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## Red dirt writing: Journalism, Foucault and the transformation of Onslow

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Edith Cowan University Faculty of Education and Arts

# RED DIRT WRITING

## **Journalism, Foucault and the transformation of Onslow**

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10/29/2015

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## ABSTRACT

The remote town of Onslow in the Pilbara region of WA plays host to two massive liquefied natural gas plants that will contribute billions to the state and national economy over the next 50 years. Recognising the importance of creating a first draft of history, the Tracking Onslow project was launched in 2012 by ECU and the Shire of Ashburton, to use journalism as a research methodology to document physical changes in the town and changing community perceptions about the gas plants and the companies that run them. The project produced six magazines over a three-year period. This practice-led thesis supplements the core research of the Tracking Onslow project by applying academic analysis to three investigative assignments undertaken for the Edition 6 Tracking Onslow magazine, to examine whether contemporary Australian journalism (as described by Lamble, 2004) can fulfill the watchdog function, as defined by Errington & Miragliotta (2011) in a resources town amongst corporate and government power struggles and bids to control the narrative. And, therefore; if projects like Tracking Onslow can fill functional gaps in contemporary Australian journalism practice and processes. The contextual analysis is based on Foucault's truth, knowledge and power paradigm. It identifies the journalistic processes and limitations inherent in the battle for information and truth, in order to provide a better understanding of the impact these limitations can have on the journalism produced.

## INTRODUCTION

During undergraduate study I contributed as a journalist to four of the first five editions of the Tracking Onslow project. This collaborative venture between Edith Cowan University and the Shire of Ashburton used journalism to photograph, video/audio record, document and track physical and social changes and shifting public perceptions in Onslow, over a three year period, as the town plays host to the massive \$29 billion Wheatstone and \$1.5 billion Macedon, LNG plants. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures released in 2011 forecast a significant population increase for the town, and promised millions of dollars from the companies running the project joint ventures in the form of infrastructure funds (Ottaviano, 2012). The State Government also promised significant investment for the town and these promises warranted media monitoring. As De Burgh asserts; the journalist operates as "Tribune of the commoner", existing to; "protect the public's right to know, to examine and to criticise" (2000, p. 6).

Tracking Onslow project coordinator Dr Kayt Davies wrote the project provided an opportunity for authentic learning for student participants who helped in the production of a new media object in a disputed sphere that otherwise lacked media attention (Davies, 2015). The magazine (produced approximately every six months since mid-2012) aimed to fulfil three functions of journalism described by Errington & Miragliotta (2011) which are: to produce a first draft of history; to provide and facilitate a 'town square' that enables the free exchange of views; and to assume the 'watchdog' role. Davies believed that by fulfilling these journalistic roles the project could inform other communities of the impact major resource projects can have on host communities. In addition to being printed and distributed within Onslow the magazines are available online at [www.trackingslow.com](http://www.trackingslow.com), and they have been lodged with the National Library of Australia's Pandora archives.

As editor of Tracking Onslow magazine's edition six in mid-2015, I pursued three assignments that built on issues covered in earlier editions (Barndon, 2013a; 2013b, 2014a; 2014b; 2014c; 2014d; 2014e). These investigations sought to answer questions not answered in previous editions of the magazine, by applying Lambie's higher-level proactive investigative journalism techniques. Time and space pressure had limited how much of this type of work could be done in the earlier editions. The Edition 6 stories adhere to Lambie's

explanation of journalism as a form of research, and were created using a set of well-established practices including working to time and space constraints and publishing in a format accessible to lay-audiences, and seeking verifiable truths. Knight (2000, p 2) adds that while seeking these verifiable truths: "journalists have professional and ethical responsibilities to look beyond what they have been told by those in authority."

This corresponds with Lamble's (2004, p.1) assertion that any methodology of journalism must be founded on an understanding that journalism's aim is to: "seek answers to questions to find and tell the truth in fair, accurate, balanced and ethical way." For Lamble this is higher level proactive journalism, and the practice involves a greater level of intellectual engagement and commitment than reactive reporting and he demands that forward planning and persistence must accompany:

Complex research methods such as painstaking document analysis, diplomatic cultivation of shy sources, access to databases, freedom of information searches, computer-assisted statistical analysis [and] careful and sustained interpretive research (Lamble, 2011, p. 22).

This thesis therefore supplements the core research of the Tracking Onslow project by applying academic analysis to three investigative assignments written for the Edition 6 magazine to examine whether or not contemporary Australian journalism (as described by Lamble, 2004) can fulfill the watchdog function, as defined by Errington & Miragliotta (2011) in a resources town amidst corporate and government power struggles and bids to control the narrative. And, therefore, whether projects like Tracking Onslow can fill functional gaps in contemporary Australian journalism practice and processes.

These articles, and documentation about the process of producing them, form the 'practice-led' component of an academic analysis investigating whether or not journalism as a research methodology, can adequately fulfil the watchdog, town square and first draft of history functions amidst power struggles. The watchdog function, or the fourth estate, is described by Errington and Miragliotta as enshrining the notion that:

The media will stand on guard over democracy, closely watching and evaluating the political decision makers. The definition of the media as watchdogs forms the basis of their claims for press freedoms, namely, the right to publish with freedom from prior restraint (Errington and Miragliotta, 2011, p 8).

According to Errington & Miragliotta, (2011, p 9), the town square, or facilitator of the public sphere, function, allows the public to engage in dialogue and debate in: "a marketplace of ideas in which opinions can be debated, contested and ultimately shared". The first draft of history function as described by de Burgh (2000) makes reference to the fact that the journalist's task bears striking similarity to the historian's task, with both seeking evidence in order to apply interpretation and narrative. The function implies a fair, balanced and accurate reporting of the truth as it happens.

The theoretical perspective underpinning this research project comes from Michel Foucault's 1972-1977 writings on truth, power and knowledge. Foucault's concepts identify and examine the regimes of truth that regulate societies and power structures. Rather than focusing on the concentrated power that individuals or institutions wield, Foucault explores the invasive mechanisms that entrench power through "discourse, knowledge and regimes of truth" (1980, p. 30). Far from being sets of simple ideological statements; the discourses actively develop into systems of power that maintain control in society.

Although journalism produces discursive statements that invest power in institutions it can also, in its watchdog mode, be a vehicle for resistance and facilitate discontinuity. Developing this idea, Bacon (2006, p. 149) contends that the watchdog seeks to introduce "the truth object or fact into socio-political discourse", or conversely, "silence about truth objects and facts".

This thesis examines the process of working on three assignments that resulted in seven stories, and rates the effectiveness of the investigative journalism tasks, methods and techniques applied, in a bid to ascertain whether the articles fulfil the watchdog, town square and first draft of history roles, and thus, whether they function as practices of resistance that facilitate discontinuity.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction

This literature review will address three fields relevant to my research: the social impacts of mining; critical academic reflexivity as journalism research; and the practice of media management. The broad discourse on Australian mining and its social impacts will be discussed first, followed by examination of the West Australian circumstance. I will then address the limitations of the institution of academic research in journalism education in Australia, and the fact that critical reflexivity as a form of research as yet has too few examples to make assertions about standard practice. Lastly, I will address the practice of media management that is employed by government departments and agencies and corporations, and discuss how the practice hinders the achievement of journalistic aims.

## Mining in Australia and social impact

Conflicting discourse about the social, economic and environmental impacts of the Australian mining industry characterises the substantial body of literature available on the subject.

Whilst government, the media and representatives of industry extol the fiscal benefits of the so-called 'mining boom', emerging studies identifying inequities in wealth distribution and adverse social implications contextualise the dualities evident in the public discourse.

Accompanying the social impacts are the economic factors.

Researchers at the Australia Institute warn that this 'mining boom' has created a 'two speed economy', by pushing up the exchange rate and cutting the export profits of trade-dependent sectors of the economy (Grudnoff, 2013). Downes, Hanslow & Tulip (2014) from the Reserve Bank of Australia concur, saying that while the mining, construction and import industries in Australia have grown, industries like agriculture and manufacturing have suffered. This has been referred to as 'Dutch disease', or a 'resource curse'. Corden (2012) describes Dutch disease as; "the adverse effects through real exchange rate appreciation that such a boom can have on various export and import-competing industries".

Other commentators disagree, with Hambour and Norman suggesting the Dutch disease theory is based on simplistic guess-work. As for the resource curse, Langton (2008) states that the mining boom has negatively impacted on living conditions within mining precincts, and the country is now in the grips of a 'resource curse'. This term describes how natural resource-rich countries can experience poor economic growth, conflict and declining standards of democracy. Notwithstanding the economic value to the nation, the issue of mining is vexatious.

## Mining in Western Australia and social impact

The Western Australian landscape has long been a contested space, with the competing interests of Aboriginal, resource extraction, environmental, agricultural and pastoral stakeholders dominating popular discourse. While the agriculture industry used to characterise the state's identity and power its economy, it is now the resource sector that assumes that position. The WA agriculture industry represents around 10 per cent of the state's economy, and in 2014 the industry, which exports up to 80 per cent of its produce, exported products worth up to \$7.5 billion, up from \$6.1 billion in 2012. In contrast, according to the Department of Mines and Petroleum, the resource industry contributed up to \$114 billion to the state's economy in 2014.

While over recent years the mining boom has been promoted as positive and substantial, research suggests the negative effects have rarely been reported on (Peel *et al*, 2015). The State Government has invested significantly in the industry, with support and assistance worth up to \$1 billion a year (Peel *et al*, 2014). It is recognised that a pro-development ideology dominates the state and serves to facilitate the sector's economic expansion (Brueckner *et al*, 2013; Chapman *et al*, 2014; Carrington & Pereira, 2011).

Western Australia's Pilbara region hosts some of the world's biggest resource companies like Chevron Australia, BHP Billiton, Woodside, Exxon-Mobil, Apache and Rio Tinto, who promote their 'social responsibility' through a substantial and often glossy literature cache. Moreover, the archaeological exposition of the Burrup Peninsula, a significant culturally sensitive site approximately 200km north of Onslow, has triggered a cache of literature focused on conservation and protection of the Burrup Art Precinct, including the remaining petroglyphs. The state sanctioned destruction of up to 20 per cent of ancient petroglyphs and sacred sites on the peninsula since construction of the North-West Gas Shelf and the port at Dampier began in the 1970s ripples through many academic discourses (Bednarik, 2011; McDonald & Veth, 2009; Mulvaney, 2011).

Standing in contrast to this work is:

Compromised industry-funded research [that is] vital to legitimating the resource sector's self-serving knowledge claims that it is committed to social sustainability and corporate responsibility (Carrington, 2003, p 3).

According to Carrington, the resources industry unevenly distributes the benefits of the 'boom', with the state government collecting billions in royalties, and mining companies collecting billions in profits. The costs are borne mostly at a local level by regional communities on the frontier of the mining boom, surrounded by thousands of men housed in work camps:

The escalating reliance on non-resident workers housed in camps carries significant risks for individual workers, host communities and the provision of human services and infrastructure. These include rising rates of fatigue-related death and injuries, rising levels of alcohol-fueled violence, illegally erected and unregulated work camps, soaring housing costs and other costs of living, and stretched basic infrastructure undermining the sustainability of these towns. But these costs have generally escaped industry, government and academic scrutiny (Carrington, 2013, p 3).

Owen and Kemp (2012) argue that the social and environmental obligations discussed by Carrington, or a 'social license to operate', are a crafted industry response to opposition to the sector, arising from a series of environmentally and socially damaging incidents such as the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill. Brueckner *et al* (2014) examine the 'social license to operate' sought and won by WA's mining industry, in the context of the state's 'developmentalist' agenda. They draw on the findings of a multi-disciplinary body of new research to identify significant risks and challenges evident in the environmental, social and economic sustainability of the industry, and take issue with this social license because a state ideologically entwined with resource-led economic growth gives political license to the industry, but fails to demand adherence to social and environmental obligations.

As a result, the resource sector can adopt a self-serving agenda built on a limited win-win logic, and operate with a 'quasi social license' that is restricted to mere economic legitimacy. Cheshire (2010) expands on this by identifying the practice of corporate intervention. This takes place through two processes; firstly through industry securing a 'social license' to operate by contributing favourably to affected communities, and secondly through state restructuring. The institutional neglect of remote Australia has caused a void, and the mining companies are filling that void. Through service delivery, the companies govern with patronage rather than partnership.

Resource companies seek a 'social licence to operate' in the community, primarily by funding projects in host communities and capital cities, to ensure they are endearing

themselves to the community. This practice has been termed Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and according to Harrison (2011) the concept is often a corporate response by companies to a lack of trust or poor image within the community.

Gunningham, Kagan & Thornton (cited by Harrison, 2011, p. 6) state that a 'social licence' is based not on compliance with legal requirements but rather on the extent a corporation is accepted by the local community. Companies risk losing this social licence if they engage in unchecked development and environmental destruction, as has occurred at the Burrup Peninsula in Dampier (Bednarik, 2011; McDonald & Veth, 2009; Mulvaney, 2011; McCulloch, 2006).

The scale of the boom in construction and operation of major resource projects in remote regions, such as the Pilbara, has seen uneven social and economic benefits flow to affected communities. It has also exposed deficiencies in regional planning and policy (Cheshire, 2010; Pick, 2008; Chapman *et al*, 2014). Project-led investment by international resource companies at the height of the 'boom', plus poor planning by local and state government agencies continues to place great strain on infrastructure and services in the region (Martin, 2015).

While the Pilbara region serves as a major source of materials for the resource industry, many Pilbara communities living in the shadows of major projects still lack services and infrastructure people in the city take for granted (Langton & Mazel, 2008; Haslam-McKenzie, 2013; Chapman *et al* 2014). According to Brueckner *et al* (2012, p. 2) successive state governments have invested considerably in the "exploitation of the state's natural assets since foundation", while spending little on the communities and towns living in the shadows of major operations.

Towns like Paraburdoo, Tom Price, Port Hedland and Karratha can serve as examples. These towns were originally company camps, built as service hubs for mining and resource companies like Robe River, Hamersley Iron and Dampier Salt, and subsequently receive proportionally less government attention. Many of these towns also operate in a disputed sphere lacking consistent mainstream media attention. Onslow is one such town. There is no local newspaper and no local media presence or representation.

Looking specifically at the town of Onslow, Haslam-McKenzie (2013) documents the adjustment pressures experienced by Onslow residents, due to the arrival and establishment of huge liquefied natural gas projects on their doorstep, and discusses the strategies employed by the state and local government, the mining companies and the community to enhance the quality of life in the town. Haslam-McKenzie (2013) found that community engagement strategies like Chevron's Community Reference Group and the collaborative planning processes have been undermined by disconnects between commercial imperatives, governance frameworks, investment risk and timeframes.

Chapman, Tonts & Plummer (2014) also examined the rapid resource-led development of Onslow, focusing on the failure of timely policy responses that hinder local adjustment and adaptation. Despite the \$250 million-plus investment, Chapman *et al* found that as of 2014, a number of planned projects had yet to be undertaken, which they attributed to:

Government's inability to respond quickly to the emerging needs...despite the considerable efforts that have gone into problem identification and anticipation, community engagement, and the provision of company funding (Chapman *et al*, 2014, p. 79).

## Critical reflexivity and academic reflection as journalism research

Journalism academics (Lamble, 2004; Nash, 2013; Bacon, 2006; Turner, 2011) have in the past argued that the institution of academic research in journalism education in Australia is limited, and critical reflexivity as research has too few examples to learn from. Nash (2013) demanded that academics formulate a definitive definition of journalism as research, so as to engage intensely with the ontological and epistemological systems in operation. He recognises that the craft of journalism is a distinct and defined research practice, that, as well as functioning as a craft, satisfies research criteria of originating truth claims of significance, by using objectivity not as a proposal but as an inherent mode of practice. Invoking three core journalistic realms; the public, the present and the real, Nash implores practitioners to properly evaluate and interrogate the meaning within those realms.

However, there have been recent advances in the area of journalism academia, and the argument has developed. The Journalism Education and Research Association of Australia (JERAA) has taken steps to define and describe journalism as research, and released in October 2015 the JERAA National Statement, which states that:

Journalism studies deals with the systematic study of the theory and practice of journalism. It investigates such areas as journalism's role in society, the history and political economy of journalism in media industries and the social, political, cultural, ethical, legal and regulatory contexts and challenges of journalistic endeavour.

Journalism practice is the process by which information is independently researched, gathered, analysed, synthesised and published, or by which innovative approaches to journalism are developed. The Excellence in Research for Australia framework (ERA) acknowledges in-depth, original journalism practice and publication through reputable outlets to a broad audience as equivalent to traditional research outputs.

Journalism research is often interdisciplinary in nature, both in the methods that it draws on in analysis and practice, and in the theories it uses to explain its roles in society. In this way journalism connects with a broad range of disciplines, including but not limited to: communication, cultural studies, history, ethnography, media studies, information technology, international relations, law, literary studies, politics, economics, sociology and philosophy.

Journalism as a research discipline has evolved and grown rapidly over the past 20 years in Australia. Apart from its strong interdisciplinary, it is also defined by the objective it shares with all scholarly research: the discovery of new insights and new knowledge through freedom of inquiry and expression and open debate in order to contribute to the public good (JERAA, 2015).

Reflexivity in journalism involves examination and/or awareness of one's overall performance, which allows an elucidation of the mechanics of practice. Bacon (2012) promotes development of strong research skills over a journalist's working lifetime, and believes that an inquiring mind can play an integral part in the production of important news for the public. Whilst journalism has been marginalised as non-reflexive and routine, Bacon believes these are actually conceptualised within the practice itself. Mason (2014) too promotes critical reflexivity as a valid method in which to examine journalism from the inside, and suggests this process can facilitate greater understanding of journalism practice and its place in the societal sphere.

Bacon (2006) contends that journalism practice essentially has the same aims as standard research practice, as both have at their core a processed search for truths and meaning. For Bacon, working to deadlines, applying archival searches and exploring conflicting ideas of truth are practices inherent in the investigative process. Bacon asserts too, that journalism has a lot to do with the day to day exercise of power and control over, and access to, resources.

Andrejevic (2008) expands on this in his contextualisation of Foucault's power/knowledge discourses within journalism education, where he questions the underutilisation of Foucault's theories in the discipline. Andrejevic argues that whilst Foucault's examination of the truth object corresponds well with the central tenets of journalism, Foucauldian theory is often overlooked by journalism academics. He believes through Foucault, journalism can engage in reflexive critique and negotiate relationships of power as instruments of resistance.

Bacon and Nash (2012) agree, and claim that the fundamental importance of journalism lies in the introduction of the truth object or fact into contemporaneous socio-political discourse, or alternatively the production of silence about truth objects and facts. Lambie declares that:

Quests for information which satisfy precise standards of proof, an accurate presentation of those facts in textual form, and an ability to turn back if necessary to retrace the past and replicate research outcomes, are common threads woven into the fabrics of sound journalistic research and good academic research (Lambie, 2004, p 89).

The problem has been that critical reflexivity in journalism studies has had very few models to emulate. According to Lester (2006) reflexive responses are poorly described in news production. She believes reflexivity involves an:

Intense and contradictory struggle over a myriad of cultural, social and political settings, [and it is only through this dynamic]... at the interface of knowledge and action, that important inequities and unevenness in access to news and its power can be identified (Lester, 2006, p. 77).

Reflexivity for journalists involves implicit connections between knowledge and activity and an examination and awareness of one's practices. Durham (1998) explains that a reflexive journalistic text would not present itself as a transparent communication of reality; rather, it would openly acknowledge the factors that went into its construction.

Traditional academia still questions the credentials of journalistic output as valid research because of varying interpretations of research and scholarship, and the June 2015 edition of the Asia Pacific Media Educator has acknowledged this. The edition cites authors like Davies, Duffy, Mason, Tanner and Wake, who all demand that quality journalism produced by journalism educators be considered as equivalent to traditional research outputs.

Bacon has sought to promote this journalism research by developing Frontline, a section in the Pacific Journalism Review that links informed journalism and media research and addresses the interface between professional or practice-based journalism, and scholarly journalism research practices.

## The practice of media management

Errington and Miragliotta (2011) describe the watchdog role as the historical fourth estate notion which places the media on guard over democracy to closely watch and evaluate the political decision makers. However, they contend that this watchdog role has become harder to undertake, due to government media units and advisers placing themselves between politicians and journalists. Even though the job of the government media adviser is primarily to manage the politician's relationship with the media, they often inhibit access.

Government and corporate media units use public relations (PR) techniques to deal with publicity. Journalist Margot Kingston (2004) calls media advisers in her book 'Not Happy, John!' "Information blockers, not information providers", while Hamilton & Maddison (2007, p.123) declare that journalists may struggle to: "withstand the pressures of modern-day government media management and manipulation".

PR is described by PR educator Kim Harrison (2011) as the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between organisations and publics. According to Harrison (2011) an important strategy in PR involves framing, as a form of agenda setting, where a point of view is constructed to encourage others to interpret facts in a favourable manner

This involves processes of inclusion, exclusion and emphasis, and the strategy is conveyed through methods including spin. Spin involves talking about something in such a way that it gives it positive or negative connotations. Regardless, while it may be the PR practitioner's job to control or limit access, it is the journalist's job to find a way in.

## Conclusion

Upon review of the available literature on the social impacts of mining, it is apparent that much of it examines the issues through quantitative methods involving data, numbers and statistics. This methodological approach ignores the human element of the issue, and gives the research a clinical taint. It has become clear that missing from the discourse is dialogue from those on the ground, those who are most affected. Academia may wax lyrically about curses or corporate responsibility or uneven wealth distribution, but who is gathering the voices of the people actually living in the mine's shadow? This is where journalism can play its part. Subsequently this thesis, as an example of high quality journalistic output, can contribute to the core body of literature about the impacts of mining and resource extraction. In doing so it also makes a contribution toward establishing journalism research's pedigree.

## METHODOLOGY

This honours thesis was granted ethics clearance by the Edith Cowan University Faculty of Education & Arts Ethics Sub Committee on August 19, 2015. The thesis applies practice-led research as a methodology in the production of seven articles and accompanying exegesis, applying Foucault's truth, knowledge and power paradigm to test whether higher level proactive journalistic techniques can or cannot fulfill essential journalistic functions, within the power structures that attempt to control and regulate information.

Candy (2011) believes practice-led research concerns the very nature of practice, and it can lead to advancement of knowledge about, and within, that practice. This methodology puts the "inquiry process" into context and provides a base for the required "logic and criteria", according to Crotty (1998, p. 66). For Gray and Malins (2004) practice-led research involves identification of the practice and product as both inquiry process and research output. Haseman (2006) explains that practice-led researchers produce:

Experiential starting points from which practice follows  
[and research outputs and knowledge claims are created]  
through the symbolic language and forms of their practice  
(Haseman, 2006, p. 100).

Practice-led methodology is important for this study and the most appropriate, because it allows for reflexivity and reflection on the functionality of applied journalism practice and process. Through previous practice (through Tracking Onslow) this honours project became possible, and conversely, the project consolidates that practice into a reflexive journalistic text. Skinner *et al* (2001) believe that media texts cannot be understood as concrete truths but, rather, as constructed versions of the real; where truth privileges certain dichotomies and actual power is wielded unevenly.

Niblock (2007, p. 26) agrees that it is imperative that the repository of knowledge intrinsic in journalism's day to day practice be "abstracted and unpacked" for, as Green (2006) forewarns, it is only through practice that specific types of knowledge about the art of journalism can be created and understood.

Through my evolving roles as contributor, deputy editor and editor of the Tracking Onslow project I developed a sound investigative research strategy, which includes qualitative

methods like: evidence gathering via accessing and reading documents on the public record such as council minutes, government and corporate reports; interviews with key stakeholders, content analysis and narrative construction, which are the basic elements of all good stories.

Subsequently, during the research process I maintained a log of every question I asked, every person I asked questions of, and every response I received. This gave a record of who provided information and who withheld information, and exposed the processes different individuals or agencies use to limit or facilitate the free flow of information.

There were limitations both to the scope of my honours project and to the scope of the journalistic output achieved. The restricted access I had to the reasoning behind corporate and government decision making and the power tactics they employ meant I was forced to consult books and studies on corporate public relations, in order to identify or just make inference to, their applied strategies.

Additionally, an important limitation involved aspects of time and space. The three assignments were pursued according to the deadline set for Tracking Onslow Edition 6, which had to be produced and ready for print publication in the period dated June 29, 2015 to July 10, 2015. The assignments also had to adhere to strict word-limits within the magazine, due to the use of images and other illustrations.

# JOURNALISM PRACTICE

## Assignment 1

### Assignment 1 Background

The town of Onslow, on the remote Pilbara coast of Western Australia, lies more than 1400km from the state capital Perth, and is over 300km away from its nearest neighbour; Karratha. The original township was established in 1885 on the bank of the Ashburton River 18km away, to serve as a port to service the emerging pastoral industry. However, constant battles with tropical cyclones and high tides forced the town to move 90 years ago to its current location at Beadon Point. The 2011 Census recorded Onslow's population as 667 people, with over 21 per cent identifying as Indigenous.

While referred to in the past as a sleepy fishing village, the arrival in 2011 of a multi-national consortium led by Chevron to construct a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plant 12km from town to process gas from fields in the Western Carnarvon Basin, has turned Onslow into a resources town. The Wheatstone project is a joint venture between Australian subsidiaries of Chevron (64.14 percent), Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (13.4 percent), Woodside Petroleum Limited (13 percent), Kyushu Electric Power Company (1.46 percent) and PE Wheatstone Pty Ltd (8 percent). The mega-structure includes two LNG trains (8.9 million tons per annum) and a 200 TJ/ per day domestic gas plant.

Rather than investing in civil infrastructure, the State Government usually negotiates State Agreements with proponents of major resource projects. These State Agreements are made binding by an Act of State Parliament, and generally outline a project's terms and conditions and investment and operational obligations.

However, unlike other Pilbara towns, the Wheatstone and Macedon projects are underwritten not by a State Agreement but a contractual based State Development Agreement (SDA). The government and corporate partners entered a contractual agreement that is not ratified by an act of State Parliament. The Ashburton North Strategic Industrial Area

(ANSIA) SDA was approved in late 2011 by the State Premier, who informed the parliamentary assembly that:

The State Development Agreement negotiated by the State Government ensures important benefits for Western Australians... The project is expected to create 6500 direct and indirect jobs at peak construction and 300 new operational jobs, and to deliver an estimated \$17 billion to Australian businesses and services over the life of the project...In addition, Wheatstone will deliver significant benefits for the local community, with Chevron, its partners and the State Government investing more than \$20 million on community and public infrastructure in Onslow, including the upgrade of the town's water and electricity supplies. Benefits also include a \$20 million contribution, with \$10 million from the joint venture and \$10 million from the State Government under Royalties for Regions, to a Community Development Fund... and a further \$120 million-plus for public infrastructure including road upgrades, waste and waste water management and upgrades to health, education and emergency services facilities (Barnett, 2011.)

As a condition of the ANSIA SDA, signed by Chevron, BHP Billiton and other partners, three major investment funds were established to fund new social and infrastructure projects in Onslow. The Wheatstone Social Infrastructure Fund (SIF) and Wheatstone Critical Infrastructure Fund (CIF), and the BHP Billiton Macedon Social Infrastructure Fund, are together valued at around \$255 million. The Ashburton Shire coordinates the SIF, while DSD coordinates the CIF.

The SIF has partly financed the airport's redevelopment and the Four-mile fishing spot upgrade, and holds funds for a number of proposed projects, such as a new swimming pool, library and shire office. The CIF is earmarked for future investments in education and health and other essential services. Despite glossy brochure promotion of over 20 major projects for the town, members of the community have voiced concern about a lack of progress, and questions have arisen about the value to the town of the investment. Barndon (2014d, 6-7) details the concerns of Onslow Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) president Geoff Herbert about Chevron's perceived 'broken promises', and the slow rate of progress of projects.

In December 2014 Premier Colin Barnett released a project map with anticipated timelines and cost projections for 24 projects in Onslow, to be delivered through the infrastructure funds. This document was the starting point for Assignment 1, which sought to establish whether the community was benefiting from this funding, by following the money

trail to detail whether and how the money was being spent, what it was being spent on, and who was responsible for spending it. Additionally, the story sought to establish whether the anticipated projects were on schedule for completion.

## **Stakeholders**

The main stakeholders in this story were; the State Government, the Departments of State Development (DSD) and Premier and Cabinet, Main Roads Department, Water Corporation, Department of Housing, Department of Health, the Shire of Ashburton, Chevron and joint venture partners, BHP Billiton and concerned community members.

## **Research and investigation**

The journalistic process for writing the story started with retrieval and examination of material from primary sources that included; the minutes of Shire of Ashburton council meetings dated from December 2014 to May 2015 and the minutes of a January 2015 Department of Planning and Development community meeting. Additionally, State Parliament Hansard extracts dated May 2012 and August 2013 were found. Other material retrieved and examined includes: 2013-2014 Shire of Ashburton Annual Report; 2010 Shire of Ashburton Onslow Townsite Strategy Background Report; 2013-2014 DSD Annual Report; 2014 Pilbara Development Commission profile report; Onslow Skate Park draft consultation report and conceptual plan; and the DSD list of 24 major projects.

## **Journalistic Inquiry**

Requesting cost breakdowns and progress reports from government agencies on 24 projects list, I contacted LandCorp, Water Corp, DSD, Department of Planning, Main Roads, Department of Housing and the Department of Education. I also contacted the offices of the Premier, the Opposition Leader and the State Development Shadow Minister, requesting comment on Onslow's progress.

I directed two questions to the Premier asking for clarification of State and Chevron funding arrangements, and requested access to ANSIA SDA. I directed three additional questions to DSD requesting clarification of Chevron and State funding and for comment on

perceived delays of major projects. I contacted Chevron media liaison Kathryn Ackroyd, and submitted a request for a comprehensive breakdown of Chevron's financial commitment in Onslow. She had previously explained all media inquiries must be considered, vetted and approved (or not) by the company's corporate hierarchy in the USA and so delays were anticipated.

I contacted the office of Nationals Party MLC Vince Catania to request a breakdown of Onslow Royalties for Regions<sup>1</sup> grants. I contacted Shire of Ashburton's CEO and its President, and the OCCI President, to request interviews when in town. I contacted the office of Greens MLC Robin Chapple for assistance locating the ANSIA SDA in the State Parliamentary Library. Chapple's parliamentary assistant informed me that the library was unable to provide the document because it was classified as 'in-confidence' and 'commercial'. Subsequently I conducted on-the-record interviews with; Shire CEO, Shire President, OCCI President and a number of local community members. Neither the Premier, the Opposition Leader nor the State Development Shadow Minister responded to my requests.

## Writing the Story

The 'follow the money trail' theme is incorporated into the article's introduction by instilling a sense of urgency through style and diction choices, so that the process appears like an obstacle course race, an army battle, or a long quest in search of an ultimate truth. In a way, the theme is analogous to the process of compilation, where professional satisfaction depended on successful negotiations with many different government media advisors and PR officers, as well as with Chevron. The article was thus titled "Show us the \$250 million". To present the data in a readable format a table was compiled and included with the article. For a full list of all the questions asked please refer to Appendix 2.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the State Government, the Royalties for Regions program promote and facilitate economic, business and social development in regional Western Australia. Since December 2008, Royalties for Regions has invested \$6.1 billion of the State's mining and onshore petroleum royalties to more than 3,600 projects and programs.

## Story 1: Show us the \$250 million

The people in Onslow are tired of promises. Big dollar figures have been bandied about since news of the gas hubs first came to town. The figure \$250 million is commonly quoted as the amount being spent in the community in connection with Chevron's Wheatstone LNG project and so we tried to track it down. Where is the money, what is it being spent on and when?

While the \$250m figure appears in Chevron, State Government and Shire documents, pinning down what it is being spent on is not an easy task. Most often the answer referred to a list of 24 projects that are in varying stages of development. Asked for a list of figures that add up to \$250m, the Department of State Development (DSD) refused, explaining that not all listed projects have a public cost figure yet.

We understand that price projections for future projects can be difficult, but we wondered where the total came from (if the figures that add up to it are unknown) and what will happen to the remainder if some projects are cancelled or completed under budget.

The \$250m is the sum of a list of numbers contained in a document called the "State Development Agreement" which is not publicly available as it is "commercial in confidence" (and not even members of parliament can access it). The DSD, however, stressed that the \$250m is all coming from Chevron and that there is an additional \$70m in State Government spending earmarked for Onslow.

The list of 24 projects, published in December 2014, outlines delivery timelines for many of the Onslow projects. Announcing it, Premier and State Development Minister Colin Barnett pledged that most of the projects would be completed over the next three to four years, saying: "Almost a dozen State agencies are involved in delivering these projects to ensure that the Onslow community directly benefits from major nearby projects like the Wheatstone and [BHP Billiton's] Macedon."

The State Government, Shire of Ashburton, Chevron Australia and BHP Billiton are funding the 24 projects. The Shire is responsible for delivery of 11 of them, and the State Government for 13. The BHP Billiton contribution is \$5m for the skate park and basketball stadium.

Having watched the progress of the spending, some delays are evident. The swimming pool is listed on the December document as due for completion in late 2016. But according to Ashburton CEO Neil Hartley, it is now scheduled for construction between early-2016 and mid-2017. The basketball stadium and skate park have also moved forward from early-2015/mid-2015 to late-2015/mid-2016.

Bindi Gove from BHP Billiton said the company had been ready to spend the \$5m it has committed to that project for some time, and that the delays were to do with shire processes. Ashburton Shire president Kerry White said perceptions that the pledged projects were behind schedule were unwarranted, as significant behind the scenes work had been done to scope, plan and cost them and other external factors had affected the delivery timeline for projects.

According to White, the projects are a high priority for the Onslow community, and the Shire is investing significant resources to see them delivered. A spokesperson for the Department of State Development (DSD) said that the Shire of Ashburton and a number of State Government agencies were “working diligently to deliver more than 20 community and critical infrastructure projects for Onslow”. The department is coordinating many of these projects. She added that five projects were completed between 2012 and 2014, and that two projects were completed this year.

The big ticket item Chevron is spending on is a power and desalination facility for which public costing is yet to be released, although according to the DSD 2013-14 annual report “engineering design and approvals for these projects are progressing and construction of the first stage (water storage tanks) is now underway”.

The report said that in addition to this project Chevron was contributing a “further \$121m” for infrastructure projects. The spokesperson added that Chevron is contributing a further \$66m, which along with \$10m from Royalties for Regions funding, has been allocated for the community projects being developed by the Shire.

This \$66m is in addition to the previous \$121m. We calculate that if Chevron’s spend is around \$250m, and \$66m is for community projects and \$121m is for infrastructure projects, the power/desal plant seems to be costing at least \$63m, although the DSD would not confirm this figure. Chevron’s media releases have confirmed the company is funding both projects [power and desal] and that they will take Chevron’s total contribution to more than \$250m.

In terms of the State Government spend, there is the \$10m of Royalties for Regions funding towards the Shire-run projects, as well as \$10m for the Cane River Bore-field Upgrade and \$19.8m for the hospital also from Royalties for Regions; and the State Government pitched in \$13m toward the airport, bringing the visible government total to around \$53m. The DSD spokesperson said that “circa \$70m from the State Government” was being spent, so there is \$17m of yet-to-be-made-public State Government funding presumably involved in the 24 projects.

While the \$250m+ from Chevron is clearly Wheatstone related, working out whether the Government’s \$70m is specifically being given to Onslow because of Wheatstone, as some kind of compensation, is more complicated. This is because it is not clear whether the money was heading to Onslow anyway.

For example, commenting in December 2014 on the \$19.8m State Government investment in the \$41.8m new Onslow hospital, Regional Development Minister Terry Redman said the hospital upgrade was part of the \$161m Royalties for Regions North West Health Initiative that is working to cater for expanding populations in the north of the State. He added that improvements to service delivery and health infrastructure aim to enable more patients to be treated regionally, creating community satisfaction and building sustainability in the region.

Onslow Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) president Geoff Herbert believes the Shire is mainly responsible for the slow rate of progress. “The problem with the shire is that they have no external project management team,” he complained. “They handle these projects themselves and struggle to deliver things because they are inefficient. They don’t have enough staff to deal with all the

demands. Local government has so many levels of compliance to get through, it is slow.”

Despite that concern, Herbert expressed optimism about the direction the town is going in, and said the only pitfalls are that the local council is becoming “more of a basket case”, and the expansion of the Light Industrial Area (LIA) is still needed. Once a fierce critic of Chevron’s lack of commitment to the Onslow community, Herbert said that recently Chevron’s community liaison team has made real efforts to bridge the gap between the corporate and community reality of Chevron’s business. He thought this may be due in part to OCCI’s decision last year to hire a media consultant to apply pressure to Chevron and the State Government in the wake of the events of mid-2014.

Herbert said: “They’ve got a big company out there, and now you can see what they are actually building, they’re not here to solve all our social problems they are here to build that plant and process gas.” He explained that most of the anger directed at Chevron after it received approval from the Premier to build its worker accommodation near the plant rather than in town, had died down, and that Chevron were now seen to be more on board with the community.

Herbert said this was due to better consultation with local businesses. Now when a contract needs to be filled Chevron flies their three preferred tenderers to Onslow and “we have a big event down at the Business Hub, and all our businesses get to come with their capability statements and meet them and hit them up and tell them who they are.” He said: “We’re not asking for free kicks, we are just asking for access to those connections early on, to have a level playing field.”

Herbert continued: “What would happen before is the contractors would do all their pricing and hiring in Perth, then rock up here and see we have businesses like sign writing and building and plumbing here already, and they could have saved a fortune if they had known.”

According to Herbert, the West Pilbara Business Support Program that Chevron sponsors is so busy it just employed two new people to help local businesses build their capabilities. Membership of that program is now up to 116. He said Chevron also sponsors the Industry Capability Network (ICN), which flew in an expert for a week to meet local businesses and prepare their profiles for listing on the ICN Onslow On-line Business Directory. The profiles were also distributed to the first-tier contractors on-site at Wheatstone.

Herbert also praised the State Government. “The DSD has also come to the table for the first time ever and are working with us by sending tenders to us and referencing the Onslow ICN. So for that \$250m, from both levels, Onslow businesses are finally getting a fair go at it. The only one that lets us down is local government.”

A spokesperson for Chevron told *Tracking Onslow* the company has a clear interest in ensuring Onslow remains a vibrant and sustainable regional community, based on the company’s long-standing philosophy that fosters local partnerships to ensure delivery of sustainable outcomes. Chevron has established an office in town, at 16 Second Ave, staffed by members of the community engagement team who work to update the community on the project and answer the questions and concerns.

Chevron said; “We continue to work with our contractors and local community and business stakeholders to ensure the Wheatstone workforce makes a positive contribution to Onslow, including through participation in volunteering, recreational activities and patronage of local businesses. With our Wheatstone Project joint venture participants, we have committed more than \$250m to social and critical infrastructure projects in Onslow.”

Chevron now offers bus tours of the construction site, which provides an opportunity for people to see the Wheatstone Project for themselves. The tour is certainly an eye opener, and the massive reach and scope of construction is overwhelming yet impressive.

Herbert believes that in a business sense, where once the whole Wheatstone project appeared to be a massive failure for the town, it is now looking to be a massive success. Through the OCCI he is preparing a “lessons learnt” business investment document to inform the rest of Australia how business can operate smoothly with industry, in a circumstance like this. He believes it is important to show that there is a success story amongst the negative press stifling the North-West and other mining regions in Australia.

“We are one of the very few towns that has a very bright future for the next ten years, and that needs to be talked up to inspire confidence, both for business and investment. There’s so much news about the end of the mining boom, but this region still needs investors to invest.”

Whether or not the Chevron and Government spend ends up equaling \$320m (which is \$70m + \$250m) will take some time to assess, as many of the projects have open ended dates and are dependent on future population growth and demand. Estimating the current population of Onslow to be about 1000, the \$250m represents a spend of about \$250,000 per resident. While it will be good if it happens, we wonder whether Chevron might have more easily won social license to operate by simply writing them cheques.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This article includes table compiled using information on the DSD's December 2014 list of 24 projects. It was updated and supplemented by information from the Shire of Ashburton, press releases, interviews and government websites. There are gaps in it, but it represents our best effort at finding out what is being spent in Onslow. For table, please see Appendix 1.

## Assignment 2

### Assignment 2 Background

Under terms negotiated with the State Government in the ANSIA SDA, Chevron will invest \$250m into the aforementioned infrastructure funds. While the agreement is not legally binding, the company complies due to the appreciation and practice of the relatively recent concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Jamali (cited in Harrison 2011, p. 16) defines CSR as a combination of "the narrow economic perspective of increasing stakeholder wealth [and] economic, legal, ethical and discretionary strands of responsibility".

Despite Chevron's level of financial commitment, the community is unhappy with the company's sense of social responsibility, and a perception has arisen that some of the initial promises made by the company have been broken (Barndon, 2014e, p. 6). Ill feeling arose in 2014 after Chevron was granted permission by the Premier to house hundreds of operational, as opposed to construction, workers, onsite rather than in town, as was originally promised.

The decision was roundly criticised in Onslow, with many townspeople subsequently left feeling cheated by the company. When the Premier informed the State Parliament Legislative Assembly of his decision to accommodate Chevron's changes, after the initial uproar died down the opposition leader (Mark McGowan) accused Barnett of being a "captive of Chevron".

Therefore, this assignment sought to examine Chevron's operations within the context of the company's practice of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which ensures well behaved corporate citizens pay income tax and don't kill workers, and do not emit pollution or drive species to extinction. Additionally, the assignment questions whether the perceived 'broken promises' threaten the company's social license to operate in the town.

### Stakeholders

The main stakeholders in this story were; the Departments of State Development and Premier and Cabinet, Chevron and joint venture partners, the Shire of Ashburton, local business owners and concerned community members.

## Research and investigation

The journalistic process for writing the story started with retrieval and examination of primary source material that included minutes of the October 2014 Chevron Community Reference Group meeting and State Parliament Hansard extracts dated March 2008, June 2011, September 2011 and August 2014. Other documents include; the Education and Health Standing Committee report on the impact of FIFO work practices on mental health including Chevron's submission, the 2008 Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Wheatstone Project, and the 2011 Wheatstone Development Environmental Protection Agency Report. I also examined Chevron's company profile, a Deloitte report dated 2014 titled *Chevron Australia v Commissioner of Taxation*, and an extensive number of articles detailing unsavoury tax practices.

## Journalistic Inquiry

I submitted a request to visit Wheatstone site to Chevron media liaison Kathryn Ackroyd, as well as six questions for the article:

- There have been recent allegations in the media that Chevron is engaging in tax evasion activities. What does Chevron Australia have to say about the allegations?
- Can the company comment on the recently released findings of the parliamentary inquiry into FIFO mental health?
- There are reports workers may be feeling 'imprisoned' at Wheatstone. What are your thoughts on this claim?
- Can you comment on the latest restrictions banning workers from town?
- Can Chevron override a Bechtel decision?
- Is Wheatstone still on schedule?

I contacted the office of the Premier and directed two questions to Barnett:

- Are you confident the Wheatstone Project will remain on schedule, in light of Australian Tax Office reports detailing Chevron's transfer-pricing and debt push down tax avoidance activities?
- Chevron Director Roy Krzywosinski claimed WA has "rigid and inflexible industrial relations systems, uncompetitive taxation, red and green tape, high labour costs and inadequate productivity". Do you agree or disagree?

No response was received to these questions. I contacted the offices of ALP MLC Chris Tallentyre and Greens MLC Robin Chapple and spoke with both politicians about the exemption granted to Chevron allowing greenhouse gas emissions to remain unreported at Wheatstone. I was granted permission for site visit, but advised to abide by conditions:

Please ensure you are wearing enclosed lace-up shoes, a collared cotton long-sleeved shirt and cotton trousers/ jeans. Use of cameras onsite is prohibited, I can provide you with any Project images you may need. The tour is for your background information only and not for quoting or attribution (Chevron, 2015).

Given that this was a four hour tour of the Wheatstone Project, hosted by a Chevron community relations officer, with no photography or note-taking allowed it felt like a restricted viewing that was of limited journalistic value. I also spoke to the Chevron contractor monitoring turtles in the project zone, who expressed confidence in the peer-reviewed scientific study hosted by Chevron.

## Writing the Stories

For the sake of achieving balance between the numbers of large and small articles in Edition 6 of the magazine I drafted three articles: 'Coping with FIFO Life', 'Greenhouse Gas Grey Area' and 'Chevron Q & A', to present the material. While I was working on the stories I was contacted by Chevron to discuss my editorial intentions, and warned not to refer to ATO issue as it was not relevant. Chevron also warned against using words like 'imprisoned' and 'prison' around words like 'workers' and 'Wheatstone' in the article. They also requested details of the story before publication. All these requests were subsequently denied, as they seemed to be an attempt to control the content of Tracking Onslow. As no photography was allowed on the tour the narrative includes descriptions of what we saw. For a full list of all the questions asked please refer to Appendix 3.

## Story 2: Coping with FIFO Life<sup>3</sup>

Out on Chevron's multi-billion dollar gas plant everything looks super-sized. From the LNG tanks and the concrete blocks to the construction village with its football field, five gyms, four mess halls and swimming pool. The size and scale of Wheatstone dwarfs everything in the arid landscape around it.

When Chevron and Bechtel workers are bussed in from the airport, they are greeted by row after row after row of white containers –their homes for the next 28 days. At first sight, the Wheatstone accommodation village resembles a prison complex. We weren't the only ones to notice this.

Checking in to Facebook on our way to Five Mile our location identified itself as "Wheatstone Prisoner Transfer Facility", clearly a joke, but one that makes a point.

However, a tour of the facilities in the 4500-bed village paints a different picture. Workers have access to a full football oval, cricket pitches and nets, an Olympic sized swimming pool, fully equipped gymnasiums, movie theatres and a library. There is also a general store and four taverns.

FIFO is a well-established work practice in the resource industry, and often in remote areas like the Pilbara it is an essential part of the construction and operation of big projects.

When reports surfaced in the media in mid-2014 that nine FIFO workers had taken their own lives in the last 12 months, the State Government commissioned the Education and Health Standing Committee to investigate how FIFO work arrangements affected the mental health of workers in the resource industry.

The final report, released last month, found that FIFO workers suffered higher levels of mental distress than the general population, but that this was mainly due to the fact most workers came from the highest risk demographic for mental illness and suicide, described in the report as male and aged 18 to 44.

The report cites other recent studies that found that around 30% of FIFO workers reported mental distress, compared with 20% in the general population. The report recommended development of a Code of Practice to provide guidance of best practice to promote improved mental and emotional health and wellbeing amongst the FIFO workforces.

A Chevron spokesperson said the company supports a recent statement made by the Chamber of Minerals and Energy (CME), and now awaits the government's formal response to the Committee's findings. In that statement, the

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<sup>3</sup> Chevron refused to grant permission for any of its workers to be interviewed for this story

CME urged the Government, when considering its response to recommendations, to focus on quality research and data, rather than on anecdotal and emotive evidence.

According to Chevron policies, while FIFO is an established work practice in Western Australia and essential in the construction and operation of major projects in remote areas, Chevron places the highest priority on the health and safety of their workforce.

The company claims to have measures in place to promote and protect the wellbeing of all workers in the form of programs and information which include; fitness for duty processes, an employee assistance program and FIFO for Families workshops.

### Story 3: Greenhouse Gas Grey Area

After a report about a lack of greenhouse gas regulations for some “big polluters” was published in The West Australian in January 2015, Labor MLA Chris Tallentire asked the WA Minister for Environment Albert Jacobs in Parliament “why greenhouse gas conditions remain on Chevron’s Gorgon project but the government has waived them on Chevron’s Wheatstone project?”

On March 17, 2015, the Minister gave this answer, in Parliament: “Most greenhouse gas conditions were removed from Chevron’s Wheatstone project because the company requested that the conditions be removed in light of a complementarity clause in the conditions”. The complementarity clause provided for the Minister for Environment to determine that the greenhouse gas conditions would no longer apply if it was found they were non-complementary to any Commonwealth legislation which regulated greenhouse gas emissions.”

Tallentire also asked: “What is the likely contribution of the Wheatstone project to Western Australia’s total emissions profile?” Jacobs answer was: “At full development of 25 million tonnes per annum production of LNG, greenhouse gas emissions from the Wheatstone project are projected to be around 10Mt CO<sub>2</sub> –e per year... Therefore emissions from the Wheatstone project would constitute approximately 14 percent of total State emissions.”

We called Greens MLC for the Mining and Pastoral Region, Robin Chapple, for some background and clarification. He said that when the project first got the go ahead from the WA Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) there was a requirement to monitor and report greenhouse gas emissions, but it was exempted from these requirements by Jacob when the Rudd/Gillard Government’s Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) was passed in Federal Parliament because there was a clause in the agreement saying that Chevron would not have to report to two levels of government, and that the WA requirement could be dropped if a Federal requirement was introduced.

When the Abbot Government abolished the CPRS the Federal requirement disappeared but the State requirement has not yet been reactivated and so there is currently no project-specific requirement on Chevron to report greenhouse gas emissions from Wheatstone. He added that WA’s greenhouse gas emissions were growing faster than anywhere else in the world.

Tallentire said: “It’s worse than that. The Barnett Government is refusing to place any greenhouse gas constraint on Wheatstone and I fear that they are going further and trying to extinguish EPA oversight of emissions on all WA resource projects.” We asked Chevron if they are building into Wheatstone the capacity to measure and monitor greenhouse gas emissions and the answer was yes. Calculating the emissions from the entirely diesel-powered, fully air-conditioned 4500 (and soon to be 9000) bed worker’s accommodation village would be an additional task that would involve considering the litres of diesel being burnt.

## Story 4: Chevron Q & A<sup>4</sup>

### Q. Is Wheatstone still on schedule?

A. Construction is now approaching 60% complete. Over the next six months, Chevron Australia and its contractors will undertake hook-up and commissioning activities as the Project continues toward first gas in late 2016.

Excellent progress is being made on our upstream campaign with all nine development wells drilled to the top of the reservoir. Recently, the project made Chevron history with the largest single, integrated topsides float-over installation the company has ever completed. The platform topsides were installed onto a steel gravity structure 225km offshore the Ashburton North plant site.

We also continue to make good progress at the Ashburton North plant site, where dredging and piling activities are complete. The wharf is operational and at the Materials Offloading Facility, the breakwater is nearing completion and the 1.2-km (.75 mile) product loading jetty continues to progress.

Seven of 24 major process modules have been delivered to site. The roofs of LNG Tank 1 and Tank 2 are now raised and construction of the two condensate storage tanks is under way.

### Q. Is Wheatstone hurting the turtles?

A. In the first half of 2015, 37 environmental monitoring scopes were undertaken, including flat back turtle monitoring for both the Wheatstone Project and Thevenard Island. The areas monitored were Ashburton Delta beach, Ashburton Island beaches and Onslow back beach. In addition, Chevron held a marine turtle workshop in Onslow for the community to learn more about the local turtle populations.

Participants joined leading West Australian Turtle Specialist Dr David Waayers to discover more about the local marine turtle species and what can be done to protect them. The workshop included a presentation on turtle species in the Ashburton region, their habitats and ecology and an overview of the Wheatstone monitoring program. Participants also took part in identifying turtle tracks and nests.

### Q. There have been recent allegations in the media that Chevron has engaged in tax evasion\* activities. What does Chevron Australia have to say about the allegations?

A. Chevron has no further comment to make while this matter is subject to legal proceedings. Chevron abides by a stringent code of business ethics, under which we comply with all applicable laws and regulations in the countries in which we operate.<sup>5</sup>

*\*These reports are following a lawsuit against Chevron in the Federal Court in which the Australian Tax Office is seeking to retrieve \$322 million with penalties. The case alleges that Chevron put a complex corporate structure in place to avoid paying \$258 million in tax between 2004 and 2008.*

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<sup>4</sup> This article assumes the Q&A format due to Chevron's reluctance to go on record.

<sup>5</sup> The Federal Court ruled in favour of the ATO in October 2015, and Chevron is now liable for \$180 million for the 2003-08 tax years, plus a 25 per cent penalty plus interest that takes the bill to \$269 million. Other costs are expected to push the total higher.

## Assignment 3

### Assignment 3 Background

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century spread of European pastoralism in the north-west of Western Australia, and then the introduction of the Pastoral Award in 1968 forced inland Indigenous tribes into government administered missions at Onslow, Roebourne and Carnarvon. Consequently Onslow's Bindi Bindi community houses Indigenous people from all over the Pilbara, and language groups include: Nhuwala, Burama, Punjima, Innawonga, Thudgari, Kurrama, Pinikura, Yindjibarndi, Ngarluma and Martuthinira, as well as Thalanyji.

The Thalanyji people were granted native title over 11,120sq km of mainly pastoral land in the Ashburton Shire in 2008. Subsequent mediation led to the signing in 2010 of an agreement with Chevron for land required to develop the Wheatstone project, and several land use agreements with pastoral and mining parties. While these agreements provide the Thalanyji people with significant benefits in terms of education, training, employment, business development and financial support, some concerns about uneven distribution of wealth were raised in previous Tracking Onslow editions and interviews, as many Indigenous people in town are not Thalanyji (Barndon, 2013a).

Upheaval in federal government delivery of employment services between 2012 and 2015, through the transitioning from Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) funding to the new Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) has affected employment accessibility and opportunities, which has complicated the earning ability and cultural conditions of the people (Barndon, 2013a).

Additionally, the State Government announced earlier this year that some of the State's more than 200 remote Indigenous communities are in danger of being closed down due to shortfalls in federal funding. The Premier threatened to close some underperforming communities but did not name any specific communities, so along with all other indigenous communities in WA the six in the Ashburton Shire, including the Bindi Bindi community in Onslow, could possibly be affected. Therefore this story sought to reveal whether previous concerns had been resolved, and to discover if there were concerns that Bindi Bindi community was in danger of closure.

## Stakeholders

The main stakeholders in this story were; Bindi Bindi community representatives, Buurabalayji Thalanyji Aboriginal Corporation (BTAC) representatives, local RJCP providers, the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DAA), the State Government and the Shire of Ashburton.

## Research and investigation

The journalistic process for writing the story started with retrieval and examination of documents that included: BTAC's 2013-2014 Annual Report, BTAC's 2014 Compliance Report and BTAC's 2014 financial statements, the 2014 Office of the registrar of Indigenous Corporations 2014 General Report, the National Native Title Tribunal Thalanyji consent agreement, the Transcript of National Native Title Tribunal inquiring about future act determination applications between the Department of Lands and BTAC, the Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements (ATNS) database and the Indigenous Land Corporation Regional Profile of the Rangelands.

Additionally retrieved was the Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) including: Thalanyji and Yanrey Pastoral ILUA; Thalanyji and Nanutarra Station ILUA; Thalanyji and Uaroo Station ILUA; Thalanyji and Koordarrie Pastoral ILUA; Thalanyji and Nyang (Emu Creek) Pastoral ILUA; Thalanyji and Minderoo Pastoral ILUA and Thalanyji and Glen Florrie Pastoral ILUA.

## Journalistic Inquiry

I contacted BTAC head office in Perth by telephone to speak to CEO Tim Milsom. He was pleasant, but said he cannot comment because he doesn't live in Onslow. He suggested I speak to Glenys Hayes at the [Onslow] office. I retrieved the number for the Onslow office from my contact book and rang a number of times but there was never any answer. I re-examined the National Native Title Tribunal Thalanyji consent agreement. Thalanyji's original application for native title included areas that overlapped Puutu Kunti Kurrama, Pinikura and Thudgari native title claims, and an area likely to be Nhuwala country. Although these areas were later

excluded, the Thalanyji's overreach caused some displeasure, with rumours of an impending appeal against the original claim circling town.

I spoke to a community member<sup>6</sup> at the pub when I was in Onslow, who said that although she's currently working four days a week cleaning, she would love to work for one of the big companies, and did ask Chevron for a job but she claimed they won't hire her because she is not Thalanyji. Querying that, the woman explained that even though Thalanyji, Nhuwala and Burama are all native title holders, only Thalanyji get the jobs, and Onslow was "not Thalanyji country anyway". I contacted the DAA for comment on the threat of remote community closures. I also contacted the office of the Premier again to request comment, with Senior Media Advisor Carbon from the Premier's department agreeing to provide comment, which he never did.

I rang the Real Employment for Aboriginal People (REFAP) office when I was in Onslow, and arranged a meeting. Response received from the DAA:

Thanks for your email requesting comments. Unfortunately, we don't have a single person responsible for communities in the Pilbara. The State Government has also announced that it won't be closing communities. See our website for information on this and come back to me if you have any further queries (DAA, 2015).

In Onslow I attended the BTAC office and knocked on the door but there was no reply. I met with Paula Prior at the REFAP office out at the Bindi Bindi community and spoke to her about the REFAP program. I was shown the new commercial kitchen, the arts and craft room and training workshop. This interview formed the basis of the story titled "REFAP in Action". Then Prior suggested I also talk to Bindi Bindi community leader Margaret "Big Girl" Parker, and provided her phone number. I rang Parker and arranged a meeting the next morning. I also interviewed local police sergeant Drew Taylor. He said drug use was on the increase in town, especially at Bindi Bindi. I asked him if the police knew how the drugs were entering the community, and he said they did not.

While I was in Onslow I spoke with another community member<sup>7</sup> at the pub who said Bindi was awash with crystal methamphetamines, which was picked up from certain people in

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<sup>6</sup> Name withheld as due to the social circumstance of the interview she was not invited to complete the ECU HREC form

<sup>7</sup> Name withheld as due to the social circumstance of the interview she was not invited to complete the ECU HREC form

a return taxi journey every few weeks, and re-sold to community members. I conducted an on-the-record interview with Shire president Kerry White, who said:

The Shire has six Indigenous communities like Bindi Bindi but they don't pay rates, the shire only pick up their rubbish, they don't fix their roads or do footpaths so it makes it very difficult. I have had the shire ring there but the other councilors weren't in favour of putting any rate money in there because of no rate money coming out. They may get a free service with the rubbish, but they aren't funded by anybody. They just got abandoned by the government. There is \$5 million in Royalties for Regions to do up Bindi, but all the wrong people want to get hold of it (White, 2015).

White also claimed that Chevron was becoming aware that not all Indigenous people in Onslow were necessarily gaining benefits from its ILUA with Thalanyji, so the company had commissioned consultant Graham Barrett to visit Bindi Bindi community and compile a report. I conducted a 90 minute on-the-record interview with Margaret Parker. She said her community was dissatisfied that despite living in the shadow of multi-billion dollar projects, Bindi Bindi residents got little, as most were not Thalanyji:

Even though Thalanyji are declared native title holders in this area, they do not own us at Bindi. They are entitled to sign off with any mining company as the registered traditional owners but none of the mining royalties come back to the Bindi Bindi community. Thalanyji is separate to Bindi, and some people here feel they don't want to know us (Parker, 2015).

Raising the topic of Chevron, Parker said she had already met the consultant sent to see how Chevron can help the community, exhibiting a sense of fatigue:

We said we don't want another report to be filed away in a cabinet; we want actions. If they are not talking actions and it's just another report, then we don't want to know them (Parker, 2015).

As I left Parker's house, people sitting on a nearby porch called out and beckoned me over, asking what I was doing. Sitting down for a chat, the conversation turned to drugs. They told me what was available, the size/price, then pointed out the houses in the community where deals were available. They then gave me directions to a couple of drug houses in town. They even pointed out the car of a local dealer as he drove past. As I stood to leave, a police patrol car drove slowly past with its windows up, and I thought of what Margaret had just said about them not stopping, and also Taylor's comments about noise complaints:

The police are coming in regularly now on their patrol, talking to anyone who waves them down, and taking stereos. But they never pull up and yarn with us, or say how are you going to us, they just drive around (Parker, 2015).

Reflecting on Foucault's power theories of 1972-1977, it struck me that the police had positioned themselves as an institution of power, but this physical disconnect limits their intelligence gathering. Maybe if they wound their windows down, or got out of their cars, they could adjust the obvious power imbalance and operate in partnership with the community to tackle the drug problem. It seemed that journalism was able to find answers and information the police could not.

Regardless, given the context, it was not a journalistic interview for publication as I did not want to contravene the Media Alliance Code of Ethics, which impels journalists to protect their sources and never exploit a person's vulnerability or ignorance of media practice. Also, I did not want to jeopardise the relationship I had developed with the local Indigenous community or threaten the magazine's access. It had been a challenging and delicate process gaining the community's trust, and I did not want to throw that away.

As I left the house I spied Chevron consultant Graham Barrett walking a few doors away, so I called out to him, eager to hear his story. We arranged to meet two hours later at the Chevron offices in town. At the agreed time I rang the visitor's bell at the front desk, and Chevron operating manager Sam Rigg appeared, followed by Barrett. Barrett informed me that as he was under contract, he was bound by Chevron's rules of confidentiality, which meant he could not attend the pre-arranged interview with me after all.

I then attended the BTAC office again and knocked on four different doors. No answer. The office appeared deserted and somewhat derelict with graffiti on every wall. I caught a glimpse of somebody through a window, but they did not respond to my incessant knocking.

## Writing the Stories

Because the word length was high, due to my propensity to use large chunks of direct quotes (dialogue) to give maximum voice to my subjects, the story was broken down into three articles titled: Bindi Bindi Blues, Dodging the Closure Bullet and REFAP in Action. For a full list of all the questions asked please refer to Appendix 4.

## Story 5: Bindi Bindi Blues

Buurabalayji Thalanyji Aboriginal Corporation represents the recognised Traditional Owners of around 11,120sq km of the West Pilbara, which includes land around Onslow. The corporation's 11 year battle with the State culminated in the signing of numerous Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) with various mining companies and pastoralists.

Through these agreements, Thalanyji people party to the corporation have enjoyed great financial rewards. For the non-Thalanyji aboriginals, however, there have been limited benefits, even though most of the elders from all the families in town are related in some way. According to a number of long-term Onslow residents, the inequity of the situation is causing discontent in the wider community.

The Bindi Bindi community in Onslow is an Aboriginal Lands Trust administered, former Native Reserve. When the Pastoral Award was introduced in 1968, pastoralists were deemed to be employers and had to provide indigenous people working their stations with wages and accommodation. Many could not afford to do this and so Aboriginal people were forced off their traditional lands and moved to government-established camps, like Bindi Bindi. At last count, Aboriginal people constitute over 37% of Onslow's total population.

Margaret Parker is the Chairperson of the soon to be incorporated Onslow Bindi Bindi Aboriginal Corporation. She has lived in Bindi since it was the old Reserve, back in the late 60's. "We used to live in tents," Parker said, "and there was one ablution block for everyone, before they made us tin houses. We came to Bindi, all our parents and grandparents from off the stations, we were forced to because there were no more jobs, the station master's wouldn't pay the award rates."

Onslow resident Trevor Kempton was one of the local pastoralists at the time and he recalls driving the Aboriginal workers from Mt Minnie station because his family "just couldn't afford to pay them" the award rates the government had mandated.

Parker is a director of the Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation, and she said that most people in Bindi were Gumala Aboriginal Corporation (GAC) members. She added that there was a few in the community who were Thalanyji, but most of the Thalanyji had moved to Perth where their main office is now located. Casting her eye over the busy REFAP men's work crew, she said it was good to see work being done.

REFAP stands for Real Employment for Aboriginal People and it is the name of a Karratha-based company that won federal RJCP funding to run employment and training programs. "REFAP is fixing up the gazebo over there," Parker explained adding that after a young man hung himself from one of the beams supporting the roof, the community had wanted a ceiling installed to conceal them.

REFAP currently lease the office building and workshop in the heart of the Bindi site from the AAC, and Margaret would like the money to flow back into Bindi, to fix the ablution block and build basketball courts. But there are limitations to what REFAP and AAC can do so the Bindi community has been asking Chevron and other mining companies to help.

Illustrating a growing awareness that not all Indigenous people in Onslow are benefiting from its ILUA with Thalanyji, Chevron has commissioned consultant Graham Barrett to find out what's happening. He has held senior positions involving designing strategies for the WA Department of Indigenous Affairs, Office of Crime Prevention and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

As Barrett wandered past her neighbour's porch, Parker remarked on her meeting with him the day before. "He came around to see how Chevron can help this community and we said we don't want another report to be filed away in a cabinet; we want actions. If they are not talking actions and it's just another report, then we don't want to know them... That's what some companies have done in the past; they don't care as long as they've got their report".

Shire of Ashburton President Kerry White is skeptical of Chevron's motives: "Bindi is native title free, and it's not Chevron's place to look into their backyard. I had to beg them [Chevron] to give us \$5000 a year for a Christmas party down there. White said Chevron failed to understand that Bindi is a community within a community, and it gives the people a sense of pride to have their own Christmas party to celebrate as a community.

Parker said the community was overcrowded. "There are 24 houses here, but they are getting a bit crowded now, most of them have two lots of family's living in them at the moment... We really need single person units here, to get some of the men out of the households and away from families," she said. Parker said the houses had power that was accessible only by cards, and all houses were now connected to the town's water and wastewater systems.

The Wastewater Management Bindi Bindi project is item Number 9 on the Department of State Development list of 24 projects that is delivering new facilities in Onslow. The project was overseen by LandCorp and the Department of Housing and involved closing the old treatment ponds and connecting the sewerage system to the town services. The project started in April 2014 and was completed in early 2015.

Maintenance of the houses in Bindi Bindi is facilitated by Pilbara Meta Maya Regional Aboriginal Corporation (PMMRAC), a Port Hedland based provider of the Remote Area Essential Services Program (RAESP) for Aboriginal communities in the Pilbara, Gascoyne and Murchison regions. PMMRAC is responsible for servicing and maintaining power generation, water and wastewater infrastructures, and provides housing and property management services to 190 houses in 13 remote communities.

Parker said it had been quite a process to report faults; first they had to ring PMMRAC, who in turn rang the Department of Housing, who then rang the local contractors who fix the problem. Donna Kereopa from PMMRAC said as of July 1, 2015, the company is using a new model. "We go down there [Bindi Bindi] to see what's required and report it through the Department of Housing and they give the

work to Pindan, who then engage contractors to do the work.” Kereopa believes the changes will have no impact on Bindi Bindi households.

Parker’s brother-law Patrick Tiddums joined us at the table, and she told him to tell his story. She told Tiddums it was for the newest *Tracking Onslow* magazine, and the normally reserved man let out a bellowing laugh and exclaimed: “Hey, you get stories off people don't you,” adding that he didn't really understand what the project was about. Parker explained that the magazines actually showed changes. “Look at this”, she said, laying out three editions of the *Tracking Onslow* on the table. “Look at how you can see the changes from this one to that one. And now she’s doing another report, which is where your story should come in.”

Tiddums was born up the hill, at the Onslow Hospital. Until recently he was working on the Onslow Airport, but he's been unemployed for two weeks now, which he said was unusual for him. Prior to that job he spent seven years in the laboratory at Onslow Salt, and prior to that he worked as an environmental and aboriginal health worker for the WA Health Department.

Despite the amount of work underway in town, Tiddums said he is finding it hard to secure a job. “For some of us, who can't read and write well, it is a headache to apply for jobs because there are so many issues to face. And when you do apply for these companies around here, you won't hear from them for two or three months, if at all, and you can't track the status of your application,” he complained.

Parker said many people in Bindi have attended Thalanyji training courses and have extensive experience in a wide range of activities, but they just get certificates, not job offers, because the jobs are only available to Thalanyji people. She fears that the Bindi participants are being used simply to make up the numbers, so the training can go ahead to accommodate the Thalanyji participants. In the last training program delivered by the Thalanyji, the three Thalanyji participants secured jobs in industry, but the seven from Bindi did not.

For Parker, this is the biggest disappointment: “Our people here are well trained; they have all the same certificates, but never get the opportunity to even get a foot in the door anywhere in this town.” Tiddums added that the other day he took a couple of young guys up to the new Barrada Estate that overlooked the community to try and score some labouring work with Ertech but was told to contact the local Thalanyji representative.

Parker said that although Thalanyji are the declared native title holders in the Onslow area, they did not own the Bindi Bindi community. “They are entitled to sign off with any mining company as the registered traditional owners but none of the mining royalties come back to the Bindi Bindi community. Thalanyji is separate to Bindi, and some people here feel they don't want to know us. We are a low-income community here, but some people are coming here who have more resources and are getting housed, but they don't help the community.”

Parker believes cooperation could create change for the better. “The kids are the ones we need to teach, to lay the foundations for their future... A lot of our kids don't go to school, or they drop out completely, so where are they going to get an education to help them in life? We all need to talk with them and support each other

because it's only going to get harder for them, with all the new drugs and alcohol that could bog them down later in life."

Despite numerous visits to the Corporation's headquarters in Onslow, *Tracking Onslow* was unable to establish contact with Thalanyji representatives in town. Buurabalayji Thalanyji Aboriginal Corporation CEO Tim Milsom said as he did not live in Onslow, he could not comment on anything concerning the town. "I can't comment because I don't know anything" Milsom declared.

Parker describes Bindi as usually a quiet place to live, but said that when events like birthday parties or funerals were on, the community "rocked". She added: "But we have new by-laws coming into effect on July 17, so music, partying and fighting will be cut down. The police are coming in regularly now on their patrol, talking to anyone who waves them down, and taking stereos. But they never pull up and yarn with us, or say how are you going to us, they just drive around."

## Story 6: Dodging the Closure Bullet

The Federal Government announced in 2014 it would no longer fund essential services for remote Aboriginal communities, as living there was simply a “lifestyle choice”. The WA Premier responded by declaring his government would subsequently close up to 150 of the state’s 274 remote communities, as it could no longer meet the costs on its own. Even though Aboriginal Affairs Minister Peter Collier promised Aboriginal people they would be properly consulted before any decisions were made, the communities in the firing line remain unsure of their futures.

Down in Bindi Bindi, Margaret Parker and Patrick Tiddums said that when they heard about the closures, they were scared. “It was in the back of our minds, that they’d take our houses away,” Tiddums said. Parker said the fear came creeping in; “I was scared, in the back of my mind, so we got ready to start fighting here.” Adding: “I would have had all the people lined up ready.”

Shire president Kerry White said the Bindi Bindi community was not in danger of closure, but it is still a “forgotten place”. According to White the Shire has six indigenous communities who all get limited service: “These communities don't pay rates so the shire don't fix their roads or do the footpaths, it just picks up the rubbish... the other councilors are not in favour of putting any rate money in there because of no rate money coming out. These people have been abandoned, totally abandoned, by the government.”

The Pilbara has long been neglected by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA), and the Director General of the DAA admits it still does not have a single person responsible for communities in the whole of the Pilbara region. In May the State Government announced major reforms to service delivery to Aboriginal communities.

Premier Colin Barnett said despite the billions spent on their welfare there was little improvement evident in Aboriginal people’s lives. “It is not the Government's intention to force people off their land or to prevent them having access to country but it is essential that Aboriginal children are safe and are going to school.”

According to the DAA there are approximately 12,000 Aboriginal people living in 274 communities in Western Australia. While WA’s Aboriginal agencies receive \$4.9 billion each year in state and federal funding, the State Government has promised to increase this by using Royalties for Regions funding.

## Story 7: REFAP in Action

Project manager Paula Prior runs the Real Jobs for Aboriginal People (REFAP) program based in the centre of the Bindi Bindi community in Onslow. But she is adamant she is only in the position until a suitable local replacement is found or becomes ready to take on the role. “We have one of the best teams here, everyone is committed to what they are doing and the fact that they are all local really helps,” she said.

REFAP provides job-oriented training and focuses on getting people into work, and creating business opportunities. It is supported by funding granted through the Federal Regional Jobs and Communities Programme (RJCP). Prior’s philosophy is that it is important to create opportunities the people actually want to participate in, rather than just forcing people into the same old cleaning and gardening activities. As a result the Bindi Bindi program now involves arts, food preparation, and carpentry and bicycle mechanics.

“The men are doing artefact making, they’ve got all the tools for that, so they will make things like boomerangs and fishing spears, and we have silk-screening to make tea towels and clothing. This will directly create a business for the people, and empower them,” Prior said, adding; “you have to address barriers to employment. REFAP has a policy to try and help people push through these barriers. We don’t leave anyone behind here; we look after everyone, not in a paternalistic way but very much in a mentoring process.”

When Tracking Onslow visited the community, the men’s work team was busy redeveloping the community’s main square. In the workshop, children’s bicycles were lined up to be serviced or repaired. Prior explained that the children can only bring their bikes in to be fixed if they attend school. The workshop crew also restores old bikes for children who don’t own one, as long as they too attend school.

She added that the children come into the office after school to do painting and drawing, and they have no hesitation in grabbing the tape off her desk and proudly plastering their artwork on the walls.

While Prior said REFAP is continually speaking with the major companies like Chevron and Bechtel, she admits they are still working toward securing employment for local participants with those companies. She stressed though, that not everyone wanted to work at Wheatstone, doing the 12 hour shift, as many had family matters to consider. “It’s not for us to say I’ll pick you up, we want to give them the tools to learn how to pick themselves up,” Prior said.

AAC Director and RJCP participant Rocky Wedge said as a community elder he felt it was important that he worked, to set an example and encourage the younger people to develop a sense of pride in their community.

## DISCUSSION

In writing Edition 6 of the Tracking Onslow magazine, the PR machines of State Government and Chevron proved to be formidable opponents in the battle for information. State Government agencies refused to give us numbers and figures, and cited commercial in-confidence over the agreements. The government also made over-lapping media announcements about project costing, which confused the issue.

Additionally, dealing with Chevron too was difficult. The company wanted to tell its own story under its own terms in its own language, and did not appear to appreciate our neutrality. In fact, the relationship between Chevron and Tracking Onslow has been fraught since the second edition of the magazine addressed controversial issues including: the suspension of the Ashburton council and sacking of the CEO by the Department of Local Government; the management of Onslow's financial affairs; and the economic pressures strangling the emergence of new local businesses due to the gas hub's presence.

After Edition 2 was published, Chevron invited Tracking Onslow to a meeting at city headquarters. A lengthy PowerPoint presentation about the Wheatstone Project and Chevron's exemplary corporate reputation was followed by a briefing on who we could talk to in Onslow and who we could not talk to. Workers at Wheatstone were off limits, as were workers for sub-contractors Bechtel. Any worker connected in any way to the project was not to be approached for comment. Implicit in this warning was the suggestion any breach of this would result in the loss of employment for the worker. Chevron also advised against using unauthorised images or statements, and demanded that everything must be pre-approved by publication.

The project received financial support from the Shire of Ashburton to cover airfares, accommodation costs and some printing, but after publication of the magazine's third edition revealed community displeasure at the Shire, Cr Peter Foster raised a concern that the shire was not being painted in a positive enough light in the magazines, and suggested the funding arrangements be terminated. Chevron was also not happy with the negative publicity.

The Edition 4 editorial addressed these issues, and spelt out the project's essence in no uncertain terms:

This project is supported by the Shire of Ashburton that funds our visits to Onslow, while respecting the independence of our journalism. We receive no funding from Chevron or BHP Billiton. Despite our neutral position, we get little cooperation from Chevron which refuses to give us access to any Chevron staff or sites and went as far as blocking us from attending a CRG meeting held on February 12, 2014, at the Onslow Sports Club. In the words of community liaison officer Jeremy Coulson “You can't come in. It's for community members only. We ran it past our manager in Perth and he was not keen on you coming in.” We were told by community members after the meeting that several contentious issues were raised but they are clearly issues that Chevron would rather keep a lid on. It's incidents like this that convince us that the task of telling the real story of Onslow is an important one and we are grateful to the many locals who take time to talk to us and tell their stories and concerns (Davies, 2014a, p 1).

When Edition 5 came around the shire wavered in its support, refusing to fund airfares and accommodation, citing financial troubles as the reason. However, contact with community members revealed issues that needed to be followed up. According to the Edition 5 editorial:

After a phone around for updates it was clear that this is not the time to be letting go of the process of documenting the challenges facing the Onslow community...one of the key functions of journalism is operating as a ‘town square’, where the opinions of different members of the community are aired. In this way a publication can help facilitate debate and understanding between different groups. We know that not everyone in Onslow agrees with each other, but we seek to allow everyone a space to speak through our pages. Sometimes opinions are based on misunderstood facts and so some of the things people say may not be true. We can't vouch for the truth of what people we spoke to said, but we have faithfully recorded it so that this edition is a true record of what was being said in and about Onslow in mid-late 2014 (Davies, 2014b, p 1).

Shire support returned for Edition 6, although for a smaller crew and fewer than usual nights' accommodation. The project's difficult path was acknowledged in the editorial of Edition 6:

As far as I know, this is the final edition of Tracking Onslow...We agreed to make a series of six magazines over three years in order to track the impact of the gas hubs...The deal required an understanding on the part of the Shire that the journalism in the magazine would be independent. This magazine is not a PR tool for the shire, for Chevron, for the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, or for any

particular group in the community. Our aim instead is to do the things that journalism ideally should do, and one of these is to function as a town square where everyone's views are shared, so that questions can be answered and issues debated. This means that if we speak to people who are critical of the Shire or Chevron or other groups then those views can be published here. We hope that in doing so we give all of the parties involved in shaping Onslow's future an opportunity to respond to each other's concerns (Davies, 2015, p 1).

Although Foucault (1980, p. 133) does concede that truth cannot be saved, or “emancipated” from all power systems, he said it must be detached from the hegemonic, social, economic and cultural ties that bind it. In WA, these hegemonic, social, economic and cultural ties have long made the landscape a battlefield, with competing interests of Aboriginal, resource industry, environmental, agricultural and pastoral stakeholders dominating and complicating the popular discourse.

Regimes of truth borne from colonial/settler practices and beliefs are not simply ideological statements, but foundations that allowed a pro-development ideology to emerge. This pro-development ideology dominates the state, and facilitates its economic expansion. This dominant discourse that positions mining and resource extraction as economic pillars framing WA's very existence is difficult to challenge, as the 'regime of truth' is intrinsically linked to the state's foundation and history. Foucault proposes that practices of resistance, or discontinuities, can modify the rules that formulate discursive statements, which are the building blocks of discourses.

Discontinuities can adapt the structure that formulates discursive statements, but these practices do not enable us to extricate ourselves from the system, or operate in its margins. As Foucault (1980, p 141) said:

One is never outside power, there are no margins for those who break with the system to gambol in. But this does not entail the necessity of accepting an inescapable form of domination (Foucault, 1980, p. 141).

Power systems are often hard to see and separate from the explicit political/legal framework. Despite this, relations of power do not function in the absence of resistance, nor does power simply resist change. It exists in the realm of fluid interpersonal dynamics that enable spin, lobbying and old boy's networks that can be hard to pin down in terms of

watchdog identification of wrongdoing. Foucault warns that:

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge and produces discourse (Foucault, 1980, p.119).

Breaking Foucault's statement down, and positioning Chevron as the site of power, or a player, we can consider the things the company produces. These include glossy brochures, colourful television advertisements and promotional press releases that glorify the project's physical achievements that are distributed by a well-financed and professional public relations department. The company induces pleasure by acting as main sponsor to community events such as; the Perth International Arts Festival, the Passion of the Pilbara music and arts festival, National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) celebrations and the Perth City to Surf fun run. Chevron also offers the community financial support through marketing and social investment partnerships, and its Community Spirit Fund, which provides funding for community projects in the Pilbara. According to Chevron documents, over \$1 million in Spirit grants has been handed to community groups since 2006 (Chevron, 2015).

This induction of pleasure and production of things allows Chevron to insert attractive and digestible discursive statements into the field of discourse with the aim of controlling what other participants perceive to be 'truth', but not all statements have to be accepted as absolute truth and people do not have to read Chevron's output like it was Gospel. The truth being promoted is a fabric, and the fabric itself is not real or binding. High level journalism can prick at this fabric, and dispute Chevron's versions of truth, by engaging in reflexive critique and negotiating with other sites of power and giving voice to other players. These practices are modes of resistance.

Foucault said knowledge can be defined as true or false only within the framework of social systems of truth, which can be changed from the inside. These regimes, or strategies contain the discourses Foucault refers to as "tactical elements or accumulations in a field of power relations" (1972, 140). In journalism, knowledge and power are held by those whose social status allows them a voice. Those without a social position or prestige often struggle to have their voices heard in the public sphere. The knowledge they possess is hidden knowledge. Knowledge that Foucault describes as subjugated, or deficient, is hidden from the system and not published in the public sphere. This is similar to Bacon's (2006, 149)

description of the production of “silence about truth objects and facts”. This hidden knowledge is what I have tried to insert into the discourse about Onslow and the WA resource industry through my journalism.

The mainstream media often presents constructed representations through discursive policies of inclusion and exclusion. There are guidelines and news-worthiness criteria commonly used to regulate who can speak and who cannot speak (Masterton, 1992; Lamble, 2004). The standard news-writing practice prescribes how the topics may be discussed (included) and how they should not be discussed (excluded). While long-form journalism often aims to fulfil the town square function and to give voice to the voiceless, much short-form news reporting privileges the voices of decision makers such as politicians, experts and business owners. In terms of covering the resource sector and the Pilbara, the economic benefits of various resource projects and employment figures across the industry are included, along with company-sponsored studies and reports. Meanwhile, the concerns of Onslow resident Felicity Brennan and others that their town has lost its sense of community, or the concerns of Margaret Parker that Bindi Bindi is a forgotten community, are excluded.

Although to Foucault, journalism is a mechanism of power, it can also be a mode of resistance, a practice which does not necessarily have to succeed in terms of standard measures of newswriting excellence such as awards and large circulation, to be successful. Like a guerrilla war, where small armies inflict damage on bigger forces by using cunning rather than artillery, so too can journalism cause fractures (discontinuities) to disrupt transmission of the particular truths or dominant narratives.

Foucault does, after all, implore those of us faced with resistance from powerful players in a field of discourse to: “confront them and construct the instruments which will enable you to fight on that terrain (1980, 65).” Therefore, my journalism can be seen as an instrument, or weapon, in the battle for truth.

## CONCLUSION

So, has journalism as a research methodology, in this Edition 6 application, adequately fulfilled not only the watchdog function as defined by Errington & Miragliotta (2011) but also the town square and first draft of history functions, amidst the power struggles contesting the sphere? The answer is yes, and the following paragraphs will demonstrate all three functions. In doing this, the journalism produced functions as a practice of resistance that facilitates discontinuity.

The watchdog function, or the fourth estate, enshrines the notion: "that the media will stand on guard over democracy, closely watching and evaluating the political decision makers" (Errington and Miragliotta, 2011, p 8). By carefully monitoring and engaging with the political and economic decision makers on a community, local, state and national level, my journalism has fulfilled this function.

According to Errington & Miragliotta, (2011, p 9), the town square, or facilitator of the public sphere function, allows the public to engage in dialogue and debate in: "a marketplace of ideas in which opinions can be debated, contested and ultimately shared. The Tracking Onslow project, in having aimed to primarily function as a first draft of history by documenting verifiable physical changes and evolving perceptions in the town, to some extent avoided being locked in a struggle over providing a single dominant narrative.

The project has though, by using the techniques described by Lamble (2011), applied impartiality and editorial independence, backed up by fair and balanced reporting. In doing so, the project has provided a space in which Foucault's "changing struggles in space and time" can be observed. By interviewing a wide range of people and ensuring individual voices are heard and published, my journalism has fulfilled this function.

When de Burgh (2000, p 3) refers to journalism as: "the first rough draft of history," it is in reference to the similarities between the tasks of the journalist and the historian, who both seek evidence to apply interpretation and narrative. The notion implies a fair, balanced and accurate reporting of the truth as it happens. By applying impartiality and editorial independence, and fair and balanced reporting, my journalism has fulfilled the first draft of history function.

While, in a Foucauldian sense, I have not overthrown the power structure, or cut off the head of the king, I have introduced knowledge to the discursive field, and that is the act of resistance. When Foucault talks of resistance to power, he declares that who controls knowledge controls power. By influencing knowledge I influenced power, therefore fulfilling the watchdog role. As the watchdog functions to bring in other voices to question the “truth” provided by the powerful players, it also acts out the town square role, and creates a first draft of history. As history books are written primarily by the victors, Tracking Onslow and my first drafts of history can be thought of as raw material for future historians, published so that future omission of these voices will be open to public scrutiny.

So therefore contemporary Australian journalism (as described by Lamble, 2004) can fulfill the watchdog function, as defined by Errington & Miragliotta (2011) in a resource town amidst corporate and government power struggles and bids to control the narrative. And, subsequently, projects like Tracking Onslow can fill functional gaps in contemporary Australian journalism practice and process.

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## Appendix 1

**Table 1. Detailing costs and timelines of projects on DSD 24 projects list**

	<b>Project</b>	<b>Run by</b>	<b>Money from</b>	<b>Proposed start-end</b>	<b>Comments &amp; status in July 2015</b>
<b>1</b>	Ocean View Caravan Park	Shire	Shire stage 1 \$4.2m	Late 2014-early 2015	Construction in progress
<b>2</b>	Shire admin building	Shire	Shire \$4.7m (including insurance from fire) Chevron \$2m	Early 2015-mid 2016	Tender for construction awarded
<b>3</b>	Town Centre improvements	Shire	Chevron \$3m	Not determined	Yet to be planned
<b>4</b>	School: 3 transportable rooms	Dept. Education	Chevron \$undisclosed	Not determined	
<b>5</b>	Swimming pool	Shire	Chevron \$7m	Early 2016-mid 2017	Concept & broad specs stage
<b>6 &amp; 7</b>	Skate park & basketball stadium	Shire	BHPB \$5m	Late 2015-mid 2016	Tenders called for BB courts, SP to follow
<b>8</b>	New hospital	WA Country Health Service	State Gov. \$19.8m (RFR) + Chevron \$22m = \$41.8m	Late 2015-early 2018	See story on page 9
<b>9</b>	Wastewater Bindi Bindi	LandCorp & Dept. Housing	\$ undisclosed	April 2014-early 2015	Done
<b>10</b>	Onslow Ring Road	Main Roads	\$ Undisclosed.	Mid 2015-late 2015	Underway
<b>11</b>	Groh Housing	Dept. Housing	Gov. land \$ undisclosed Chevron houses \$ undisclosed	Mid 2015-early 2016	Land appears ready, building not started
<b>12</b>	Interim worker accommodation	Dept. Housing	\$ undisclosed	Completed early 2014	Completed
<b>13</b>	Waste management (Tip)	Shire	\$ undisclosed	Early 2015-late 2017	Started but it hit flooding problems

<b>14</b>	Barrarda Estate 220 lots	LandCorp	LandCorp \$ undisclosed Chevron to buy 50 lots for \$ undisclosed	April 2014- mid 2015	See story on page 14
<b>15</b>	Beadon Creek marina	Dept. Transport	\$20m-30m	Not determined	No sign of action
<b>16</b>	New primary & high school	Dept. Education	\$ undisclosed	Not determined	
<b>17</b>	Wastewater plant upgrade	Water Corp	Chevron \$ undisclosed	Late 2014- late 2015	??
<b>18a</b>	Water supply Desal plant	Water Corp & Chevron des & build	Chevron \$ undisclosed	Mid 2015- mid 2016	Not started yet
<b>18b</b>	Cane River Borefields upgrade + 2 tanks	Water Corp	Stage 1 State Gov. \$9.9m (RFR) Water Corp \$14.7m Chevron \$ undisclosed. (1 tank)	Mid 2014- mid 2016	2 tanks installed, stage 1 done, stage 2 underway
<b>19</b>	Onslow airport	Shire	Gov. \$13m Chevron \$34m Shire \$5m= \$52m	Late 2013- early 2015	Operational but still work going on
<b>20</b>	Light Industrial Area	Shire	\$ undisclosed	To be determined	LandCorp is scoping
<b>21</b>	Onslow Road- upgrades	Main Roads	Chevron \$ undisclosed	Phase 1 completed 2012 phase 2 mid 2017	Phase 2 subject to monitoring for requirement
<b>22</b>	Old Onslow conservation	Shire > Pilbara Regional Council	Chevron \$1m	Mid 2015- late 2016	No sign of action yet
<b>23</b>	4 Mile Creek upgrades	Shire	Chevron \$0.245m	Completed 2013	The parking stumps are still bemusing <sup>8</sup>
<b>24</b>	Power station/Desal	Chevron to build Horizon to run	Chevron \$ undisclosed	Mid 2015- mid 2016	No sign of action yet

<sup>8</sup> The Shire marked out the carpark at 4-mile with posts that makes the area resemble a maze

## Appendix 2

**Table 2. Questions asked for Assignment 1**

<b>Question Asked</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Method of Contact</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Answer Received</b>
<b>Do you have confidence in the Shire's capacity and ability to complete projects</b>	Shire President	Face to face approach	On the record interview	Yes
<b>Request breakdown of Chevron and State spending</b>	Premier	Email	No response	No
<b>Request copy of ANSIA State Development Agreement</b>	Premier	Email	No response	No
<b>Request copy of ANSIA SDA from Parliamentary library</b>	Robin Chapple	Telephone	Advised document not available	No
<b>Are projects on schedule</b>	Shire President	Face to face approach	On the record interview	Yes
<b>Are there any delays holding up projects</b>	Shire President	Face to face approach	On the record interview	Yes
<b>Request breakdown of Chevron spending</b>	DSD	Email & Telephone	Official statement	Yes
<b>Request breakdown of State government spending</b>	DSD	Email & Telephone	Official statement	No
<b>Asked about project delays</b>	DSD	Email & Telephone	Official statement	No
<b>Asked for progress report on Shire's projects</b>	Shire CEO	Telephone	On the record interview	Yes
<b>Request breakdown of company</b>	Chevron	Telephone & email	Official statement	Yes

<b>spending in Onslow</b>				
<b>Asked to describe mood in town</b>	OCCI President	Face to face approach	On the record interview	Yes
<b>For comment on Onslow's progress and future</b>	State Opposition Leader	Email	No response	No
<b>For comment on Onslow's progress and future</b>	Shadow State Development Minister	Email	No response	No
<b>Request cost breakdown of Onslow Royalties for Regions funding</b>	Vince Catania MLC	Telephone	Comprehensive document	Yes
<b>Request cost breakdown and progress report</b>	Department of Education	Telephone	Official statement	Yes
<b>Request cost breakdown and progress report</b>	Department of Housing	Telephone	Official statement	Yes
<b>Request cost breakdown and progress report</b>	Main Roads	Email	Official statement	Yes
<b>Request cost breakdown and progress report</b>	Water Corporation	Telephone	Official statement	Yes
<b>Request cost breakdown and progress report</b>	Department of Transport	Telephone	Official statement	Yes
<b>For comment on mood in town</b>	Local resident Felicity Brennan	Face to face approach	Off the record interview	Yes
<b>For comment on changes in town</b>	Local resident Bonnie Palermo	Face to face approach	On the record interview	Yes
<b>Asked about Macedon fund</b>	BHP Billiton	Telephone	Off the record interview	Yes

## Appendix 3

**Table 3. Questions asked for Assignment 2**

<b>Question Asked</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Method of Contact</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Answer Received</b>
<b>Asked permission for Wheatstone visit</b>	Chevron	Telephone	Face to face approach	Yes
<b>For comment on FIFO mental health Parliamentary inquiry</b>	Chevron	Telephone & Email	Official statement	Yes
<b>For comment on allegations of tax evasion</b>	Chevron	Telephone & Email	Official statement	No
<b>Asked about media reports suggesting workers feel 'imprisoned' at Wheatstone</b>	Chevron	Telephone & Email	Official statement	No
<b>Are workers restricted from town</b>	Chevron	Telephone & Email	Official statement	No
<b>Is Wheatstone on schedule</b>	Chevron	Telephone & Email	Official statement	Yes
<b>Can the company override a Bechtel decision</b>	Chevron	Telephone & Email	Official statement	No
<b>Are you confident Wheatstone will remain on schedule, in light of ATO reports about Chevron's alleged transfer-pricing and debt push down tax avoidance activities?</b>	Premier	Email	No response	No
<b>Chevron claims WA has "rigid and inflexible industrial relations systems, uncompetitive taxation, red and</b>	Premier	Email	No response	No

<b>green tape, high labour costs and inadequate productivity" Do you agree?</b>				
<b>To explain why Wheatstone project granted exemption from greenhouse gas reporting requirements</b>	Robin Chapple	Telephone	On the record interview	Yes
<b>To explain why Wheatstone project granted exemption from greenhouse gas reporting requirements</b>	Chris Tallentire	Telephone	On the record interview	Yes
<b>For data on Pilbara Oil &amp; Gas industry</b>	The Australia Institute	Email	No such data available	No

## Appendix 4

**Table 4. Questions asked for Assignment 3**

Question Asked	Source	Method of Contact	Response	Answer Received
<b>How do Thalanyji view the changes in town</b>	BTAC CEO	Telephone	No comment	No
<b>To clarify issue of remote community closures in the Pilbara</b>	DAA	Telephone & Email	Email	No
<b>Are any Pilbara communities in danger of closure</b>	Premier	Telephone & Email	No response	No
<b>Is Bindi community in danger of closing</b>	Shire president	Face to face approach	On the record interview	Yes
<b>How many Bindi residents secured employment with Chevron/Bechtel</b>	REFAP	Face to face approach	No comment	No
<b>For progress report on available programs</b>	REFAP	Face to face approach	On the record interview	Yes
<b>Asked how community feel about changes in town</b>	Bindi Bindi leader	Face to face approach	On the record interview	Yes
<b>Asked for his views on life in Onslow</b>	Bindi Bindi resident Rocky	Face to face approach	On the record interview	Yes
<b>Asked for his views on life in Onslow</b>	Bindi Bindi resident Patrick	Face to face approach	On the record interview	Yes
<b>Asked about drug use in community</b>	WAPOL Sgt Drew Taylor	Face to face approach	Off the record interview	Yes
<b>Asked to explain how Bindi</b>	Pilbara Meta Maya	Telephone	On the record interview	Yes

<b>residents access house maintenance services</b>				
<b>Asked for interview</b>	Consultant Graham Barrett	Face to face approach	Not available	No
<b>Asked for information on local drug trade</b>	Confidential source	Face to face approach	Off the record interview	Yes