserve may be reduced. Similarly for recreation, if a particular type of opportunity is secured, the demand for similar opportunities within the plan area is reduced.

Further, if a decision is made to secure for conservation a planning unit containing fire sensitive ecosystems, potential secondary activities such as camping with open fires would need to be constrained within that planning unit, or as a potential primary use in adjacent planning units.

The ripple effect is subtle and needs to be carefully dealt with. Changes made to values within and between planning units as a consequence of ripple effects must be recorded and the reasons for changes documented. Repeatedly addressing the most valuable forest value within the applicable planning unit will eventually ensure that all significant forest uses in all planning units are secured and the best mix of primary, secondary and other uses across the planning area and within each planning unit is identified.

For the Gold Coast Hinterland Landscape Plan, efforts were made to ensure that the processes of undertaking both the community valuation and the expert ratings were totally transparent and available for inspection as required. Following the production and public release of the draft Framework Plan, a period for public submissions will provide a further opportunity for public input. Figure 4 details the sequence of activities described above.

Assessment of intrinsic attributes or
characteristics of planning units, demand
factors, the relationship with adjoining
planning units and regional context

↓

Community values priority
derived from consultation
with key stakeholders

↓

Proposed use/s providing optimum community
benefit from each planning unit including an
assessment of the compatibility of values/uses
with all other values/uses

↓

Draft Framework Plan ——————
Public release   ↓
                              Public submissions
              ←——————   in response

↓

Final Framework Plan to guide cooperative
management of public open space in the
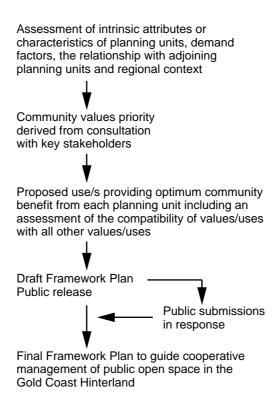Gold Coast Hinterland

Figure 4. Gold Coast Hinterland open space framework (Roberts, 1996:13)

Case Study 2 - The Koombooloomba Ecotourism Project

The Koombooloomba Ecotourism Project (KEP) began with a request from a community in North Queensland to the Queensland Government wishing to explore the potential for developing ecotourism experiences focused on Koombooloomba Dam and the surrounding

Koombooloomba State forest. The KEP provided an opportunity for a second trial of MUMP system elements, which could enable the technology to be presented in a more articulated package incorporating enhanced public consultation and participation supported by background information, community feedback and reflection.

A Steering Committee was established which incorporated the Wet Tropics Management Authority, Traditional Owners, inter-agency state interests, those of Local Government, a range of specific interest groups (*e.g.* Ecotourism, Conservation and Military), and those of the general community.

As the custodian of Koombooloomba State forest and a principal stakeholder, the Department of Natural Resources proposed that the Steering Committee resolve to apply some MUMP system elements to the project.

It was resolved to apply Phase 5 of the MUMP process whilst other components of the project occurred in a more *ad hoc* fashion. Phase 5.1 (Inventory of Use Ratings) was undertaken by assembling a range of expert panels in consultation with the Steering Committee. The inventory expert panels included members of stakeholder and interest groups, locally eminent scientists, and out-sourced consultants.

Where use rating assessment models did not exist (*e.g.* Ecotourism and Military) the relevant stakeholders participated in the development of criteria and weightings to be included within the models. Wood production ratings were established for planning units within Koombooloomba State forest that occurred outside the World Heritage Area. Opportunities for the review and adoption of inventory output (use ratings) were scheduled.

For Phase 5.2 (Community Values Assessment) it was decided to offer the opportunity for general members of the local community to participate in the assessment in addition to members of the Steering Committee, in an effort to develop a balanced value set.

Lessons learned from the Springbrook exercise, where uncertainty and confusion over the meaning of many of the terms used to describe alternative forest uses resulted in prolonged discussions, lead to the preparation of an information booklet. The booklet provided a contextual definition for each of the terms (forest uses) to be considered in the assessment and an overview of the role of community valuations in the planning process.

The booklet was distributed to assist members of the general community who chose to attend the CVA session advertised in a local paper, and to Steering Committee participants prior to their attendance of a management planning workshop.

At the management planning workshop, prior to the participation of the Steering Committee in the CVA process, the synthesized valuation produced by members of the general community was presented. Some initial concern was expressed over the relative ranking of certain forest uses. The participation of the Steering Committee in the CVA process resulted in a slightly different ranking, particularly in the middle values.

The synthesized value set of the Steering Committee and a synthesized combination of the two value sets was then flashed on an overhead screen. The planning team expected the values debate to begin anew; they were disappointed. Instead, the combined results were seen as a fair and honest reflection of a balanced valuation. Even the military representative, where

military use of forests had come bottom on both lists, was resigned but accepting of the validity of the combined valuation.

Following the adoption of the combined value set by the Steering Committee, the Steering Committee then proceeded to participate in the Management and Compatibility phase of the MUMP process. This is generally the domain of management experts, but in an effort to foster confidence in the system, it was resolved to facilitate the participation of the entire Steering Committee. Workshop participants then began undertaking the iterations of the process to secure the highest values of the plan area and participate in the discussions that lead to the development of management prescriptions and the tracing of ripple effects. Here the representatives of the various interest groups could see how their relative interests were dealt with during the decision-making process and understand the rationale behind group decisions which may have lead to their interests being constrained within particular planning units.

Further, the information system provided for issues identified earlier in the planning process to be addressed and the capacity of the plan area to deliver the range of scenarios (*e.g.* Ecotourism) developed in earlier components of the project. After several hours of participation the workshop participants agreed to delegate the remaining management and compatibility tasks to those of the Steering Committee with the greatest management expertise.

The management group was then charged with the preparation of a preliminary draft plan for subsequent review and comment by the remainder of the Steering Committee and ultimately any interested persons.

User satisfaction

When applied to the Gold Coast Hinterland Landscape Strategy Plan there were some shortcomings imposed on the Community Values Assessment process by limitations of the Expert Choice computer program. These shortcomings were less evident when applied to the Koombooloomba Ecotourism Project where the range of forest uses considered was nine or less. Possible future shortcomings have since been addressed by the in-house development of an eigen vector calculator capable of considering up to fifty (50) uses.

Further limitations were imposed by the difficulties of locating people representative of the range of interest groups who had an awareness of the full range of forest uses. In undertaking the pair-wise comparisons, there was an obvious need in the Gold Coast Hinterland Landscape Strategy Plan to clarify terms. This took some time but it ensured that all participants had a similar understanding of the terms, so that the interpretation of the outcomes of the Community Values Assessment process could be meaningful.

Attempts were made to address these limitations in the Koombooloomba Ecotourism Project by facilitating the participation of a more diverse steering committee and members of the general community in the process, and through the provision of a contextual definition for each of the uses to be considered.

Forest planners believe it is appropriate to constitute the group/s participating in the CVA process to reflect the relevant scales of issues for the area. That is, if the planning is taking place in a World Heritage area with world heritage values, then there must be greater weight given to National values by including community members with a World Heritage purview. If, on the other hand, the area is primarily a local forest with local significance and representing a

local resource, then the committee must be constituted with an emphasis on representatives with local interest in addition to input from regional and state interests.

In the Gold Coast Hinterland Landscape Strategy Plan the outcomes of the project were presented to an Advisory Group, a committee of community people tasked with managing "The Settlement", an area of land near Springbrook. The framework study was aimed at rationalising the use of public land, and setting up a planning framework for Settlement property. There was generally an enthusiastic reception of the project outcomes, in that almost all (all but one) were happy with both the methodology and the results.

Members of the Steering Committee for the Gold Coast Hinterland Study, made up of representatives from the land management agencies, generally believe that they have learned much though the application and trial of some MUMP system elements, and are generally comfortable with the results to date.

The Koombooloomba Ecotourism Project provided an opportunity for an expanded Steering Committee incorporating representatives external to State management agencies to participate and be exposed at a more intimate level to the inventory (Phase 5.2) and management and compatibility (Phase 5.3) elements of the MUMP process

Preliminary draft outcomes of the Koombooloomba Ecotourism Project have subsequently been reviewed and endorsed by the Steering Committee for wider public comment. This move indicates the acceptability of the MUMP system to the community participants of the Steering Committee.

Some difficulties

The reactions of the group set up to input their "community expert" prioritisation of forest values are somewhat problematical in the Gold Coast Hinterland Landscape Strategy Plan. A common complaint amongst the participants is that the workshop was a one day affair, which occurred out of the blue and for which there was never any follow up or feedback. For some participants, their part in any larger process remains a complete mystery. One community member did have some understanding of where his contribution fitted into the overall process, but only because of a later chance meeting with a member of the steering committee where the overall planning process was explained.

For at least one member, the greatest benefit from the process lay in access to information provided in the two to three hour discussion of planning issues which preceded the trial. Amongst the participants themselves there is confusion as to the basis on which they were chosen as representatives. For some, particularly those declaring a lack of computer literacy, the process seemed particularly time-consuming and confusing.

One of the initial conditions of community members' participation was a guarantee of anonymity, which in itself poses interesting questions of accountability and potentially of validity.

Many of these difficulties were addressed in the Koombooloomba Ecotourism Project by providing improved opportunities for articulating the role of Community Values in the planning process. These included written articulations within the booklet and also presentations made to the Steering Committee before adopting the methodology, and to both the general community and the Steering Committee before their participation in the assessment.

Attempts were made to address issues associated with computer literacy through the development of on-paper surveys. At the same time further development of the computer program has removed the necessity to lump together uses that the group felt were significantly different, such as beekeeping and grazing.

From a wider viewpoint, the degree of acceptance accorded this analytical valuation process by the wider public still remains to be seen. Draft versions of both the Gold Coast Hinterland Landscape Strategy Plan and the Koombooloomba Ecotourism Project are about to be distributed. This is an important aspect of assessing the community's acceptance of the Community Values Assessment phase of the MUMP process, but one that will have to await future analysis.

Other consultative and participatory elements of the MUMP process will be tested in the future when the first true pilots of the full process incorporating all phases and system elements occur in each region in Queensland.

Victoria

Before the current process...

Victoria has a considerable history of public participation in policy making on issues of land use. The Victorian Crown Lands Commission of 1878-79 toured extensively through country districts seeking information on the progress and conditions of land settlement in order to create new legislation for small-scale settlement and pastoral leases (Powell 1973).

More recently the *Land Conservation Act 1970* provided for comprehensive strategic planning on public land by the then-unique Land Conservation Council (LCC), an independent statutory body known for its independence, expertise, and commitment to the value of public consultation. A major part of the LCCs brief was to provide extended opportunities for public comment. Its method of operation proved very successful and eventually formed the basis of the current Victorian public consultation processes.

Following an initial study of an area, the LCC would present a published report for public written comments. These comments then contributed to formulating recommendations for land use allocation in the area. The recommendations were resubmitted for public comment before final recommendations were made to the Victorian government. Area studies were reviewed and revised on a cyclical basis.

The LCC established a precedent in Victoria of the Forests Commission being asked to justify forest planning and management on public and private lands, as merely one of several potentially competing land uses affecting overall community resources. Additional patterns were set following the amalgamation of natural resource management agencies in 1983. In response to increasing public insistence to broaden the scope of forest management goals the Victorian government instituted a multi-disciplinary Cutting Area Review Committee for the entire State. These measures ensured that areas of known sensitivity and significance were protected, while at the same time ensuring that sawlog allocations could be met. In the process, procedures had been set in place to broaden the types and sources of information which were to be taken into account in forest planning.

Planning

Between 1984 and 1987 a number of significant documents and events influenced the shape of forest planning in Victoria. The Timber Industry Board of Inquiry (the Ferguson Inquiry) was set up to review the development of Victoria's timber and forest products industries *vis a vis* the Government's social, economic, employment, and environmental policies and objectives and to propose future directions for the industry.

The subsequent Timber Industry Strategy (TIS) mandated the production of Forest Management Plans to ensure management which was economically viable, environmentally sensitive, sustainable for future generations and *assisted by public participation* (Government of Victoria 1986).

Over the same time period in both the *Conservation Strategy for Victoria* (1987a) and the *Social Justice Strategy* (Government of Victoria 1987b) the necessity for public participation was reiterated, with the intent to "ensure adequate opportunities for community involvement in

environmental and resource decision-making". (Bonyhad, 1993:23) To a large extent this reflected the contemporary world-wide shift in governmental processes of environmental decision-making.

Out of the Victorian Conservation Strategy and the Timber Industry Strategy came the creation of a FMA Consultative Committee for each forest management area to assist in the development of regional Forest Management Plans (FMP). These committees were to operate from the initial scoping meeting through to the completion of the Plan and into its implementation phase. One clear intent of the process was to improve the level of community understanding of the issues and complexities of forest management.

The consultation process

The Otway Forest Management Plan (FMP) prototype project began in October 1987, with requests for public comment on the future management of the Otway forests in the form of *Have Your Say* pamphlets. An initial document *The Statement of Resources, Uses and Values for the Otway Forest Management Area* in April 1990, provided base data on the area's physical, biotic, social, and cultural resources as well as an explanation of existing forest use and management. Its release coincided with the establishment of a 13 (later 14) member community Advisory Committee (AC) throughout Victoria.

The AC was formed from replies received following a series of newspaper advertisements advising of the planning project and asking for expressions of interest from individuals. The Department of Conservation and Environment also used office files to contact known stakeholders in forest matters. A series of meetings by the district forester with local interest groups expanded the list of stakeholders interested in participating on the Advisory Committee. AC members were chosen on the basis of actual demonstrable regional interests in the planning process and its outcomes, and were appointed to the Advisory Committee by the Minister. Figure 5 outlines the position of the Advisory Committee within the FMP preparation process.

Together with departmental staff this first Advisory Committee met nine times over the following 18 months in order to carry out its mandate to "advise on issues of concern to the public and to ensure that these issues are addressed" in the FMP (DCE 1991:5).

The content of those meetings is instructive. The initial meeting in June 1990 clarified the role of the committee and chose a convener who was a community member. Subsequently monthly meetings were used to outline and explain proposed management options and to explore separate issues of concern which combined to make up the five management scenarios or options. Amongst these issues were Old Growth forests, stream side buffers or reserves, rainforest definitions and sites of significance, harvesting in mountain and foothill forests, roading and seasonal closure of forest roads, residual roundwood, the regional system of retained habitat, and the classification of soil loss hazard classes.

Background papers were requested by the committee on many of these issues and these were either located or prepared and distributed by CNR staff. These included, for example, fact sheets or reports on:

- rainforest Sites of Significance,
- flora and fauna surveys of logging coupes,
- economic and social aspects of forest management in the Otways, and
- the strategic management option for OFMA.

Figure 5. Outline of the Forest Management Planning Process in Victoria (Source: Department of Conservation and Natural Resources 1992)

Two field trips were organised to observe the effects of various management techniques. The AC also met with relevant officers such as the regional fire protection officer and held a joint meeting with members of the Forest Policy and Planning Advisory Group, a group of academic researchers and policy individuals providing technical advice to the State government on forestry matters.

One entire meeting was devoted to reporting back to the whole AC the results of representatives' discussions with members of their respective organisations on the five management options.

Over subsequent months the planning team refined the five management options, incorporating comments, and creating the *Proposed Management Plan for the Otway Forest Management Area* (DCE 1991). The *Proposed Plan* was publicly released in July 1991 and submissions were received until 16 August 1991.

Each member of the AC received complete copies of the 442 submissions, and at the eighth meeting in October 1991 discussions were held on the issues raised by the submissions, issues similar to the committee's own discussions earlier: economic analysis, Old Growth forest, rainforest, landscape, plantations and recreation. At the final meeting of the committee in December the planning team reported back to the committee on actions taken by the Department in the final plan with respect to points raised by the public submissions. The final plan was officially released in March 1992.

Subsequent FMPs

Procedures established by this first Otway FMP form the basis for subsequent regional Forest Management Plans . These procedures include:

- public invitation for committee membership,
- appointment by the Minister of a small (fewer than 14 person) committee chaired by a community member selected by the group,
- an initial meeting to clarify the role of the committee,
- a subsequent series of meetings spaced out in time to discuss and debate a range of prepared management options, with
- forest visits, invited speakers and supplementary studies provided by the departmental forest planning team which also provides administrative and logistical support.

Across all regions, there is a sense of cooperation between the department, with its mandate to produce a workable forest management plan, and the community, which is looking after its regional environmental, social and economic concerns. As a general pattern, the draft management plan is prepared with iterative consultations with the Advisory Committee and then distributed to the public; public submissions are invited, received and discussed; and the final Forest Management Plan is prepared, accepted by government, and released, with provision for review in five years.

However, external circumstances have conspired to mould most subsequent FMPs in unique ways.

In East Gippsland the planning process began in 1989. Because EG is such a large management area with a very high proportion of public land, the approach taken by the planning team was to conduct a range of careful pilot studies of representative areas within the FMA to develop and trial the management processes intended to "resolve conflicts between flora/fauna and timber management." The central strategy was to maximise the use of areas which were otherwise unavailable for timber harvesting.

The AC reviewed and discussed one such pilot study including the characteristics, criteria and projected impacts of the proposed forest management zoning system, and an Options Discussion Paper was also publicly circulated, containing a questionnaire asking respondents to rate how each of the options treated values of flora/fauna conservation, sustainable yield, Old Growth values, rainforest conservation, and threatened species.

No clear preferences emerged from either the community or committee responses, but the subsequent AC meeting did give provisional endorsement of 17 management principles which the planning team had distilled from the submissions, and which could be used to guide the development of a management plan.

During this time three major co-lateral studies which were to influence the development of FMPs were progressing toward completion:

- a comprehensive Old Growth study, the first in Australia, combining aerial photography of crown cover and growth stage analysis with disturbance histories and ground truthing (Woodgate *et al.* 1994);
- the HARIS report updating hardwood harvesting and supply calculations of available resource (DCNR, 1993); and
- a joint national Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) and State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (CNR) National Estate Study.

This latter in particular was an ambitious effort to overlap National Estate values and affected protected areas with State conservation areas to produce a comprehensive FMP. At this point in 1993, there were already indications that the Comprehensive Regional Assessment (CRA) which was being mooted as part of the coming Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) process would require the assessment of National Estate and Heritage values, and the forest planning team decided to delay the completion of the East Gippsland FMP in order to incorporate the AHC/CNR National Estate Study. The bureaucratic arrangements and increased complexity of issues which resulted were estimated to have extended the FMP process by at least a year. Nevertheless, during this recess, the forest planning team kept the Advisory Committee members informed of progress being made by means of regular newsletters.

Effects of departmental change and the RFA process

In the Central Highlands of Victoria, what began as three separate Advisory Committees was eventually amalgamated into a single plan. The Central, Dandenong and Central Gippsland regions each began production of FMPs in 1989, forming an FMA Advisory Committee in each region. By 1991, Dandenong region had produced its *Statement of Resources, Uses and Values*, followed in 1992 by the Central region and in 1993 by Central Gippsland. Rough, internal, drafts of the Forest Management Plans were produced but from about 1992 the planning process was essentially mothballed.

According to the *Forest Management Plan for the Central Highlands,* this arose from a decision to incorporate the results of two studies which were then just beginning: the LCC's review of District 2 of its Melbourne study area and the joint forest assessment (DNRE 1998:4). However, by 1994 when the results of these studies were available, the RFA process for the Central Highlands was looming, and as a result the decision was made to produce an integrated plan for the entire region.

Work recommenced in 1995 with the intention to have a completed integrated FMP in 1996. In fact the Plan was ninety-eight percent finished by July and was distributed as a published Proposed Plan in January 1997, with only a few details on Leadbeters possum yet to be resolved. The final FMP was released in April 1998, one month after the release of the Regional Forest Agreement for the Central Highlands. As in East Gippsland, the broad acceptance by the RFA process of the FMPs with very few changes, can be seen as an endorsement of the comprehensiveness and thoroughness of the forest management planning process in Victoria.

The measure of success

This process is well developed and well researched. It is informed by the British Columbia Forestry Department's community participation process researched by Victorian foresters on study tours in the mid-1980s, but well conceived and adapted to Australian needs. There exist general principles for forming and conducting ACs and for tailoring expectations to the realities, and ensuring forest planners have access to the experiences of others (Rumba 1991; Gijsbers &Parson, 1989; Gijsbers and Rumba 1991).

The process seeks to arrive at an agreed management plan that the whole range of interest groups can live with. Most often closed committee meetings are held so that individual representatives need not necessarily carry their public persona into the discussion, but are free to discuss their views, to freely explore the views and realities of others and to adjust their own views.

Ideally the process of education, discussion and argumentation is intended to forge a core set of rational management goals to which all can ascribe which reflect general rules for what is best for the whole society. In the process individual drives are moderated in consideration of others' interests with the goal of arriving at a solution that benefits the whole society. The committee acts as a community sounding board for forest planning ideas, as a microcosm of conflicting social interests and as a source of local knowledge to assess the on-ground impacts of particular policies, plans and activities.

In reality such consensus is often not realised. Rather a semblance of agreement may be attained by creating a hodge-podge of unconnected (or potentially even contradictory) strategies which offer some boon to each representative group. Nor can the process entirely circumvent political intervention. Across the sites researched, it was variously the peak environmental group representative who was going to have the ear of the Environment Minister, or the VAFI representative who was taking the issue beyond the region, and everywhere the representatives of MMBW/ Melbourne Water who, while willing to negotiate to a certain extent regionally, ultimately retained the right to resort to higher level negotiations between their agencies' respective General Managers.

Participants perceptions

Almost uniformly participants give high marks to this form of public consultation, not least because it appears to be a serious attempt to develop a mutually acceptable multiple use forest plan. Its two greatest drawback are the time required and the inevitable consequent lack of continuity.

The actual time it takes to undertake a meaningful and productive consultation, to sort out issues and arrive at preferred options is not the difficulty. Participants do not seem to feel that 18 to 30 months is an excessively long time to develop a management plan. This may be because they are aware of, and can keep track of, what is happening. What is unbearable and often incomprehensible is the 18 to 30 months spent in invisible government consultation subsequent to what the public sees as an essentially finished "draft" document. It is not the waiting, but the lack of information on progress, which participants find difficult to accept.

Lapsed time between experiences also seems to be viewed differently according to whether the experiences are considered as mainstream to a person's life, or as incidental. For departmental personnel immersed in the process of their regular duties, there would be daily or weekly

references made to the progress of an FMP through the labyrinth of government consultation, keeping the reality of the plan alive in their consciousness. For community members, immersed in a separate daily reality, there is an understandable loss of salience in the sudden reappearance of the "draft" plan after 18 months absence.

Tied to this is the disjuncture caused by the inevitable changeover in departmental personnel. DNRE seems to view the effect of personnel changeover as inconsequential, since from a bureaucratic viewpoint the role is unchanged, merely the individual filling that role is replaced. From the community's viewpoint a new set of departmental personnel signals a whole new consultation process.

This is particularly true when, as in the Central Highlands, the introductory meetings with the "new team" for the revived process began by reiterating their understanding of past issues. This was interpreted by many members of the community as the beginning of a duplicate, and in their view unnecessary, process. The cooperative relationships which community members had developed with department personnel were tied to the individual, rather than to the role, and a new team of individuals signalled a new consultative process.

Planners perceptions

Inevitably forest planners see this process as personally demanding and very time consuming.

Planners who enter midway through an on-going process or a stalled process, particularly if they have had no previous experience with that particular committee, find the process less than satisfying. Many of the most significant group adjustments occur in what has been called previously the "stormin" phase of group interaction, and now exist only in the memories of the original participants. For them it forms part of the reality of the process; but not so for the new planner. To the newcomer, group meetings are without flash and the group appears passive, perhaps even uninterested. The best that can be achieved is a tidy wrap-up of the process.

However those forest planners who are most committed to significant public input and who are so fortunate as to be able to oversee the whole process from beginning to end, find the process rewarding and ultimately an empowering partnership between agency and community.

How Effective are the Consultation Processes?

In the early sections of this study, we made the distinction between public participation and consultation, describing participation as an umbrella term which encompasses many different ways of participating — only one of which is consultation. We now further restrict our interest to effective consultation and offer a discussion of those attributes which, from both the literature and our experiences, can be seen to be essential in order to deliver effective consultation.

Attributes of effective consultation can be seen as sub-categories for the principles of good practice discussed earlier. The relationship between the attributes and principles is set out in Box 10 below; note that some attributes may be applicable to more than one principle.

Box 10 Key attributes of effective public consultation

Principles	Attributes
Principle 1. *Commitment and clarity*	Disclosure of interests Agreed objectives and expectations Transparency of process
Principle 2. *Time and group dynamics*	Time Continuity and follow up
Principle 3. *Representativity*	Representativity Equity
Principle 4. *Transfer of skills*	Resourcing the process Quality of information

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Principle 1: Commitment and clarity

Disclosure of interests and limitations

The agency seeking people's involvement needs to be very specific at the onset about what it is prepared to achieve in order to avoid misleading the public and raising false expectations. Clearly, government agencies have their own mandate to fulfil and must operate within their own constraints. Efforts to deny or avoid discussions of the immutable technical or political realities which dictate what the agency can or cannot d, will only result in a waste of both agency and community time and effort, and will delay the process of getting down to seriously working together to discover or create mutually acceptable solutions.

In Tasmania, the series of information leaflets in the press or sent to registered interest groups describe in sufficient detail the consultation process, the mile stones and the procedure to follow in order for the wider community to have a say in what should and should not be included into the Forest Management Plan. However there is no clear statement regarding the limits within which Forestry Tasmania operates. The public for example is not made specifically aware of the A and R codes which will be used to review the draft, nor is the public informed about the position (mission statement, terms of references) of Forestry Tasmania in relation to specific management plans.

A similar situation can be observed in Western Australia.

In Victoria, the disclosure of legislated timber volume commitments was not well received, and was initially interpreted as inflexibility. There were, in addition, issues of forest management policy which were clearly articulated at the beginning of public consultation as being unavailable for negotiation, for example, the use of 1080 in newly planted areas. However these disclosures helped to prepare an honest platform from which to proceed.

Very clear guidelines as to limitations were set out in Queensland, primarily because both of the instances being analysed there were treated strictly as pilot studies or trials, essentially testing out the process. They were therefore undertaken fairly tentatively with no indication that the processes being used would necessarily serve as a precedent to bind the forest agency in any way.

Agreed objectives and expectations

Agencies need to be very clear about what they are interested in achieving by the consultation process both for their own benefit and for the benefit of the consultative group. This involves deciding, and probably committing to writing, whether it is merely interested in informing people, in seeking opinion or whether it is seeking some arrangement by which to share decision making or control.

At the most basic level, different objectives dictate different consultative processes and it is quite inefficient, unethical and ultimately counterproductive to operate at a hierarchical level distinctly higher than what is intended in the end result. (See Creighton's diagram of types of techniques used and the levels of participation in the literature review.)

Simultaneously stakeholders will come to the process with specific needs and diverse agendas which, with the best of intentions and skilled facilitation, may still be irreconcilable. It is important therefore to try to develop a "shared understanding of success" and to spend time specifying and negotiating the criteria for that evaluation of success.

In Tasmania, the experience of the RAG was an attempt to reach a consensus on definitions and objectives. During the current process there is no mechanism through which the wider community has an input in the process of planning (rather than influencing the content of the Management Plan). The public is invited to comment on a document, but there is no forum for Forestry Tasmania and the wider community to work together to agree on what can and cannot be discussed. The Agency operates under the principle of the representative democracy whereby elected politicians define the framework within which the Agency has to operate. The "meet the planners" meetings provide a forum for information dissemination, for better relationship building, and possibly some conflict management, but Forestry Tasmania staff has no mandate during those meetings to make decisions, or propose concrete changes.

From the discussions and written questionnaires it transpires that the wider community has expectations beyond commenting on a text: people want to have a say in the choice of forestry options. One argument put forward is that the RFA process was the forum where people had a chance to shape what would happen in forestry within the next few years. We did not specifically look into the nature of public participation within the RFA, and therefore cannot comment conclusively. However even in the case of the RFA document representing the view of the majority of Tasmanians, it is important to acknowledge the difference of scales. The

RFA document makes propositions at the macro scale level while forestry practices happen at the micro scale level and participation or the motivations for people to get involved vary with scale. Peoples' concerns are generally for very specific places on the land while agency concerns are often for more generic forest management (Cortner and Shannon 1993:14). Although the Forest Agency may consider that general policy decisions made already take into account public opinion, the general public may still feel very strongly that they have a right to dispute decisions and practices at the local level.

In Victoria over the past two decades, planning authority has been increasingly devolved to the regions and has resulted in increased regional autonomy. Victorian strategic planning is carried out in Forest Management Areas, which range from about 200 000 to 1 million ha. Nevertheless specific regional forest planning issues have been granted significance, and a principal task has been to develop a management plan that delivers industry's needs while also accommodating the community's needs.

To succeed, this process requires early disclosure of objectives and expectations and a cooperative process working to achieve the best match between differing objectives. As a result, though the Department might prefer standardised plans, because of its commitment to devolving responsibility to the regions, each Forest Management Plan in Victoria is different, using slightly different arrangements to address local or regional needs. One consequence of this practice is that in some regions forested lands on alternate sides of an administrative boundary are currently being managed under different designations of land classification and according to different management strategies. Wildlife ecologists generally see this as an undesirable outcome; local communities however may not.

Some constancy has been achieved through common training sessions for the various forest management team leaders to ensure some shared understanding of the purposes, techniques and feasible outcomes of public consultation.

By contrast the public consultation process in Queensland seeks intentionally to separate people's attachment to particular features on the land from the determination of community values for forests generically, by promising that individual plots of land, or Planning Units, will be scrutinised later in a separate process for their place-specific attributes or primary qualities. In a sense then, objectives and expectations are tightly constrained by the definition of the process. It remains to be seen how robust this separation of the processes of value specification from technical planning processes will be. It can be claimed that the durability of the process has yet to be tested under the same intensity of adversarial conditions that have been experienced in other states. Firstly, the Springbrook plan has yet to be publicly released. Secondly, and more importantly, the competition for limited remaining resources is not as keen in Queensland as elsewhere.

Transparency of process

The process to be followed should be an informed one at every step of the way. There is no point in setting up a generally open and transparent community consultative process in which the final steps remain hidden or obscured by government involvement. A common example of this is the review and processing of stakeholders written submissions by representatives of the bureaucracy, where every third or fourth issue is labelled "beyond the scope of this document!". Greater clarity in the initial explanation of the eventual scope and purpose of the final document and therefore of the constraints formed by existing policy, may help to focus later public submissions better.

In Tasmania, the process of reviewing is laid out clearly. In the latest Management Plans indications are given about the nature of submissions made as well as which submissions may have led to changes in the text. The submissions are reviewed by a panel of six Forestry Tasmania staff and the full analysis document is available for consideration by the public. However people or interest groups who have made submissions are not contacted and made specifically aware of the results of the panel meeting. As people are not given information as to why their submitted proposals may not have been considered, people tend to question the fairness of the process as well as the effectiveness of their input. Although some stakeholders may feel alienated because they don't agree with the outcomes (and therefore try to undermine the process) the absence of personalised communication is a draw back.

In Western Australia it seems, no attempt is being made to be explicit about what happens to the submissions and as a result stakeholders (from Industry as well as the Conservation movement) have little confidence in the process. This type of feeling undermines the credibility of the overall consultation effort put in place by CALM, creates suspicion and jeopardises any further attempt to involve the public in forestry matters.

In early instances of the Victorian process (Otways, East Gippsland) members of the Advisory Committees each received complete copies of all public submissions. These were discussed at subsequent meetings, and the Committee themselves provided advice on how to address the issues raised, which was taken on board according to the strength of arguments raised and points made. This was considered a valuable step in the process and an important role for communities. For the Central Highlands plan, the Department prepared a summary of issues raised in submissions and an NRE response to each. This was sent back to everyone who had made a submission, a process which seemed to be well received.

The whole question of transparency of process must be reconsidered in the Queensland context. Again, forest planners there are reluctant to define activities undertaken to date as anything more complete than testing elements of a new technology, claiming that nothing like a full, integrated package of public consultation (as detailed in Table 2) has yet been undertaken. In the Springbrook study although a discussion paper on the Community Values Assessment (CVA) process was produced, it was not distributed to the participants, nor has there been any follow-up provided to those participants on the final analysis of results. Judgements of transparency by the community panel participants themselves have yet to occur, as the document is not yet released, and at present some profess to being quite mystified over the point of the exercise or the significance of their input.

Considerably greater attention has been paid to developing an integrated package for the process in the subsequent trial. Efforts were made to explain the planning context and provide factual background information for the second trial of technology at the Koombooloomba site. Here the "Values" panel was made up of a separate community group from the Steering Committee. Results from the Values panel were presented to the Steering Committee, and after addressing some initial objections and concerns, results from the two groups were combined to produce an amalgamated version which, to the satisfaction of the Steering Committee, differed in only minor ways from the separate results.

Nevertheless, it should be remembered that the outcomes of the Community Value Assessment process itself do not determine the primary uses for individual planning units but rather combine with the results of inventory (*i.e.* inherent site qualities) to produce an indicator of the

community benefit attributable to forest uses within a particular planning unit and thus influence planning outcomes (see Box 11 below).

The presentation of this information provides opportunities for those who have participated on the values panel, end users and any interested parties to view how the community valuations have contributed to the planning outcomes.

In draft planning outcomes produced to date for both the Gold Coast Hinterland Landscape Strategy Plan and the Koombooloomba Ecotourism Project, tables such as those shown above have been included in the documents. The presentation of such information is a central part of the planning output for the MUMPs process and contributes to transparency of process.

Box 11: The effect of community valuation on utility values

A comparison of the final utility values assigned to Conservation, Forest Products and Recreation for a particular planning unit is shown in the two tables below, to demonstrate the effect of different community valuations:

Forest Value	Inventory Rating	Description of Inventory Rating	Community Valuation	Utility Value
Conservation	9.0	Very high conservation value relative to the conservation value of other areas	1.0	9.0
Forest Products	6.0	Moderate value for Sawlogs, Poles, Foliage and Landscaping Materials	0.4	2.4
Recreation	4.0	Moderate value for bicycle riding and horse riding	0.5	2.0

Table 2.1 The impact of community valuation on management outcomes

Clearly, faced with the utility values associated with the above scenario management would recognise the very high utility value for conservation within the subject planning unit by locking it in as the primary use. Then because of the high intrinsic conservation value (i.e. inventory rating), and low utility values for forest production and recreation these potential secondary uses would most likely be heavily constrained or perhaps excluded.

If community values change, however, for instance from planning cycle to planning cycle, then the change would be immediately reflected in the utility values considered during the management decision-making phase (see Table 2.2 below).

Forest Value	Inventory Rating	Description of Inventory Rating	Community Valuation	Utility Value
Conservation	9.0	Very high conservation value relative to the conservation value of other areas	0.4	3.6
Forest Products	6.0	Moderate value for Sawlogs, Poles, Foliage and Landscaping Materials	0.8	4.8
Recreation	4.0	Moderate value for bicycle riding and horse riding	1.0	4.0

Table 2.2 The same inventory ratings with an alternative community valuation

Here the alternative community valuation in this scenario has resulted in distinct changes in the utility values to be considered during the management phase of the planning process. In this scenario, forest production would emerge as the dominant use, however, applied to it would be a range of management prescriptions seeking to maintain the main attributes of the site's inherent conservation values (*e.g.* endangered, vulnerable and rare flora and fauna). Further, during periods of harvesting operations, prescriptions would apply to recreational use in the interests of safety.

Variation in the size of differences between the relative importance of forest uses within a value set could result in significantly different planning outcomes (see Figure 6). Where the differences are great, the community valuation has the greatest impact on outcomes due to the relative weightings which are applied to the inventory ratings.
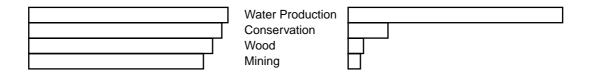

Figure 6. Similar rank orderings from different scoring patterns

Where there is little variation in the magnitude of differences between the relative importance of forest uses, the community valuation influences the inherent site qualities less.
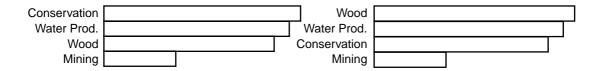

Figure 7. Variations of rank orderings from similar scores

The significance of these points becomes clearer when it is understood that, although the values assessment process is said to be robust, it is possible for the input of a single person with very polarised views to still effect changes in the aggregated group value set when sample sizes are small. In the Springbrook trial, the input from one committed advocate of outdoor education did effect such a change in rankings.

With respect to effective inclusion of Aboriginal peoples in participation processes, the bulk of attributes discussed in this section are pertinent. In particular, the principles of commitment and clarity include such important areas as cross-cultural communication and training, the avoidance of jargon and the assurance of transparency of processes.

Principle 2: Time and groups dynamics

Time

Time is important in a number of ways, both for the *duration* of the consultative process and for the *timing* of the phases of consultation as well as the timing of specific events

In general agencies operate to different time scales than do individuals or even groups in the community. For departmental personnel immersed in the process of their regular duties, regular references to the progress of a Forest Management Plan through the labyrinth of government consultation, keeps the reality of the plan alive in their consciousness. For community members, immersed in a separate daily reality, there is an understandable loss of significance for the "draft" plan that suddenly reappears in their life after 18 months absence. Elapsed time between experiences seems to be viewed differently according to whether the experiences are considered mainstream or incidental to a person's life.

Victorian participants found that the time element of holding regular meetings over 2 to 4 years was not particularly a burden; more frustrating was the long time span between the community's main contributions to the draft management plan and the appearance of an approved draft management plan. In East Gippsland, that time lapse was made bearable by regular newsletters tracking its progress, or giving explanations for its lack of progress. In the Central Highlands case, where little information seems to have been made available concerning the delay which followed the community's initial involvement, in some cases stretching to three years silence, several participants expressed general anger over the time delay at its revival. Yet, it seems to be not the objective elapsed time, but the lack of information on progress, which participants find most difficult to accept.

Participants from all areas were clear that they would prefer to be given an initial time frame for the consultation process and a set of benchmarks to be established at the beginning, and for progress to be subsequently reported regularly against those benchmarks.

Elapsed time has not been an issue in Queensland's process as, in the first pilot, the single workshop appeared to its community participants as an isolated event, unconnected to the development of any subsequent plan. In reality, even after the release of the Gold Coast Hinterlands Open Space Study, it seems unlikely that community members will make any connection between the two events. From the Queensland planners' viewpoint one of the perceived advantages to the process being developed in Queensland is its efficient use of time, which requires minimal interaction, and therefore minimal time and investment from community members and forest planners. According to one of its principal planners:

> "The Queensland process seeks to rationalise the participation of a range of target groups in the development of a management plan. It seeks to engage each group in the phase (or phases) of the process intended to best meet their anticipated needs and the needs of the plan, as opposed to facilitating the participation of all interested parties in a protracted broad objective set of meetings.
>
> In terms of engaging the general community and stakeholders in the development of a value set to guide decision-making, the Community Values Assessment process can be implemented quickly with the results (as in the case of Koombooloomba) presented within the time constraints of a single consultative opportunity."

In Victoria **timing** of meetings was also seen as an important attribute requiring careful thought, particularly because public consultation in Victoria was seen as an opportunity to educate the community via the community representatives.

For participation in decision making to encourage the development of a strong civic culture and impart new technical and strategic planning skills, then the effects of consultation must reach beyond merely the representatives of interest groups. The information and critical debate on responsible natural resource management must be carried back to the constituent groups. This requires encouragement and careful timing to ensure the opportunity for information and skill transfer, as some community or interest groups may meet formally only a few times each year.

In Victoria the system of regular meetings spread over several years allowed sufficient time for that information transmission. In addition Victorian forest planners made considerable efforts

to encourage representatives to carry information from the meetings back to their constituents and to involve the members in helping to frame decisions.

This specific issue of timing is irrelevant for the consultation process promoted in Tasmania and Western Australia.

To the extent the Queensland process can be called a package of community consultation, it does not address this issue, as there was only the single workshop, or in the second tria,l a compact set of meetings. Forest Planners in Queensland are currently interested in sampling, rather than helping to influence the development of responsible forest values.

Issues identified above as particularly important to Aboriginal representation in consultative committees include early opportunities for inclusion in the process and early disclosure of project objectives and limitations. Within forest planning processes in Queensland and Victoria, consultation with Aboriginal people has begun only recently, and therefore many of the commonly experienced obstacles to meaningful participation relate strongly back to the lack of previous participation. For example, refer to Crisp and Talbot (1999) and Environment Australia (1999) for discussion of the late stage at which Aboriginal interests have been included into the RFA processes and into forest management and planning generally.

Continuity and follow up

In the context of Tasmania and Western Australia where the consultation process is limited to inputs to the text of the Management plans the issue of continuity of the participatory process does not arise. However we recognise it as an important criterion for effective participation and the absence of follow up or rather on-going participatory process may be a reason why some people feel alienated from the process.

In between specific events (like the call for public comments on the draft Plans), there seems to be no specific effort to involve the public in the activity of the agency. Representatives of various stakeholders groups could, for example, be engaged (or at least be offered the opportunity to engage) in the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of Plans. Forest Agencies could also see people's involvement for the preparation of ulterior plans. If one recognises the educational element to participation, then only continuity of involvement provides a realistic arena for education and relationship building.

In the Victorian processes, there seems to be a clear recognition of the importance of maintaining continuity and in ensuring a coordinated follow up which in several instances even included a closure ceremony celebrating the official public release of the final Forest Management Plan. It has been suggested that there would be significant value in an ongoing "community reference group" which could be used as a two-way communication process during the implementation of the plans. To date, this has not eventuated because of its implications for resourcing.

This careful attention to detail and comprehension of the importance of continuity of course relies on adequate funding and available personnel. The intervention of external events can also mean that not all forest management planning processes deliver their full potential. One major example is the introduction of the Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) to the process which has tended to "de-localise" the participation process. Nevertheless, even here, participants can distinguish between successful and rewarding early consultations and later less successful attempts to reinvigorate the Community Advisory Groups.

In Queensland this follow up was not done for the first trial, and as a result there is a sense of confusion over the purpose of the exercise. The second trial was a more integrated, iterative process and as a result has been much informative.

Principle 3: Representativity

Representativity

Who has a chance to take part in the process, who raises their voice in the process and who keeps silent or is excluded from the process are important questions for the legitimacy of the participatory process.

The Agency in charge of the process has to be aware of the diversity of stakeholders and their constituencies and must be consistent in their approach. In one of the case study states, multiple versions of the stakeholders list seemed to be in use at any one time, possibly implying that not all stakeholders were considered or treated similarly.

It is also necessary for the Agency to be pro-active in approaching potential stakeholders rather than to limit their efforts to a call for groups and individuals to register their interests.

According to the forest planners in Queensland, it is appropriate to constitute the Values group to reflect the respective geographic and administrative scales of issues for the area. That is, if the planning is taking place in a World Heritage area with world heritage values, then there must be people in the Values group who have sufficient overview of conservation and biodiversity at a holistic level. If, on the other hand, the area is primarily a local forest with local significance, then the emphasis needs to be mainly on representatives of local interest with lesser input from regional and state interests. in general there should be a mixture of organisational and community stakeholder representatives to reflect the land use interest in an area.

This fine tuning according to the various land tenures (or interests in general) in the area in question can be accomplished through discussion and suasion, but it can equally be achieved by the careful choice of panel members for the Values committee. The extent to which this adjustment is made clear to the Values panel, who might otherwise believe theirs represents universal values, is a measure of transparency. It is here that the Steering Committee takes on a new role of overseeing the equitable constitution of the Values Committee and witnessing to all interested parties to the fairness and equity of the process.

Knowing why people do not come and participate is also important in designing a fair and representative process. Of course, people may choose not be involved because they don't want to, but too often it is because they can't; either they don't have the resources (money, time, skills perceived as necessary), or they don't know about the process (as in, they missed the advertisement in the paper).

Additionally the process as described may not be seen as appropriate. In earlier research in Victoria and New South Wales, participants generally could only suggest "disinterest" as an explanation for the absence of certain groups, particularly those that had been invited but had not continued to attend (Hoverman 1997). However looking at commonalties across the range of disinterested groups — Aboriginal groups, representatives of the Bushfire Brigade, the

Timberworkers Union, and taciturn miners — across a number of sites revealed a common aversion to the pursuits and processes of the "chattering classes". Graziers as a group might also be expected to be disinterested, but in fact graziers attending frequently revealed through their interviews that they were already involved in either Total Catchment Management or the Landcare movement, movements which promote information exchange and social networking .

Clearly the structure of agency-initiated consultation tends to enfranchise mainly individuals and groups which have already adopted the "culture of critical discourse" which engages people in questioning the *status quo*. People who traditionally accept the status quo, who see themselves as compliant with or not in a position to challenge local authority, or who consider themselves politically powerless, are unlikely to seek inclusion onto the committees, and if invited, are unlikely to be regular or leading participants.

Representativity issues have a particular salience for Aboriginal interests. For instance, representativity should be considered both in terms of how well the different intra-Indigenous groups and interests have been represented within the participation process, and in terms of how well Indigenous interests in general have been represented in the broad participation process.

Equity

Not all the stakeholders have equal access to information, equal weight in the decision making process or equal resources. Although it can be argued that these inequities reflect the different role or actual importance of the various stakeholders in the process, such discrepancies are often interpreted by the apparently weaker stakeholders as an unfair abuse of power.

Through social and political networks, some interest groups have disproportionate influence at local, national or international level. This gives better or quicker access to information and knowledge and therefore more (unbalanced) power in the negotiation game. As mentioned earlier, this was evidenced in Victoria when participants referred to "having the ear of the Environment Minister", or claimed "close connections with VAFI". Equally there were some groups which, while present at the community consultation meetings, preferred not to continue to engage in community consultation but rather resorted to higher level negotiations between their respective General Managers.

It is also important to make the difference between the importance of the role a stakeholder may play and the voice they may have in the process. A Forestry Agency obviously plays the biggest role in forest management but does this justify a more crucial role in the balance of power? Although some may expect it to be so, we would suggest that perceived and actual equity is at the core of effective participation.

One theoretically ideal proposal is that independent agencies or individuals should be responsible for the consultation process and Forest Agencies properly just one more of the stakeholders, without the ultimate decision-making power that they currently have. This does not of course guarantee that the decisions ultimately taken would be representative of the majority of the stakeholders views recognising that most management decisions are ultimately political, but it would foster greater equity between the stakeholders. Such an arrangement would then allow for greater trust to develop between participants. The disadvantages of independent facilitators for the consultative process are that the forest Agencies are then potentially relieved of the necessity for close interaction with community and industry group

representatives, and can potentially retreat into their bunkers, exactly the historical reality that is finally being remedied.

In all the four States, the Forestry Agency is a stakeholder as well as the executive agency.

Principle 4: Transfer of skills

Resourcing the process

As already mentioned, stakeholders will have different resources at their disposal to engage in the process. Apart from time and money, the pool of human resource available within the community may differ and hinder some people's or interest groups' motivation. If the educational potential of public participation is to be realised or fostered through this process the community will need some support.

Often people are invited to comment on the draft plans while they may have only limited understanding of practical and technical issues, though they may feel competent in their grasp of theoretical or aesthetic aspects of forestry. These limitations, which may sometimes translate into unreasonable or impractical demands, discredit the quality of the submissions, arousing even more frustration. If agencies want to move the forestry debate beyond "logging or not logging", the community has to be invited to learn about forestry.

To this end, Victoria has actively set about exploiting the consultation process for its community education potential as an opportunity to increase awareness of social and environmental responsibility and to expand the community grasp of the complexities and trade-offs and generally develop social capital in the community. This is an undoubtedly difficult undertaking, but evidently one seen as ultimately worthwhile. Not all states concur.

Forest Planners in Queensland are hoping to eliminate "planner bias" which requires that the system be seen to be neutral i.e. not biased in any particular "right" thinking way. The information presented and discussion fostered as a function of the process will go a long way to making the process a "learning journey" but not by manipulating outcomes. To this extent Forest Planners feel their responsibilities lie in equitable sampling, rather than helping to influence the development of "responsible" forest values.

There is also enormous potential to involve the community in assessing available resources and in monitoring and evaluating forest operations as is increasingly being done overseas. Field visits have been recognised as positive learning experiences in both Tasmania and Victoria.

For a learning experience to be fruitful it has to be on-going as opposed to a one off opportunity. This requires a considerable amount of resources on the part of the Forest Agency. Forest Agencies do employ specific staff dedicated to education of the general public, but often in times of budget restrictions those positions are the first ones to be stopped.

As discussed earlier, in order to meaningfully include Aboriginal peoples into forest management decision making, existing socio-economic and political disadvantages will need to be considered. Lack of resources has been identified as a major obstacle to the achievement of full Aboriginal consultation within forest planning processes including RFA processes in both Queensland and Victoria.

Quality of information

Quality of information refers to the content of the information as well as its availability.

Conflict over data (lack of information, misinformation, different views on what is relevant, different perception of data and different assessment procedures) is very common in the forestry debate in Australia, and is often underpinned by epistemic differences. Foresters' training has traditionally emphasised a rationalist, scientific approach to knowledge and to a closely defined understanding of what constitutes social progress. Members of the public are often more likely to believe in the social construction of truth and to have a more adaptive, more iterative and more creative definition of social progress.

Foresters have been known to say that the scientific knowledge produced by the forestry agency is the only information that can be trusted, as the agency is perceived as having no vested interest in misleading the public. Members of the public in turn often tend to greet this announcement with scepticism and mistrust and to insist on challenging the epistemological and socio-political basis of that information. This is evident when meetings to discuss forest planning deteriorate into the presentation and defence of the veracity of information as opposed to an open discussion on the quality and interpretation of that information.

Resolving (if at all possible) this issue of information will partly happen through the educational process already highlighted in this report. There is also a need to recognise that the issue is not whether or not information is true but rather which are the interpretations which can bring a consensus for people to move on. Making information readily available is part of the transparency of the process but also reflects on how genuinely open to discussion the process is.

In Tasmania, the Draft Plan is made widely available across the state.

In Western Australia, until recently, the Forest Management plan was made available for consultation at the regional office. However we were told that members of the public had to make an appointment to see the document and then had to consult the document in the presence of a CALM employee for a limited amount of time; no photocopying was allowed. If exact, this rather rigid system does not promote confidence and openness.

As evidenced by the intentional inclusion of divergent voices into the consultation process, Victoria makes a concerted effort to exchange information throughout the entire planning process which includes circulating its draft documents widely, recognising that factual and perceptual errors need to be picked up early and properly addressed before they blow out of all proportion.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this study we indicated that there were two principal rationales for incorporating public participation in planning: as a method, a set of guidelines and procedures to involve the general public in certain planning activities or as an ideology which incorporates a specific ethos for personal and community development. This difference has been described by Nelson & Wright (1995) as the distinction between "instrumental and transformative" participation. Undoubtedly both ends of the spectrum and several interim combinations are represented amongst the studies of the four states presented here.

The instrumental appeal of participatory planning lies in the hope that when communities' views have been taken into account, policy and projects will respond better to real needs and ideally reflect a true social and economic reality. People, feeling a sense of ownership, will be more compliant to bear the costs.

Secondly a positive instrumental benefit of engaging in a participatory management approach is the improved rapport between the community and the respective government agencies. As different people get involved in a consultation, discussion or negotiation, different parties start to know and understand each other, sometimes even start to trust each other. At some point this instrumental benefit of improved understanding fostering improved communication channels begins to contribute to the creation of social capital and in this way begins to merge with the transformative effects of participatory planning.

Participation's transformative potential lies in its ability to extend the sympathies and capabilities of the individual and to moderate individual drives by forcing a consideration of others' interests and some consideration of what may be best for the society as a whole. Participants are called upon to reconcile their individual interests with those of others, considering their viewpoints, and in the process learning to take on the responsibilities of a public, as well as a private, citizen.

At a more strategic and individual level though, this transformation reflects a state of personal development, a state of the mind through which people engage in a learning process, increase their personal esteem and self confidence and are better able to use and manage their own resources. Empowerment frequently also incorporates an aspect of increased critical awareness of the complexities and competing demands of trying to live responsibly and sustainably on this earth.

The distribution of power is often presented as an indicator of the extent of true participatory processes. It is also arguably one of the major reasons why people decide to get involved in forest management issues but at the same time forestry agencies are reluctant to relinquish their responsibility for, and control over, the resource. The nature and levels of participation in a policy or a development process are often measured in terms of power and the role that the different stakeholders have in the decision making process. In very crude terms, this may be true, but under more enabling circumstances, it is clear that the distribution of power is only a very narrow indicator for effective participation.

In recent years the *National Forest Policy Statement* (1992) which requires significant public consultation in forest management planning and the *Inter-governmental Agreement on the Environment* (1992) which binds Commonwealth, State and Territory, and local governments to inter-governmental communication and cooperation on environmental issues, have contributed to redefining the context of forestry and more specifically foresters' concepts of clientele and concomitant responsibilities. While this is not always a direct function of the public consultation process, clients' awareness of constraining legislation and changed relationships between Forestry and other government instrumentalities do influence the forester-client relationship (Hoverman, 1997).

Despite the impetus created by legislative changes, practical issues of power shifts, increased conflicts, stakeholders representativity and the need to call upon new and different skills from both the community and the forest service are still central concerns. The challenge for the forestry sector is to develop the supportive institutional structures which will accommodate the

needs expressed by the wider community. This cannot be just limited to using new consultation processes but has to accept that changes in forestry practices themselves may be needed.

Although separate individuals may have divergent opinions about what forestry is or should be, it seems that on the whole a growing number of people are interested not only in having more control over the decision making process but also would prefer to see a "different kind" of forestry practiced. This in turn does not just mean that the wider community expects to dictate to the forestry profession what they should or should not do but rather that the community recognises that various sections of the society can play complementary roles in forest management.

We are heartened in this research to document the progress made by many forestry agencies in searching for, trialing and adopting methods to incorporate and support successful mechanisms that facilitate a productive two-way dialogue with the public.

Further, this is echoed in evolving programs for farm forestry, echoed in their essence if not exactly in their process, which recognise that landowners may envisage very different roles for forestry on farms than that of the traditional forester, with goals and expectations reflecting farming needs and experience. These should be seen as opportunities for the development of new and productive partnerships between farmers and foresters (O'Grady, pers. comm. 1999). Local councils are also considering, and in many instances instituting, new relationships between themselves, the community and natural resource management professionals (Kelly, pers. comm. 1999).

This increased interest makes all the more necessary further research into the monitoring, review and evaluation of public consultation processes, in order to better understand and document growth in both community and agency knowledge and skills development.

 In theory at least it should be possible to frame the set of conditions of fairness and openness which should offer the most supportive framework for authentic rational dialog to take place, in the process erecting a standard against which instances of community-agency discourse may be evaluated.

For aboriginal groups the ability to strike negotiated agreements on land rights issues for instance, as well as recourse to legislation when other means fail, may be hindered by social, cultural and political interactions involving a lack of political will, political cynicism or a misinformed public dialogue. Policies designed specifically to include Indigenous interests should be seen as a direct result of Indigenous efforts to regain the power they require for self-management and/or self-determination. However, some of the social and political obstacles to Indigenous participation can be addressed when land rights and adequate resourcing of Indigenous participation in natural resource management are viewed positively. These processes are acts of restitution and conciliation which can only result from a combination of Indigenous effort and non-Indigenous support.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire regarding the public consultation process for the preparation of the forest management plan 1998

Name:
(Optional, but would help for further contact. Information treated with confidentiality.)

Phone number:
(would help for further contact)

In what capacity did you get involved in the process? (Land holder, tourist industry, environmentalist…?)

What were your motivations for getting involved?

Could you describe the consultation process organised by Forestry Tasmania? (*e.g.* how did you hear about the possibility of contributing comments to the plan? Were you contacted personally? Did you read an advert in the paper?….etc...)

PTO

How do you perceive the public consultation process? How would you **qualify** the process? (*e.g.* Was it constructive? Genuine? Equitable? Appropriate? Biased? Manipulative? Open?…)

Do you feel that it was worthwhile preparing a submission?

Did you attend any "meet the planners' meetings? If yes, which one(s)? and how useful did you find them? Can you describe the meetings? What happened? Who attended them?...)

If not, why did you choose **not to attend** any of the public meetings?

What do/did you feel you gained from taking part in the process?

What were your initial expectations in getting involved in the process?

What, in your opinion, are the major benefits of this process?

What, in your opinion, are the major drawbacks of the process?

What could Forestry Tasmania do to improve the effectiveness of the public consultation process?

Thank you for your time.   Please use the enclosed pre-paid envelope.
(NO STAMP NEEDED)