Measuring the Performance of Australian Politicians: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

This thesis is an exploratory qualitative research-based investigation into why it is difficult for stakeholders and constituents to accurately define and measure the performance of their individual Australian political representatives in the electorate and parliament. Evidence suggests that ‘everyday’ people, whether they are a voter, constituent or stakeholder in the Australian political process, have expressed varying degrees of apathy, disgust, distrust or a pure dislike for politicians both individually and collectively. Voters’ complaints appear to range from an inability to determine how politicians make decisions, a perceived lack of political transparency, and the lack of ability to measure a politician’s performance, to the politician’s lack of accountability to the voting public. Nonetheless, Australian politicians have been quick to embrace principles and methods that ensure Australians are subject to increasing productivity targets and gains while reducing the natural, human and financial resources available to complete the tasks at hand.

The major objectives of this research involve understanding the political processes by which politicians view their ‘world’ including:

1. How do politicians define performance?
2. How do politicians gauge how other politicians are performing?
3. How do politicians negotiate their conflict between personal and party beliefs and values?

These in turn lead to the following research question: Why is it difficult for constituents and stakeholders to measure the performance of individual Australian politicians?

Evidence obtained from two surveys of serving Australian politicians and a number of personal interviews with a wide spectrum of current and former politicians reveal that political performance is totally subjective; it depends on what and how achievement is measured, and it varies between being in government or opposition. In essence, performance has to include both political outcomes and public approval, and as such these two elements can be subjective and opposing. The evidence also highlights that there are different measures of success or achievement that apply to different politician types. For instance, while some
politicians’ value being a strong campaigner; others value eloquence in the art of debate in parliament.

The common perception is that political performance is very hard to define given that most constituents and stakeholders think of politicians in the general media as ‘performing’. Yet a high performing legislator might have zero public profile outside their own electorate, given their political involvement mainly relates to policy work undertaken in the State Upper House or Federal Senate; work generally unseen by community members. The evidence also indicates that it is often difficult enough for an individual politician to assess their own performance level as a member of parliament, let alone analyse someone else's.

The research results strongly show that political performance is neither black nor white. Rather, the act of perceived performing belongs in the grey area, and in all probability contains varying levels of self-interest for the individual politician. Every political action or reaction can be considered a compromise based on negotiation to achieve an appropriate outcome which cannot or may not be universally classified as ‘good’ or ‘bad’. The consequence of such political actions is that everyone will have their own interpretation of the result, which will ultimately determine the level of satisfaction that the constituent or stakeholder experiences.

It is this subjectivity that politicians contend makes it difficult for constituents and other politicians to accurately assess their performance, because there are often huge differences between each constituent’s, stakeholder’s and politician’s needs, beliefs, values and political views, even within the same political party. This juxtaposed environment contributes to a preference for political self-interest among general stakeholders as well as politicians, high levels of ambiguity, secrecy, conflict, confusion and inconsistency, and a lack of satisfaction by constituent and stakeholders because there are few tangible measures by which the politician’s actions and outcomes can be accurately measured.
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the work and effort that my primary academic Supervisor, Dr Ron Kluvers has undertaken an immense workload since work commenced on this thesis in 2005 and thank him for all of his efforts. I would also like to thank Dr Mohammad Azim and those both in the faculty and outside who have offered constructive advice and at times, criticism of the research that was conducted. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the editorial assistance provided by Jeanette Walton. I believe that both her advice and criticism has led to a much richer and balanced final outcome.

Second, I would like to thank the research participants who elected to participate in this project, for without their participation, this thesis would never had eventuated.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Elizabeth and daughter Amelia for their unwavering support and perseverance with me during what at times has proved to be a tedious and unwanted part of their lives.
Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other institution. To the best of my knowledge, the work of no other person has been used without due acknowledgement, and the thesis is not written in collaboration with any other person.

Shane Milroy
November, 2015
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<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>APS</td>
<td>Australian Public Service</td>
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<td>ASG</td>
<td>Australian System of Government</td>
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<td>ATO</td>
<td>Australian Taxation Office</td>
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<td>BPM</td>
<td>Business Performance Management</td>
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<td>BSIF</td>
<td>Business Performance Measurement</td>
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<td>BSI</td>
<td>Balanced Score Card Institute of Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOE</td>
<td>U.S. Department of Energy</td>
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<td>GAO</td>
<td>U.S. General Accounting Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>KM</td>
<td>Knowledge Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>KPI</td>
<td>Key Performance Indicator</td>
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<td>NFP</td>
<td>Not for Profit</td>
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<td>NPM instruments</td>
<td>Efficiency measures, or as otherwise known – efficiency or evidentiary artefacts</td>
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<td>NPM</td>
<td>New Public Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>OMB</td>
<td>U.S. Office of Management and Budget</td>
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<tr>
<td>PMI</td>
<td>Performance Measurement Indicator. Also referred to in literature as a key performance indicator or KPI</td>
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<td>PS</td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
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<td>PSM</td>
<td>Public Service Motivation</td>
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<td>TSO</td>
<td>Third Sector Organization. Interchangeable with and also referred to in the thesis as a Not for Profit Organization (NFP)</td>
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<td>USNSCG</td>
<td>United States National Standards for Civics and Government</td>
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 Purpose of this thesis

This thesis is an exploratory qualitative research based study into the issues surrounding the measurement of politician's performance. However, it is an acknowledged by the author that due to the complexity and breadth of this subject matter it would be impossible to include all aspects of performance measurement for politicians within the word limits of this thesis. Therefore, while acknowledging the extensive literature on performance measurement and voter theory, this thesis will focus on performance management systems found in business, the public sector and third sector organizations (also referred to as not-for-profit organizations in this thesis) that have direct bearing on the ability of the individual or group to measure the performance of politicians.

1.1.2 Definitions of terms used in this thesis

For the purposes of this thesis, a politician is defined as ‘a person who is or has been elected and held a political office’ (Free Dictionary 2013). The term ‘politician’ also includes the following synonyms: Member of Parliament, MP, legislator, representative, minister, political leader, lawmaker; senator, elected official, councillor, assemblyman or assemblywoman (Free Dictionary 2013).

A constituent is generally defined as ‘a voter or member of an area or electorate that elects a representative to a legislative or parliamentary body such as the Legislative Assembly, parliament or Senate’. The Merriam Webster Dictionary (2013) defines a constituent as ‘a person who authorizes another to act as agent or principal; is a member of a constituency and forms an essential part of the electorate as a voting member’. However, a constituent may not reside or work in an area impacted by a local parliamentary member’s decisions, but may instead be directly affected in other ways. For the purposes of this thesis, persons fitting within the latter criteria are categorized as ‘stakeholders’; bearing in mind the term ‘stakeholder’ is wide-ranging. w
Stakeholdermap.com defines a stakeholder as ‘a person who can affect or is affected by the actions of an organization, strategy or project’. Other definitions have suggested that stakeholders are those who have the power to impact an organization or project in some way:

“[Stakeholders are] people or small groups with the power to respond to, negotiate with, and change the strategic future of the organization.” (Eden and Ackermann 1998)

Yet Bryson (2004) argued that this is a somewhat restrictive or ambiguous definition, because it excludes those who are affected but do not have any power to respond to or negotiate with the organization. From a business, industrial or human relations perspective, a stakeholder is a person or group not owning shares in an enterprise but affected by or having an interest in its operations, such as the employees, customers and local community. From a government, political or diplomatic perspective, a stakeholder is a person or group, of or relating to policies intended to allow people to participate in and benefit from decisions made by political enterprises in which they have a stake, i.e. voters, constituents and stakeholders (Bryson 2004).

1.1.3 Motivation for thesis

Generally, evidence collected as part of the literature review suggests that ‘everyday’ people, whether they are a voter, constituent or stakeholder in the Australian political process, have expressed varying degrees of apathy, disgust, distrust or a pure dislike for politicians both individually and collectively (Harris 2013; Carney 2013; Transparency International 2013; Coorey 2012). Voters’ complaints range from an inability to determine how politicians make decisions (Chenhall, Hall and Smith 2013), a lack of political transparency (Assange 2013), the lack of ability to measure a politicians’ performance (Rais 2013) to the politician’s lack of accountability to the voting public (Froomkin 2013).

Nonetheless, Australian politicians have been quick to embrace principles and methods that ensure Australian constituents are subject to increasing productivity targets and gains while reducing the natural, human and financial resources available to complete the tasks at hand (OECD 2003; UNEP/CSIRO 2013; Mohr, Somers, Swartz and Vanthournout 2012). This has been especially true in the public sector (Bassett, et. al 2010) and third sector organizations (TSOs) (Enhancing Australia’s Productivity Growth, Annual Report 2007-08).
Previous and current governments at all levels have adopted various models of performance management theories, as well as tools, often based on the principles of the Balanced Score Card (Kaplan and Norton 1996) or similar models (Shulver and Lawrie 2007; Neely Adams and Kennerley 2002), to ensure productivity gains are made. Performance measurement and management models abound and are used by employers (whether they be public or private) to ensure workers are regularly monitored, to ensure optimum performance is maintained with minimal use of resources and support (OMB Circular A–11 2013). Given that technically, constituents are the employers of politicians, why is it that voters cannot measure the performance of politicians in the same manner that stakeholders and customers measure the performance of managers and leaders in the private sector? After all, it has been argued that politicians funded by taxpayers are nothing but representatives, delegates or agents elected to represent the interests of their employers (Free Dictionary 2013; Spingola 2005) – the Australian community.

Available evidence suggests that individual politicians are not subjected to the same scrutiny as stakeholders they lead and manage (Clark 2013; Bartels 2008). Politicians argue that it would be impossible to measure their performance in the same manner that others in the workforce are subjected to. They believe their individual performance is ultimately measured at the ballot box every three or four years, depending on which parliament they belong to (Deitrick and Goldfarb 2012).

However, evidence suggests that this explanation is losing its impact, with the rest of the workforce now demanding increased accountability (Froomkin 2013) and transparency (Assange 2013) from their representatives in the electorate and parliament (Rhode and Packel 2009). The major outcome is that constituents and stakeholders do not trust their political representatives because it is very difficult both in cost and time for voters, constituents and stakeholders outside the political system to monitor and assess how well or how badly an individual politician is performing (Rais 2013; Bartels 2008; Ter Bogt 2002; Jessinghaus 1999, 2000).

1.1.4 Australian government, politicians and constituents’ expectations

Australia is a federation of six states which, together with two self-governing territories, have separate constitutions, parliaments, governments and laws. However, the state and territory governments are also based on the same principles of parliamentary government as the

While Australia’s systems of government are well documented, Professor Williams AO (2011) noted that the average Australian possesses an appalling lack of knowledge about their systems of government when compared with other nations, including how the Australian political system works and how politicians operate both in parliament and as a local member on behalf of their constituents. It encompasses matters as basic as politicians’ performance and the impacts of that behaviour on the quality of education Australian children receive or the treatment members of the community receive in public hospitals. Yet rather than being distanced from the Australian community, politics and politicians have a profound impact on every Australian’s day-to-day quality of life and future prosperity (Williams 2011).

This author’s research on the internet has disclosed a large amount of material published by ‘various’ Australian governments, both state and federal, that informs voters, constituents and stakeholders about ‘their political mechanisms without fully detailing the impact these mechanisms have on their everyday lives. For example, the Parliament of Australia Information Sheet No. 20 explains the ‘Australian system of government’, while Information sheet No. 13 discusses ‘the Constitution’, while No. 19 ‘the House, government and opposition’ respectively.

That said, Williams (2011) argued that few Australians take the time to learn about their own parliamentary systems, such as the role of the parliamentary government and Senate; the separation of powers between the parliamentary government, public service and judiciary; the parliament as an institution to make laws; the executive government including the ministry, prime minister, and Cabinet; or the role of the Governor-General as representative of the head of state, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second; and their influence on ordinary citizens’ lives (Williams 2011).

Yet given that Australia is a representative democracy, why is it so important that constituents understand the political system by which they are governed, and more importantly feel confident in the performance of the candidates they elected to carry out the business of governing on their behalf? It is often argued that Australians are a laid-back population (Tourism Australia 2013), more interested in sport or long weekends than
learning about the fundamental tenets of politics that govern their everyday lives (Rowe 2013).

In comparison, the United States National Standards for Civics and Government (USNSCG) (2013) actively proposed that a grassroots civic education is essential for a well-educated, knowledgeable and politically engaged citizenry. As part of its role in educating its citizens, the USNSCG contends that politics is a process by which groups of people, whose opinions or interests may be divergent, reach collective decisions that are generally regarded as binding on the group and enforced as common policy. Politics enables people to accomplish goals they could not realize as individuals. Politics always arises wherever communities exist, since collective decisions of one kind or another must be reached for the community to prosper and grow.

USNSCG further argued that differing assumptions about the proper relationship between civic and private lives influences ideas about the purposes of government. These differing ideas generally have profound consequences on the wellbeing of both individuals and society. Therefore, from an Australian perspective, voter’s constituents and stakeholders all need to understand competing ideas about political life, politics (the performance of their individual political representatives) and government. This is necessary so that voters, constituents and stakeholders can make informed judgments about what government and their own political representatives should and should not do, or how they are to live their lives together, and how to support the proper use of authority or combat the abuse of political power. Conversely, Alesina and Cukierman (1990) argued that generally, politicians face a trade-off between the policies and actions that maximize their chances of re-election and the politician’s most preferred policies or the policies most preferred by their constituency. They further indicated that voters are deliberately not fully informed about the preferences of the politician. Their research revealed that the incumbent generally adopts a policy which is intermediate between the opposition party’s ideal policy and their own. Rowe, Wilcox and Gadlin (2009) further argued that the most common reasons for a politician’s hesitation in answering questions include a fear of being made accountable for the individual’s own actions or inaction, a loss of power and control in relationships, a loss of respect or status, a loss of privacy, and a fear of ‘bad consequences’ or ‘retaliation’ from opponents. This may help to explain why politicians generally prefer to loosely commentate on the overall performance of the political party or independent support organization to which they belong,
rather than the complex and ambiguous socio-economic environments in which they operate.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to address the current gap in academic evidence concerning how individual politicians define performance measurement from an individual perspective in the pursuit of their duties as elected representatives of the Australian community. Addressing this gap will be achieved via the use of electronic surveys and face-to-face interviews with current and former Australian politicians. Based on the results of these surveys and interviews, the candidate will present evidence that reflects on the issues that affect the ability of stakeholders and constituents to accurately identify the performance of their elected political representative.

1.2 An introduction to performance measurement

In line with the 1950’s belief that everything political can be measured, research undertaken in the Nordic countries, Northern Europe and the USA in the 1950’s and 1960’s was conducted with the purpose of identifying a single model that could be used to measure the performance of politicians (Downs 1957; Homans 1958). However, by the late 1950’s – early 1960’s – it started to become apparent that no single model of performance measurement for politicians existed. Yet research identified numerous indicators that could be used or were capable of measuring a politician’s personal performance in their political role (Davis 1957; Downs 1957; Lane 1959; De Grazia 1957; Homan 1958; Mitchell 1958; Linz 1959; 1978; Modell 2001; De Bruijn 2002; Ter Bogt 2002, Rais 2013).

In the 21st century, contemporary performance measurement theorists again believed that everything and anything can be measured to determine whether the object or person is performing to optimum levels. Some theorists contended that even intangible actions in a personal belief and values-based normative environment, such as religion or politics, can be measured through performance management systems such as the Balanced Score Card (Kaplan and Norton 1996) and the Performance Prism (Neely, Adams and Kennerley 2002).

Theorists such as Jessinghaus (1999, 2000), Moore (2006) and Rais (2013) highlighted that there are elements in a personal belief and values-based normative environment including
individual politicians, political parties and political environments that can be measured using current business performance measurement (BPM) tools. However, most of these performance measures are crude and lack sophistication, and generally involve minor and easily identified activities such as participation in public debates, and the number and frequency of responses to voter questions and media interviews and articles written. In other words, the performance measures relate to tangible actions that can be measured using traditional business-based performance indicators.

In effect, performance indicators of this type generally fail to provide useful information as to the overall effectiveness of the individual politician’s performance in meeting their obligations as a political representative of the community, where many of the actions undertaken involve activities based on personal beliefs and values (Ter Bogt 2002; Johnsen 2005; Alesina and Tabellini 2007, 2008; Passarelli and Tabellini 2013). Rais (2013) further argued that accomplishing measuring politicians’ performance is difficult, given the complex and ambiguous nature of the political environment. He therefore posed the question that if the very goals are unclear, how can voters, constituents or stakeholders measure whether they are achieved in a satisfactory manner? Furthermore, the issue of performance measurement becomes more complex and confusing as one climbs higher up the political ladder, given that the political goals become more and more complex, conflicting and ambiguous. Therefore, if Rais’s (2013) contention is given weight, meaningful measurement of parliamentary members’ performance appears almost impossible.

Given the confusion that exists when attempting to measure the effectiveness of an individual politician’s performance, the aims of the research undertaken by the candidate in this thesis are to examine why it is difficult to measure the performance of individual politicians, and the roles that ambiguity, conflict and complexity play in their decision-making processes. This research will further address current gaps in Australian academic literature; the largest gap is that there appears to be minimal research that directly asks individual politicians how they define performance, and further how they measure political performance in Australia. This will be undertaken by examining existing literature and archival material concerning performance measurement and how it generally defined in the business, public service and Third Sector Organization (TSO) environments. Furthermore, an examination based on evidence gained from (79 electronic) surveys received and (12 face to face) interviews with individual politicians will determine how they personally define and
measure performance as political representatives of the community at state and federal political levels.

### 1.3 What is performance and how do we measure it?

The Australian Oxford Dictionary defines performance as the:

“execution (of command etc.); carrying out, doing; notable feat; performing of an action; achievement under test … something performed …”

Bakke (2013), adopting an esoteric perspective, argued that performance is subjective. Therefore, performance can only be measured when it has been generally accepted by all ‘actors’ what is meant by ‘performance’ in a defined arena of performance, such as the performing arts, sport, education, health, business or even politics. Bakke (2013) further argued that consciously or subconsciously, everybody makes assumptions about what performance consists of. For example, he contended that performance is significantly based more on how well you apply the principles outlined in the performance action than to the degree you are born ‘talented’. Rolfe (2013) further argued that a such a definition of performance is important, as it is spoken about and used all the time in general and specifically in Australian politics.

For example, Rolfe (2013) pointed out that Australia is currently in the middle of a debate about same sex marriage and that each side chooses a definition to advance their cause. Furthermore, the definitions used are ‘loaded’, so to speak, to reflect how they value their choice. That is, participants in the debate cannot help injecting their approvals or disapprovals into definitions. Rolfe (2013) further argued that advancing a definition is to plead a cause to advance a claim, and this is where individual and personal leadership comes in. One of the prime skills of a political leader is the capacity to define people and situations, and so shape the context in which opponents, events and proposals are viewed by the public. He contended that a successful leader thus shapes perceptions of opponents and of the political landscape they contest in (Rolfe 2013).

Edwards and Wajcman (2013) in turn argued that the spread of performance management has plainly had an effect on how organizations work; yet it appears that the emphasis on
leadership and performance measurement has not always received the same amount of attention. Performance measurement as a management tool is more common today and it has defined standards of performance in new ways. It is at this point that Edwards and Wajcman (2013) noted that organizational management is often more eager to show results, and as a result might view meeting targets and producing appropriate data as more important than increasing the substantive performance of the organization’s employees.

While performance measurement is generally concerned with current or past performance (Bakke 2013; Edwards and Wajcman 2013; Meyer 2002), the Britannica Concise Encyclopaedia (2013) defines economic performance (an area greatly influenced by government and political policies and political conversation) as ‘the process by which a nation's wealth increases over time’. The rate of economic growth is influenced by natural resources, human resources, capital resources and technological development in the economy, along with institutional structure and stability. Other factors include the level of world economic activity and the terms of trade. The Houghton Mifflin Companion to US History (2013) noted that the direction of economic performance is generally forward-looking in application (e.g. forecasting annual increases in the nation’s total output of goods and services); yet this is only based on the levels of production achieved in past annual quarters (Marron 2012).

Methods of measuring the performance of the economy can be undertaken in various ways. While agreeing that new performance measuring methods are always being sought, Bivens (2013) argued that ultimately the same result generally emerges. For example, one way is to measure improved performance as the ‘value added’ by economic activity in agriculture, manufacturing, mining, and so on.

The United States General Accounting Office (GAO) (2011) defines performance measurement as ‘the ongoing monitoring and reporting of program accomplishments, particularly progress towards pre-established goals’. Therefore, performance measures need to address the type or level of program activities being conducted (process), the direct products and services delivered by a program (outputs), and/or the results of those products and services (outcomes). In line with this The Balanced Score Card Institute of Australia (BSI) (2013) has contended that performance measurement analyzes the success of a work group, program or organization's efforts by comparing data on what actually happened to what was planned or intended (Lisiecka and Czyż-Gwiazda 2013) then asks if progress is
being made toward the desired goals (Fowler 2013; Kantor 2013). Furthermore, performance measurement monitors the implementation and effectiveness of an organization’s strategies, determines the gap between actual and targeted performance, and determines the organizational effectiveness and operational efficiency (Fowler 2013).

The BSI (2013) also notes that effective performance measures provide a way to monitor if the individual’s or organization’s strategy is working, focus employees’ attention on what matters most to succeed, allow measurement of accomplishments rather than just the work that is performed, and provide a common language for communication. Kantor (2013) further argued that performance measurement is explicitly defined in terms of owner, unit of measure, collection frequency, data quality, expected value (targets), and thresholds that are valid, to ensure measurement of the goods or services produced are verifiable, and to ensure the accuracy of data collection.

However, while there are positive aspects to measuring the performance of organizations and individuals as a way of raising productivity or the quantity and quality of outcomes or actions, it needs to be stressed that dysfunctional or unintended responses to performance measurement can also occur. Yet performance measurement is most often viewed positively, such as for measuring a government agency’s performance in order to improve its operations and boost accountability.

For the past 30 years, the business-based model of performance measurement has been widely applied in the public sector—from calculating community crime rates to gauging customer satisfaction through interaction with customer service officers at Centrelink. However, Kelman and Friedman (2009) asserted that as:

“… worthy though this action may be in theory, in practice it occasionally turns into bureaucratic chicanery, or, as scholars in organizational theory put it, ‘dysfunctional responses to performance measurement’.”

Van Thiel and Leeuw (2002), when commenting on the dysfunctional aspects of new public management (NPM) practices in the Public Sector (PS), noted that unintended consequences may not only invalidate conclusions on public sector performance, but can also negatively influence that performance. An unintended performance paradox can, for example, be the result of minimal accountability requirements. Research concerning the
accountability of quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations in the United Kingdom (Hall and Weir 1996) and the Netherlands (Van Thiel 2001) revealed that few requirements are imposed. Van Thiel’s (2001) research further revealed that in some public sector organizations, targets and benchmarks are often missing. Meyer and Gupta 1994 in turn, support this view in that, the fewer the number of performance indicators, the more difficult it becomes to obtain an accurate report of the performance. Moreover, evaluation of auditors’ reports shows a strong inclination to focus on procedures rather than actual performance, and on the absence or presence of performance indicators rather than their quality or content (Leeuw 2000; OECD 1996).

A second cause of an unintended performance paradox is the elusiveness of policy objectives (Wilson 1989). Public policies often have many, and sometimes contradictory, goals. Consequently, performance indicators are usually not neutral but contested measures in the public sector, both among politicians and between politicians and managers (Van Thiel and Leeuw 2002; McGuire 2001). Performance indicators can thus unwittingly cause ambiguous and dysfunctional effects (Van Thiel and Leeuw 2002). However Meyer and Gupta 1994 have argued that while such absences or contradictions of goals and objectives, or even the manipulation of performance results have provoked cynicism, it is generally accepted that the good outcomes of performance measurement far outstrip the bad (Kelman and Friedman 2009).

1.3.1 Impacts of measuring organizational and individual performance

Both Fowler (2013) and Kellen (2003) believed that performance measurement has a variety of uses. For instance Bititci, Carrie and Turner (2002) stated that one of the reasons companies’ measure business performances is to achieve alignment with organizational goals and objectives. Simons (2000) defined the Business Performance Management (BPM) system as a tool to balance tensions within a firm; the most important being able to balance the performance expectations of different stakeholders of the firm. Furthermore, Kellen (2003) stated that practitioners need to treat the business as a complex organism in order for it to survive or thrive in its competitive environment, and for performance measurement systems to serve as a key contributor to its perceptual and coordination/control capabilities. Lastly, Kellen (2003) noted that organizations use BPM systems to help monitor and control specific activities, to predict future internal and external
states, to monitor state and behavior relative to goals, to make decisions within needed time frames, and to alter the firm’s overall orientation and/or behaviour.

Heskett (2011) added that organizational performance coupled with culture is not a soft concept; the impact on profit can be measured and quantified. Effective performance measures can let management and other users know how well the organization is doing, and if the organization’s processes are in statistical control. In summing up, Heskett (2011) stated that a performance measure is normally composed of a number and a unit of measure. Therefore, performance measures should always be tied to a goal or an objective (the target). Ideally, a performance measure should be expressed as a unit of measure that is meaningful to those who use or make decisions based on the measure. The key attribute of a performance measure involves credibility; and that credibility is at its strongest when the performance measure is one that is supported by stakeholders (Brown 2010; Anderson and Brown 2010).

While organizations may develop their own categories of specific performance metrics depending on the organization’s mission, the U.S. GAO (2011) stated that most performance measures can be grouped into one of the following categories:

1. Effectiveness: Are we doing the right things?
2. Efficiency: Are we doing things right?
3. Quality: The degree to which a product or service meets customer requirements and expectations.
4. Timeliness: Measures whether a unit of work is done correctly and on time. Criteria are established to define what constitutes timeliness for a given unit of work.
   Productivity: The value added by the process, divided by the value of the labour and capital consumed.
5. Safety: Measures the overall health of the organization and the working environment of its employees.

The GAO (2011) stressed that from a public service perspective, the government organization must clearly state the agency goals in outcome-based terms, develop a means to measure progress toward those goals, and establish structures and processes to reinforce outcome-based management. One benefit of performance measurement is that it
provides a structured approach for focusing on a program’s strategic plan, goals and performance. Another benefit is that such measurement provides a mechanism for reporting on program performance to upper management. That is, when results differ from objectives, organizations are then able to analyze gaps in performance and make adjustments. The US Department of Energy’s Guidelines for Performance Measurement (1996) propose that performance measurement improve communications internally among employees, as well as externally between the organization and its customers and stakeholders.

Based on this, the. GAO (2013) argued that the emphasis on measuring and improving performance through results-oriented management as opposed to previous input-output, bureaucratic-based theory of public sector management, aligned with the early 20th century hierarchical, mechanistic and administrative theories of Fayol (1910, 1917) and Taylor (1911), has created a new climate of transparency and accountability at all levels in all US government agencies.

1.3.2 Differences in performance measurement between politicians and other workers

Thomas and Davies (2005) reasoned that in government, performance is usually thought of as progress toward goals and objectives, but its measurement is complicated by the fact that the sought-after outcomes are often multiple, vague, shifting and even conflicting (Chang 2009; Hood and Peters 2004). Thomas and Davies (2005) went on to say that this reflects the fact that the outcomes emerge out of the wider political process of competitive political parties and public debate. In countries such as the USA, UK, Canada and Australia, individuals and groups will often disagree strongly over what constitutes good political performance (Thomas and Davies 2005).

Thomas and Davies (2005) further argued that the government’s (political) performance is generally more subject to continuous and critical review by opposition parties, interest groups and the media than the corporate or for-profit businesses. Therefore, for governments, appearing to perform well matters almost as much or more than the reality of performance (Eastman and Collier 2008; Hood and Peters 2004; Van Thiel and Leeuw 2002). For public service managers who operate within the department’s structure, part of
the performance equation is ensuring no surprises and keeping the ministers they serve out of political trouble. Maintaining legitimacy and support for the policies and programs of government is also seen by senior public service managers as a legitimate performance goal (Thomas and Davies 2005; Van Dooren and Thijs 2010). However, it has been suggested that the link between performance measurement and individual politicians is more complicated as there appears to be a general lack of knowledge by constituents as to what politicians actually do in their workplace (Tillema and Ter Bogt 2010).

Due to this lack of formal political knowledge about the activities undertaken by their political representatives, the general public usually have to rely on media reports to keep them informed about current political issues. As a result, they may find political activities and their politicians uninteresting and difficult to understand (Tillema and Ter Bogt 2010; Thomas and Davies 2005; Van Dooren and Thijs 2010); thus making it difficult to judge whether the politician is performing to their expectations (Jessinghaus 1999, 2000).

Eastman and Collier (2008) proposed that in democratic politics, the politician is the agent and the electorate is the principal. That is, just as the alignment of managerial incentives in the corporate sector requires that actions taken by senior management to benefit them also benefits the firm, the alignment of the politician’s incentives with electoral constituents and stakeholders requires that actions taken to enhance their electoral victory prospects are also welfare-enhancing for the electorate. The misalignment of performance occurs in both politics and business when an agent works to advance the welfare not of the electorate or the firm, but only for themselves.

Further issues arise concerning the performance measurement tools which the firm can use to manage agency problems, as opposed to the tools available in the political arena. Agency issues in a firm are directly addressed by attempting to align managerial incentives with firm performance, such as pay for performance (Tabellini 2008; Jensen 1994; Jensen and Meckling 1976), and through competition within the managerial talent market. Furthermore, Eastman and Collier (2008) argued that the performance metrics for evaluating whether the electorate principal’s desired outcomes are achieved are also available to the for-profit firm.
1.4 Why measure performance?

1.4.1 Brief history of performance measurement

When discussing why there is a need to measure performance in both traditional business-based and personal beliefs and values-based environments, it is helpful to understand the history and progress of performance measurement, including its application to both organizations and individuals. This is because both are indelibly linked if the performance management system is going to meet the goals and objectives of the employer, whether they are a private for-profit corporation, a government public service department, or the executive government and its parliamentary members (politicians).

Performance measurement arose in the late 1800’s from the need to improve productivity and simplify the processes used to generate profit for organizations and stakeholders (Fort 2001; Strasnick 1981; Friedman 1962; Drucker 1954). Scientific management (Mitcham and Briggle 2005) was a theory of performance management that analyzed and synthesized workflows; its main objective was improving economic efficiency, especially labour productivity.

The application of this theory of business simplification and improvement was adopted by Henri Fayol (1910) as the genesis for his seminal 1908 thesis titled “L’exposee des principles generaux d’administration”. Based largely on his own management experience, Fayol developed his concept of administration. In 1917 he published this experience in the book Administration Industrielle et Générale, around the same time as Frederick Winslow Taylor published his Principles of Scientific Management (1911). Fayol’s work was one of the first comprehensive statements of a general theory of management (Narayanan and Nath 1993). Fayol (1910) proposed that there were six primary functions of management and 14 principles of management. Many of today’s performance management texts have reduced Fayol’s six primary functions to five: (1) planning; (2) organizing; (3) leading; (4) controlling; and (5) forecasting (Daft and Lengel 1984).

1.4.2 Contemporary reasons for measuring performance

Neely, Adams and Kennerley (2002) reasoned that in today’s world:
“Businesses need to define what strategies they will pursue to ensure that value is delivered to stakeholders … In essence they need to have a clear business model and an explicit understanding of what constitutes and drives good performance starting with stakeholders, not strategy.”

They further subscribed that the use of systemic performance management principles and technologies in their model known as the Performance Prism achieves this in two ways: (1) considering what the stakeholders’ wants and needs are; and conversely (2) what the organization wants and needs from its stakeholders. In turn, each stakeholder is then examined through:

1. stakeholder satisfaction
2. strategies
3. processes
4. capabilities
5. stakeholder contribution.

Another aspect of performance management involves the use of organizational strategies and tactics to achieve goals and objectives. When measuring performance and outcomes, whether it is political, human or mechanical in nature, a person is faced with different and often conflicting definitions of what performance means and how it should be measured. Both Ansari and Bell (1991) and Robey and Sales (1994) linked individual performance to the organization’s control systems. Control systems monitor and evaluate organizational and individual employee performance – they monitor the numerous aspects of performance including budgets, actual expenditure and outputs. Therefore, it has been noted that control systems and performance measurement are used to improve future performance by learning from the mistakes made in the past (Ansari and Bell 1991).

From a management accounting perspective, Hilton (1994) maintained that control systems assist goal congruence through the performance measurement of organizational management and organizational sub-units. Hilton (1994) further maintains that measuring the performance of employees and other stakeholders is one method of motivating employees toward achieving the organization’s goals. In turn, those measurements can be used for multiple purposes including rewarding an employee’s personal performance, by
providing positive and constructive feedback and/or pay increases to employees who meet the organization’s performance expectations. However, Robey and Sales (1994) contended that business managers do not rely on financial or non-financial performance measures alone. They proposed that most managers recognize that financial performance measures only summarize the results of past actions by the employee. Meyer (2002) further suggests that outside the parameters of business and economics, performance management and measurement is about people and machines: why they do something, how they do something, their functioning and their accomplishments. Meyer (2002) also believed that performance is about the present and the past, and is therefore something that can generally be identified, observed and measured.

To assist the organization achieve the desired performance, the individual must first be willing to commit to change (Carnall 1990), as it is the individual who achieves the organizational goals and objectives. Likewise, organizational management must also be prepared to support the employee through the period of change, or run the risk that any changes made will have negative impacts on employee participation in the workplace; in turn negatively impacting on the organizational culture and future economic performance. Van Dooren (2005) referred to this as the ‘supply and demand approach’ to performance measurement; rooted in the information processing tradition of public policy research developed by Bobrow and Dryzek (1989). In this context, performance management is used to measure the condition of the organization’s competencies and capabilities (Van Dooren 2005), especially those that are needed for superior performance (Bean 2003). For business, public service, TSO managers and individual politicians, an effective information system communicates issues of importance to the user, which may result in the development and implementation of solutions to problems, and furthermore indicate performance gaps that can be closed.

1.5 Cultural impacts on measuring business performance

Societal culture is the set of values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and customs that distinguish one society from another (Van Dooren and Van de Walle 2008; Mahoney et al. 1998). Briefly, Mahoney et al. (1998) discussed several characteristics of culture worth noting:
"Culture is shared between members of society and defines the membership of a society."

Culture affects the political, economic, social and ethical rules that individuals and organizations must follow when dealing with the community and its constituents. Individuals and organizations are increasingly becoming accountable through increased government legislation, such as equal opportunities for male and female, and able-bodied and disabled workers, to ensure that corporate and individual behaviour’s correspond with public policies and beliefs and values of society in general. Therefore, organizational culture and workplace congruency is best achieved through a system of agreed measurement methodologies that can be used to gauge specified levels of personal performance in the workplace (Carlopio et al. 1997; Mahoney et al. 1998). Culture also adds to the many problems in measuring performance, especially if the measurement is based on intangibles (including human behaviour and values and beliefs) that are not measured against financial targets or physical outputs.

1.6 Measuring business performance from a rationalist perspective

Vakkuri and Melkin (2006) assert that performance measurement has been largely built upon the theories of the rational and calculative behaviour of social actors and organizations. Their investigation into the increasing importance of performance measures in the public hospital sector identified a link between focusing on controlling the financial performance and increasing attention to quality improvement due to lapses in professional quality and the reduction of resources. The research further identified the importance of controlling costs without losing quality due to increasing costs and needs; and finally a need for increased transparency and accountability by organizational management. They maintained that by identifying areas that require measurement (i.e. quality, financial performance, costs, transparency and accountability); the use of performance measurement is able to translate a hospital's performance requirements into quantifiable metrics (Vakkuri and Melkin 2006). Furthermore, identification of performance indicators informed different stakeholders of the hospital's performance, and enabled stakeholders to follow up, coordinate, control and improve (aspects of) the hospital's performance. A key finding of their research was that motivation is a major factor when developing performance metrics and indicators. However,
when performance measurement is not embedded in the decision structure of the organization, then it does not achieve the goals of adding value to the organization or employee satisfaction (Vakkuri and Melkin 2006).

Vakkuri and Melkin (2006) and Van Thiel and Leeuw (2002) argued that there are numerous problems with performance measurement, and that it is often assumed by organizational management that the problems can be solved through the introduction of more sophisticated performance measurement methods and techniques, standards and indicators. However, Vakkuri and Melkin (2006) also noted that when an organization’s performance is multidimensional, it is influenced by multiple stakeholders and can be heavily context laden. Furthermore, the organization can potentially face a charge of misrepresentation at law (Vakkuri and Melkin, 2006), or more importantly, the loss of integrity, credibility and trust by stakeholders and constituents (Kelman and Friedman 2009).

The performance measurement ‘trap’ occurs when an employer believes they fully understand the business operations and customers in the area of operations, and increases the number of performance measurement indicators (key performance indicators / KPIs) used to measure business activities while increasing the level of sophistication within the measurement system. Thomas (2006) and Bleuel (2005) both stated that while businesses and organizations normally assume that a measurement is an accurate assessment of some aspect of the business operations, both agreed that the measurement trap represents the false belief that all organizational stakeholders can fully understand all business aspects through measurement alone. Furthermore, Donovan (2005) and Heskett (2011) both pointed out that when attempting to accurately measure the performance of individuals and organizations, there is a clear need for the goals and objectives to match the measures by which the employees are to be judged. A disconnect occurs when there is a misalignment and lack of proper measurement of business processes and activities which drive financial results. This misalignment of performance measurement between culture, strategy, goals, processes and organizational activities is often poorly understood by organizational management [and constituents] (Robey and Sales 1994; Bleuel 2005; Donovan 2005; Heskett 2011).
1.7 Performance measurement of politicians’

Previous studies relating to the measurement of politicians’ performance have asked what is it about the environment in which politicians work that makes it difficult, if not impossible, for an ‘outsider’ (i.e. grassroots community organizations and voters) to judge whether the individual politician is performing at expected levels by stakeholders and constituents (Staples 2004; Holmes 2001; OECD 2009)? In line with this, Rais (2013) raised the question of how does one measure the performance of an individual politician? While it is true that some actions undertaken by politicians can be measured using traditional BPM tools and methods, a review of the literature reveals that minimal research has been undertaken to explore how politicians personally define and manage their performance.

Considerable data exists concerning the complexity of performance in a business or public service environment (Milbrath 1958; Converse 1964; Morgan 2000). However, performance measurement theory does not define or explain the performance of politicians (Davis 1957; Downs 1957; Lane 1959; Linz 1959; De Grazia 1957; Homans 1958; Mitchell 1958; Jessinghaus 1999; De Bruijn 2002; Ter Bogt 2002; Bouckaert and Halligan 2009). The lack of research to date is partly due to the long-held perspective by politicians and political organizations alike that most individual politicians and political parties are judged during an election (Megalogenis 2011). As a result of this argument, the limited research that has been undertaken has revealed that politicians are rarely subjected to the usual forms of performance management (Askim 2007).

The study of performance measurement relating to individual politicians has been limited to specific issues involving how political decision-making is influenced in relation to specific environmental perspectives (Jessinghaus 1999; De Bruijn 2002; Ter Bogt 2002). Traditionally, measuring business related activity including an individual’s performance has been output-based and has included components such as inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes, whereas the inclusion of customer/normative-based approaches in assessing performance is a more recent phenomenon (Bouckaert and Halligan 2009). In line with the 1950’s belief that everything political can be measured, research undertaken in Nordic countries, Northern Europe and the USA in the 1950s and 1960s was conducted for the purposes of identifying a single model that could be used to measure the performance of politicians (Downs 1957; Homans 1958). However, by the late 1950’s – early 1960’s – it became apparent that a single model of performance for politicians did not exist (Linz 1959).
Contemporary research into politicians’ performance by Vermaelen (2010) contended that as a result of paying politicians a fixed salary, the politician bears no financial consequences for their decisions. Moreover, Vermaelen (2010) argued that in the case of politicians, there is no board of directors like those in private business or the public service that can instantly dismiss them if the politician under-performs. Svolik (2010) found that challenges to electoral accountability and the public’s subsequent dissatisfaction with the performance of individual politicians often turn into disillusionment with democracy as a political system; thereby further precipitating its breakdown overtime. However, Svolik (2010) further reasoned that should politicians establish reputations of good performance, this will act as a barrier to the entry to politics of low-quality politicians, and strengthen the voter’s belief that political elections can deliver accountability; thus facilitating the ongoing consolidation of liberal democracy.

1.8 Summary of Chapter 1

In this chapter the main points discussed have determined that traditionally, performance measures gauging commercial or business activity including an individual’s performance have been output-based. Conversely, others have argued that unlike measuring ‘widgets’, measuring normative performance based on beliefs and values is difficult if not impossible (Rais 2013). At best, one can only observe performance indicators across the work being performed (Rais 2013; Meyer 2002; Moore 1996). However, the performance measures used, and in particular the level of accuracy achieved in gauging the performance measurement process itself, backs up the argument that performance is not measurable in the future sense (Meyer 2002).

Key attributes of a performance measure involve validity, reliability, responsiveness, functionality, credibility, understandability, availability and abuse-proofing. Benefits of organizations using performance management principles and techniques include ensuring that performance management encourages value-creating investments by both the organization and its employees. Control systems monitor and evaluate both organizational and the individual employee’s performance. From a management accounting perspective, Hilton (1994) described the measurement of management and organizational sub-units as one method of motivating people (employees and other stakeholders) toward the organization’s goals and ensuring their performance in achieving those goals. To achieve
higher levels of performance, individuals must first be willing to commit to change (Meyer 2002; Carnall 1990). However, a dis-connect occurs when there is a misalignment and lack of proper measurement of business processes and activities which drive financial results. This misalignment of performance measurement between strategy, goals, processes and activities is often poorly understood by organizational management (Robey and Sales 1994; Donovan 2005).

Given the complex environment in which politicians operate, there is a lack of understanding of performance and its measurement and relationship to politicians’ activities. While it is accepted that some actions undertaken by politicians can be measured using BPM tools and methods, what are the indicators of good performance for politicians? More importantly, how do politicians personally define performance?

Chapter 2 will analyse literature relating to management and measurement of performance in business environments for the purposes of providing a base of knowledge which can then be applied to the individual politician. Furthermore, the following chapter will briefly examine the historical relationship of organizational and individual performance measurement, organizational culture and ambiguity, and why historical performance measurement and cultural theory continue to have major impacts on organizations and their employees in the 21st century.

Chapter 3 will then explore issues concerning performance measurement in the public service and TSOs, because they are essentially normative value-based organizations, and assessing performance is subjective and more difficult than private sector businesses. Similar conditions are faced by politicians, as it is politicians who impose policies and performance criteria on the public service. Chapter 4 will then examine the links, or lack thereof, between performance measurement and measuring the performance of individual Australian politicians.

Chapter 5 next introduces and reviews key performance issues concerning the main research question: Why it is difficult for constituents and stakeholders to measure the performance of individual Australian politicians? Chapter 6 will then examine and discuss the most appropriate methods of research that were used in this thesis, and provide information as to why qualitative, quantitative and archival research methods were selected. Chapters 7 and 8 provide and discuss the data collected in the surveys and face-to-face interviews conducted with current and former Australian politicians.
In Chapter 9, the candidate will discuss why it is difficult to measure the performance of Australian politicians. Questions concerning performance measurement will be answered from the perspective of politicians. This is a unique perspective, because performance measurement theory has assumed that activities can be measured even in normative organizations. Performance measurement theory also assumes that principals, employees and stakeholders have the ability to understand the results of performance measurement. As a consequence, rational performance measurement systems are generally developed and implemented to assess performance, implemented by principals, constituents and stakeholders. However, in this thesis it will be argued that for politicians, performance measurement is completely different.

Finally, Chapter 10 will present the conclusions of the research undertaken and make recommendations for further research in this field.
CHAPTER 2: ISSUES WITH MEASURING PERFORMANCE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 it was suggested that everyday people, whether they are a voter, constituent or stakeholder in the Australian political process, have expressed varying degrees of apathy, distrust or a pure dislike for politicians both individually and collectively (Harris 2013; Lucas 2010; Transparency International 2013; Coorey 2012). Evidence put forward indicates that the main complaints appear to range from an inability to determine how politicians make decisions (Chenhall, Hall, and Smith (2013), a lack of political transparency (Assange 2013), a lack of ability to measure a politician’s performance (Rais 2013), to the politician’s accountability to the voting public (Froomkin 2013).

Furthermore, in Chapter 1, it was determined that traditional performance measures gauging commercial/business activity, including an individual’s performance have been output-based. Performance management as referenced in this thesis is a broad term coined by Dr Aubrey Daniels in the late 1970’s to describe a technology (i.e. science imbedded in applications methods) for managing behaviour and results; two critical elements of what is known as performance management (Daniels 2004). Others believe that unlike measuring widgets, measuring normative performance based on beliefs and values can be difficult, if not impossible, to measure – especially in the case of individual politicians (Rais 2013).

2.2 Impact of normative statements for politicians and constituents

Dorschel (1988) argued that normative statements claim how things should or ought to be, how to value them, which things are good or bad, and which actions are right or wrong. Positive statements are purportedly factual statements that attempt to describe reality. Furthermore, Dorschel (1988) reasoned that normative statements may also relate, in a sociological context, to the role of cultural ‘norms’ – the shared values or institutions that structural functionalists regard as constitutive of the social structure and social cohesion. Dorschel (1988) contended that these values and units of socialization act to encourage or enforce social activity and outcomes that ought to (with respect to the norms implicit in those
structures) occur, while discouraging or preventing social activity that should not occur. That is, they promote social activity that is socially valued. While there are always anomalies in social activity, such as anti-social behaviour or societal criminality, the normative effects of popularly-endorsed beliefs (e.g. ‘family values’ or ‘common sense’) push most social activity toward a generally homogeneous set.

As stated by Moore (1996), normative environments are those based on human beliefs and values used to produce outcomes which benefit individuals, groups within, or the community as a whole. However, it is argued that at best, one can only observe individual performance indicators within the work performed in normative environments (Rais 2013; Meyer 2002; Moore 1996). This work is based less on the concrete foundations of making profit in the traditional sense and is more about politicians and public service managers defining and attempting to realize what is right or wrong in the provision of services for voters, constituents and stakeholders, each with their own interpretation of what is important or right for constituents (Petersen 2011; APSR 2009; Stoner 2008; Dorschel 1988). Furthermore, Daniels’ (2004) definition of performance management states that performance management principles apply equally to all individuals in the workforce, even though the individual may be employed in differing roles and industries (Daniels 2004).

A review of factors that impact on an individual’s or organization’s performance in the workplace regularly identify that consistency is an essential element in the success of any performance measurement or management system (Neely, Adams and Kennerley 2002; Kaplan and Norton 1996). Key attributes identified of a performance measure involve validity, reliability, responsiveness, functionality, credibility, understandability, availability and abuse-proofing. However, previous research has identified that this is often not the case when it comes to measuring the performance of individual politicians who operate in complex (Milbrath 1958; Converse 1964; Morgan 2000; De Bruijn 2002; Ter Bogt 2002; Bouckaert and Halligan 2009) and often conflicting environments filled with ambiguity and conflict (Alesina and Cukierman 1990). While considerable data exists concerning the complexity of performance in a business or public service environment (Moore 2000, 1996; Adams 2002; Kaplan and Norton 1996), performance management theory does not adequately define or explain the performance of politicians (Davis 1957; Downs 1957; Lane 1959; Linz 1959; De Grazia 1957; Homans 1958; Mitchell 1958; Jessinghaus 1999; De Bruijn 2002; Ter Bogt 2002; Bouckaert and Halligan 2009).
It appears that this lack of research to date is in part due to the long-held excuse by politicians that most are ultimately judged during an election (Megalogenis 2011). Research undertaken reveals that politicians are rarely subjected to the usual forms of performance management (Askim 2007). While it is true that some actions undertaken by politicians can be measured using BPM tools and methods (Rais 2013), it appears that little research has been conducted to explore how politicians personally define and manage performance.

In this chapter literature will be analyzed that relates to the management and measurement of performance in business and public service environments for the purposes of providing a knowledge base which can be applied to the individual politician and their performance management.

While considerable data exists concerning the complexity of performance in a business or public service environment (Moore 2000; 1996; and Adams 2002; Kaplan and Norton 1996), performance management theory does not adequately define or explain the performance of politicians (Davis 1957; Downs 1957; Lane 1959; Linz 1959; De Grazia 1957; Homans 1958; Mitchell 1958; Jessinghaus 1999; De Bruijn 2002; Ter Bogt 2002; Bouckaert and Halligan 2009).

While the lack of research to date has been in part, due to the long long-held proposal by politicians that individual politicians of most persuasions are ultimately judged during an election (Megalogenis 2011), what limited research that has been undertaken has revealed that politicians are rarely subjected to the usual forms of performance management (Askim 2007). While it is true, that some actions undertaken by politicians can be measured using BPM tools and methods (Rais 2013), it appears that little research has been conducted to explore how politicians personally define and manage performance.

In this chapter it is therefore proposed to analyze literature relating to management and measurement of performance in business and public service environments for the purposes of providing a base of knowledge which can then be applied to the individual politician and their performance management.
2.3 Brief history of organizational theory and its impact on performance management

2.3.1 Taylorism

Around the turn of the 20th century (1900–1930), organizations were typically viewed as closed, rational systems (Robey and Sales 1994; Scott 1987). This closed system perspective defined by Taylor (1911) was characterized by a focus on internal interactions, and an emphasis on organizational order and control. Individual workers in these organizations were seen as capable of, indeed driven by, rational decision-making.

‘Taylorism’: (1) aims to achieve maximum job fragmentation to minimize skill requirements and job learning time; (2) separates execution of work from work planning; (3) separates direct labour from indirect labour; (4) replaces rule-of-thumb productivity estimates with precise measurements; (5) introduces time and motion study for optimum job performance, cost accounting, tool and workstation design; and (6) enables a payment-by-result method of wage determination (businessdictionary.com 2013; Pugh, Hickson and Hinings 1973) Taylorism has remained an important managerial model that continues to influence concepts of effectiveness and performance management strategies, functions and tools (Bloisi, Cook and Hunsaker 2003; Matsushita 1988).

2.3.2 Henri Fayol and bureaucratic management

In line with changes introduced by Taylor (1911) concerning how work was performed, changes to performance management were introduced with the establishment of bureaucratic organizational control in compliance with Fayol’s (1910) bureaucratic and administrative theory. Fayol’s theory was developed in order to prevent employers and organizational management from behaving arbitrarily or capriciously. Fayol’s formalization of role expectations for workers, combined with a specification of management authority within ‘narrowly prescribed hierarchical authority relations’, was designed to increase system rationality and predictability (Robey and Sales 1994). The concept of performance management control was furthered by Taylor’s notion of scientific management, which consisted of rationalizing organizational behaviour through extensive and detailed task analysis, systematization and routinization (Pugh, Hickson and Hinings 1973).
2.3.3 Rational choice theory

Jones (1999) noted that rational choice theory, a descriptive model of human behaviour, has largely failed. Bounded rationality theory asserts that decision-makers are rationally intended (i.e. they are goal-oriented and adaptive), but because of human cognitive and emotional constructions, they occasionally fail when making important decisions. In this thesis, that observation appears to be a condition often experienced by politicians and other politically-oriented decision-makers (Simon 1999; Simon 1996). Business effectiveness from a closed, rational system perspective (Simon 1999; 1996; Robey and Sales 1994) is achieved through:

- setting specific goals
- prescribing the behavioural expectations of organizational employees through formalization of rules and roles.

Simon’s (1957) theory of administrative control was a somewhat less obtrusive form of bureaucratic control than scientific management. Simon (1957, 1978) was also well-known for introducing the concept of bounded rationality. However, Jones (1999) argued that there are limits to rational adaptation: (1) procedural limits which limit how a person (in this case, an individual politician) goes about making decisions; and (2) substantive limits which affect that individual’s particular choices directly. Rational analysis in institutional contexts can serve as a standard for adaptive, goal-oriented human. Jones (1999) further stated that in relatively fixed-task scenarios, such as asset markets or elections, we should be able to divide into adaptive, goal-oriented behaviours (rational action) that is a consequence of processing limits, and then be able to measure the deviation between expected and actual behaviours Jones (1999) contended that the extent of deviation is an empirical issue.

Consistent with the view of a closed, rational organization, early performance management literature also assumed that organizations were fairly generic. Follett (1920, 1924), Barnard (1938), Dessler (1982), Drucker (1985), Stoner (1978), Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw (1992), and Daniels (2004) all assumed the following core set of management functions were applicable to all organizations:

- setting performance standards and value expectations
- staffing, developing and managing human resources.
Organizational theorists have questioned the fundamental premise of increasing system rationality through the promotion of stable patterns of behaviour and a reduction in the scope of decision-making authority. Excessive emphasis on internal control and stability is seen as irrational, and attempting to pre-program the behaviour and decisions of employees was viewed as misguided. Perrow (1986) crystallized this position, arguing that the appropriateness of an internal control focus is affected by the degree of organizational complexity and uncertainty. That is, internal command and control orientation may be effective when task complexity is low, but is less feasible in highly complex systems such as politics where the actors are operating in environments full of ambiguity and complexity (De Bruijn 2002; Ter Bogt 2002; Bouckaert and Halligan 2009), as well as conflict (Alesina and Cukierman 1990). Similarly, when the external environment is complex and uncertain, an internal command and control approach may be inappropriate because it restricts the organization’s flexibility and limits its employees’ ability to adapt to the changing demands and opportunities – an important requirement, meaning their ability to adapt, for individual politicians (Alesina and Cukierman 1990; Robey and Sales 1994; De Bruijn 2002; Ter Bogt 2002; Bouckaert and Halligan 2009).

2.4 Natural systems and management in organizations

Scott (1987) previously argued that differences in opinion about organizational theory are caused by the experiences and background of the researchers themselves – a viewpoint still agreed with today (Martz 2013). Rational systems analysts observe industrial firms and state bureaucracies (Martz 2013), while natural theorists focus on service and professional organizations including not-for-profits, government agencies, schools, hospitals and similar organizations (Martz 2013 and Wladawsky-Berger 2013). Scott (1987) further contended that rational theorists including Hobbes, Lenin and Saint-Simon generally only perceived the task-related behaviour of individuals as relevant. Conversely, natural theorists such as Rousseau, Burke and Durkheim explored broader behaviours that impact on an employee’s motivation and commitment to the goals and objectives of the organization. Furthermore, rational theorists use a mechanical conception of organizations, while the natural theorists use an organic model (Scott 1987). In line with this, Dooley (1997) contends that the increasing recognition of the limits of the rational system perspective led to the emergence of the natural system perspective, which became the prevailing model from the 1930s through to the 1950’s.
In contrast with the rational system perspective, the natural system perspective views organizations as, first and foremost, social collectivities whose primary interest is the survival of the system. A natural system perspective stresses the need for the organization to harness the minds and hearts of its participants, and emphasizes the importance of informal social relations over formal structures (Likert 1961; Weick and Quinn 1999). In tandem, performance management science moved away from an emphasis on command and control to a focus on engaging the hearts and minds of the organizational employees. From 1928 to 1933, Mayo (1933, 1949) and Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939) undertook a series of experiments at a Chicago factory that reshaped business research, reframed management education, and rewrote the tenets of work. This approach to treating workers as complicated individuals, and in turn viewing organizations as complex social systems, laid the groundwork for the human relations movement. At that time, the theory of ‘scientific management’ still dominated business institutions.

Mayo and Roethlisberger’s ‘Hawthorne effect’ was a term created in the 1950’s, and described the phenomenon of test subjects changing their performance in response to being observed, as some employees did when they knew they were part of the study. Human relations departments, employee engagement surveys and hundreds of popular books on business psychology echoed Mayo and Roethlisberger’s call to focus on the human side of industry. The human relations perspective, initially associated with Mayo (1933), gave rise to a large body of work directed at informal, normative structures; organizational cooperation; organizational culture; leadership; motivation; morale; and later teamwork (Barnard 1938; Goffman 1961, 1974; Argyris 1964; Peters and Waterman 1982; Wladawsky-Berger 2013).

The impact of rational command and control and organic theories are not confined to the for-profit market sector, public service or TSOs alone (March 2010; Alberts and Nissen 2009; Alberts and Hayes 2006; Cole 2005; Lewis 2001; Morand 1995; Burns and Stalker 1961). These theories apply equally to individual politicians and political parties, as no theory alone completely captures what a politician or party does (Ivanko 2013). Moreover, added to this is the requirement for politicians to balance behaviours found in both rational and organic models. This is essential in an environment where the interrelationships between politicians and stakeholders are combined and affected by the way governments address important economic and social issues to constituents and stakeholders. When looking at political party
organizations, it appears that political organizations fall naturally within the descriptions of the organic model. Jones (1999), drawing on the works of Simon (1999, 1996), posed the question:

“Do politicians make rational decisions in politics?”

Jones (1999) reasoned that the answer to this question was no, if ‘rational’ meant that politicians demonstrated conformity with the classic rational utility model, as politicians generally seek preselection and electoral victory based on policies that appeal to the largest group of voters in the electorate (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network 2013; Menocal 2013). Furthermore, recognition by constituents of their representative’s positive impact on the community is also essential. However, other factors also come into play when attempting to measure the performance of politicians (McKnight 2013). Political parties and politicians are key stakeholders in the election cycle. Politicians standing for office are affiliated with political parties which both define a candidate’s ideology and policy position while reflecting a list of issues with which the electorate can identify, based on a political party platform mirrored by the politician’s public election promises (McKnight 2013).

Politicians as individuals represent a party platform, and with the support of their affiliated party apparatus compete for public office, carry out election campaigns, and try to convince voters to cast their ballot for them. Ultimately, the ability to openly campaign, receive credible public support through the voting process and assume public office, depends on the legal, political and cultural environment, and on the administration, outcome and public acceptance of the election results (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network 2013; Wladawsky-Berger 2013).

However, it has been argued that the goals of the politician manager and public organizations tend to be more ambiguous than those of businesses (Rainey 1983; Chun and Rainey 2005a, 2005b; Stazyk and Goerdel 2011). This claim is ultimately grounded on an assumption that the political environment within which politicians and the public service operate generates goals that are more likely to be numerous, conflicting and vague (Pandey and Rainey 2006; Stazyk, Pandey and Wright 2011). Ambiguous goals appear to be problematic for politicians and public servants for two reasons. First, goal ambiguity may make it harder to hold politicians and public servants accountable and to assess their performance (Boyne 2002; Chun and Rainey 2005a, 2005b). Second, it may leave politicians and public servants uncertain about how the organization’s goals relate to broader
electoral and party objectives. In such cases, the politician’s and public servants’ commitment and performance are likely to suffer; thus resulting in a reduction of positive outcomes for all stakeholders (Stazyk, Pandey and Wright 2011; Chun and Rainey 2005a).

2.5 Impact of multiple organizational models

Meyers, Van Woerkom and Bakker (2013); Olson, Parayitam and Yongjian (2007); Kozlowski and Ilgen 2006; Seldon and Sowa (2004) have all argued that organizational managers have long been preoccupied with identifying the ‘best measure’ and model of organizational performance. Few topics have vexed public and non-profit researchers more than the question of what constitutes effective organizational performance. Numerous theorists throughout the history of organization theory have focused on developing models that define and measure organizational performance. As a result, a dearth of research has resulted in conflicting models of organizational performance (Likert 1967; Miles 1980; Pfeffer 1982; Quinn and Rohrbaugh 1981, 1983; Rainey and Steinbauer 1999; Olson, Parayitam and Yongjian 2007). In recent years, some theorists have placed their focus on advocating for and developing more comprehensive, multidimensional frameworks of organizational performance (Cameron 1978, 1980; Quinn and Rohrbaugh 1981, 1983; Rojas 2000; Kozlowski and Ilgen 2006).

Coleman, Selden and Sowa (2004) contended that Rohrbaugh (1983), Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983), and Quinn (1988) argued that most managers have experienced tensions within the different operations of the organization. This has generally impacted negatively on the performance of the organization and workforce as a whole. Coleman, Selden and Sowa (2004) concluded that performance effectiveness depends upon the ability of an organization, and its managers, to strike the right balance among the critical attributes required by the organization’s goals and objectives (Meyers, Van Woerkom and Bakker 2013; Kozlowski and Ilgen 2006; Quinn 1988; Rohrbaugh 1983).

In providing a potential resolution to this problem, Thompson (1967, 2003) recommended that organizational effectiveness needs to be present at three levels:

1. Technical level – the part of the organization carrying out the productive function.
2. Managerial level – comprised of those activities relating to the control of the production function.
3. Institutional level – consisting of those activities relating the organization to the larger community and institutional sectors.

However, Murray 2013, Thompson (1967, 2003) Coleman, Selden and Sowa (2004) highlighted that management and practitioner perspectives often conflict when these three levels are applied within different types of organizations. For example, Thompson theorized that the correct way to get departments within an organization working together effectively is to structure respective work tasks by the intensity of interdependence, and then manage each of those interdependencies with different coordination methods. A sequential interdependency is managed through mildly adaptive planning and scheduling, while reciprocally interdependent departments are managed through constant information sharing and mutual adjustments (Murray 2013; Thompson 1967, 2003). Organizations with routine production processes might therefore attempt to seal off the technical level, protecting it from external uncertainties as much as possible.

In contrast to, the open system perspective of organizational effectiveness would mostly apply to the institutional level in some organizations, such as political organizations (Thompson 1967, 2003; Coleman, Selden and Sowa 2004; Meyer and Rowan 1977). Increasingly, focus on external factors in developing criteria for performance (Coleman, Seldon and Sowa 2004; Meyer and Rowan 1977) and the awareness of the complexity of organizations and organizational environments has contributed to an emphasis on organizational differentiation and integration, information management, organizational learning, and lastly, enterprise knowledge management (NAIC Education & Training 2013; Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995). The greater emphasis on corporate responsibility has led to additional critical performance dimensions, such as the compliant organization (NAIC Education & Training 2013), environmental stewardship, community service and stewardship, and sustainable design and growth (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995; Carroll 1993; Miles 1987).

For these reasons, there has been a growing need for organizations to address rapid changes in the external environment (Douma and Schreuder 2013; Teece 2007). This has resulted in additional attention being given to organizational competencies such as innovation, teamwork, change management and partnerships (Hamel and Prahalad 1994; Hamel 1996, 2000; Christensen 1997; Christensen and Overdorf 2000; Teece 2007).
Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) created the label ‘contingency theory’ to capture the idea that different environmental contexts place different requirements on organizations.

2.5.1 Relevance of multiple organizational models for political organizations

Generally speaking, research has demonstrated that every organization is slightly different. Therefore, relevant and appropriate criteria for assessing performance varies among different types of organizations (Drory and Vigoda-Gadot 2010; Seldon and Sowa 2004). Organizations with clearly defined and easily measured goals are best assessed using the rational goal model. As an example, in the case of a political party, good performance may involve its participation in electoral processes and its ability to influence the greatest number of votes; thus gaining power, control and ultimately government. Another example may involve the political organization exerting its influence as either originator or steward of its mission and vision, and its responsibility for formulating a strategy that realizes this. Drory and Vigoda-Gadot (2010) argued that ultimately, performance is judged on the ability of the organization to successfully implement such strategies; thus attaining the goals and objectives of the organization, whether it be policy-driven or to attain an increased majority in either house through its employees or representatives, namely the politician. Moore (2006) and Kotter (2011) both observed that the debate about measuring outcomes and performance in general has been continuous, especially in the public arena where stakeholders and constituents are now more demanding of those elected to show how the public service has performed and whether the outcome has been successfully achieved.

2.5.2 Implications for measuring performance

Over time, organizational theory has produced a plethora of models exploring organizational performance. Coleman, Selden and Sowa (2004) observed that there are as many models as there are studies of organizational performance or effectiveness. However, the fact remains that the employee remains the key element of the organization – the success or failure of the organization depends on employee performance. Therefore, organizations need to continue to invest large amounts of money on employee development to improve personal performance in the workplace (Pauley 2013; Hameed and Waheed 2011).

Some theorists have tended to focus on internal organizational factors when defining criteria of performance, such as organizational goals or the procedures for accomplishing these goals (Mercer Consulting 2013; Pauley 2013; Hartnell, Ou and Kinicki 2011). The relevant
rational goal or purposive-rational model of organizational performance assumes that organizations were designed to achieve certain goals, both formally specified and implicit. This model focuses on the extent to which an organization reaches its goals as the key criterion of performance (Etzioni 1964; Pfeffer 1982; Price 1972; Hartnell, Ou and Kinicki, 2011; Mercer Consulting 2013; Pauley 2013).

Other researchers have, when developing models or concepts of organizational performance, emphasized internal measures of organizational performance (Pauley 2013; Argyris 1964; Bennis 1966; Likert 1967). In contrast, some researchers have focused on internal organizational components (Hameed and Waheed 2011; Hartnell, Ou and Kinicki 2011; Umphress, Bingham and Mitchell 2010; Bartels et al. 2010; Rousseau 1998, 1985), such as strong communication systems and stable policies and procedures that contribute to the achievement of organizational control. In addition, others have focused on human relations measures including workforce cohesion, morale and human resource development (Hameed and Waheed 2011; Morrell 2011; Karsan and Kruse 2011; National Business Research Institute 2011).

Seddon (2008) highlighted that recent history has illustrated that performance management still continues, in some cases, to be driven by command and control and mechanistic thinking. This is more so when organizations are faced with unstable and difficult economic times. In particular, ever-increasing demands from customers have focused management priorities on volume, standards and control through product standardization, work process specialization, and the use of production and financial targets (Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal 2013; Kotler and Keller 2012; Seddon 2008). Managers have generally set targets for employees and monitored their achievement using a command and control approach (Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal 2013; National Business Research Institute 2011). Such performance management has mostly been driven by KPIs such as financial indicators and production quotas, which have then been used for checking whether employees have completed their assigned tasks (Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal 2013; Kotler and Keller 2012; Seddon 2008).

2.6 Performance measurement and the use of KPIs

In line with a century of management and organizational theory, theorists and practitioners including Fayol (1910), Taylor (1911), Sloan (1964), Drucker (1977), Reh (2011) Heskett (2011) and Clifford (2011) have stated that unless an organization's management measures
the performance of a specific action or outcome, they will not know whether the organization’s performance has become better or worse.

KPIs are those measurements which are quantifiable and agreed to beforehand, that reflect the critical success factors of an organization. Drucker (1977), Reh (2011) Heskett (2011) and Clifford (2011) further noted that many specific KPIs often differ between similar sector organizations and for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. For example:

1. the percentage of customer calls answered in the first minute

2. the number of clients assisted by an NGO or community sector organization during the year.

Clifford (2011) stated that the use of KPIs gives organizational managers the ability to establish their businesses or operations in a competitive market. Therefore, KPIs need to be carefully balanced short-, medium- and long-term business considerations, and need to reflect the goals of the business. Paraphrasing the words of both Reh (2011) and Drucker (1977), “[organization management] couldn’t manage for improvement if [they] didn’t measure performance to see what was getting better and what wasn’t”. Clifford (2011) stated that in business, profit maximization is defined as charging the optimal price for products and services while fulfilling it at the least cost, without compromising on the standard of service or product expected by clients or customers. From a performance measurement and management perspective, employees should ask: (1) how do I measure progress toward those goals; and (2) how do I know whether I am succeeding?

It has also been noted (Reh 2011; Carter, Klein, and Day 1995; Drucker 1977) that practitioners generally measure only those activities or results that are important to the successful attainment of the organization’s goals. However, such measures often differ, depending on the nature of the business or organization. The reasoning behind organizations measuring performance is often reduced to simple propositions such as ‘you can’t manage anything unless you measure it’ or ‘what gets measured gets done’ (Drucker 1977). Marr (2011) proposed that the main reasons for measuring performance are:

1. learning and improvement
2. control and monitoring purposes.
Marr (2011) further contended that a reason for collecting KPIs is to inform external stakeholders and comply with external reporting regulations and information requests. In line with this, Dosh, Dowell and Toffel (2011) asserted that it has become mandatory in many jurisdictions for organizational management to measure performance for governance, external reporting and compliance purposes. Performance results and outcomes are already used for reports and associated indicators produced in organizational annual financial statements or performance reports for regulators (Werner, Kolstad, Stuart and Polsky 2011; Mullen, Frank and Rosenthal 2009).

KPIs are also used in a top-down command and control fashion to guide and control employees’ behaviours and actions (Larkin 2011). Measures are used to set goals or rules, to objectively assess the achievement of these goals, improve conformity and provide feedback on any unwanted variance between achievements and goals. In this context, measures are often linked to reward and recognition structures. However, Heskett’s (2008) research has shown that this approach, if not implemented well, can be dangerous and often leads to a culture in which employee focus on delivering the measures but not the performance (i.e. hitting the target but missing the point).

To ensure organizations are meeting their desired objectives, Heskett (2011) and Marr (2011) suggested that management needs to clearly understand what indicators are required for learning and improvement, and remove those external reporting indicators that are irrelevant, to avoid confusion and data overload. Furthermore, management needs to concentrate on creating the positive culture that drives employees’ high performance (Rao and Weintraub 2013; Heskett 2011; Marr 2011).

2.6.1 Measuring performance the right way

Business performance measures are most often associated with quantification and numbers (Heskett 2011). In order to realise the stated objectives, the performance measures used must provide organizational management with an objective, uniform and rigorous picture of reality. Performance measurement can also be considered a social activity (Ebrahim 2010), where measurement goes beyond simply counting and can equally include words, pictures and videos to describe and assess performance (Marr 2011). That said, there is a need to balance quantitative and qualitative measures in order to gain a real understanding of business performance (Rao and Weintraub 2013; Heskett 2008).
Marr (2011) indicated there is a need to be aware that organizations and their management cannot design perfect indicators that will measure things perfectly. KPIs are only there to provide information that helps the user make better informed decisions. Beer (2009) noted that how you measure is as important as what you measure.

For example, an organization can measure the number of calls by having each customer service representative (CSR) count their own calls and advise their supervisor at the end of the day. The best option but most expensive would be to purchase a software program that counts the number of calls, measures how long it takes to answer each one, records the name of the CSR that answered the call, and measures how long the call took to complete. Collecting measurements in this way enables the supervisor to calculate the percentage of customer calls answered in the first minute. Knowing call durations also lets the manager calculate whether there are enough staff to reach the goal (Henri 2008; Bloodworth and Herron 2007; Moore 2006).

2.6.2 Implications of organizational KPIs

Morgan (1997) stated that while organizational participants must have a shared understanding of the purpose of KPIs, they should be designed primarily to manage performance at the field level and as a part of the process of capacity development. Furthermore, KPIs should not always be based on the conventional ‘inputs-outputs-outcomes-impact’ typology that is widely used in the performance management community; they should also focus on process and behavioural change. Morgan (1997) further argued that the selection of KPIs must be tied to a coherent process of strategy formulation to merit any diagnostic value. Finally, organizational participants must be clear about the use of these indicators for informational purposes and their impact on participant motivation (Zaccaro, Marks and DeChurch 2011; National Research Council 2011a, 2011b; Morgeson, DeRue and Karam 2010; Ostrem 2007).

2.6.3 Benchmarking performance management

Heskett (2011) claimed that the emphasis on performance management naturally lends itself to the kind of value that can be set by an organization. Management of such business knowledge (also known as knowledge management / KM) (Lee and Choi 2003) involves data collection, analysis and application of new and better processes in a system known as ‘benchmarking’. In general terms, benchmarking can be defined as a continuous search for,
and application of, significantly better practices that lead to superior competitive performance (Watson 1993). An important prerequisite for better performance is that performance data needs to be captured by measuring meaningful KPIs (Pauley 2013; Muller, Ahalemann and Roeder 2010).

Although organizations approach data collection differently, there are several fundamental characteristics in the methods they use. Drew (1997) identified five key activities in benchmarking, for building a relevant knowledge management system and setting relevant KPIs: (1) determine what to benchmark; (2) form a benchmarking team; (3) identify benchmark partners; (4) collect and analyze benchmark data; and (5) take action to identify relevant KPIs. Furthermore, Muller, Ahalemann and Roeder (2010) found that this process makes benchmarking a tool well-suited for capturing rich datasets found in organizational databases, and relevant KPIs, even in strategic settings.

For Heskett (2011), the knowledge management process involves collecting data (measurements) and determining how they would be expressed as a standard (metric), and then comparing the measurements to a benchmark to evaluate progress (Pauley 2013; Bloodworth and Herron 2007). These performance metrics reduce the complex nature of organizational performance to a small number of KPIs, in order to make performance more understandable and easy to digest. However, Marr (2011) observed that most managers generally only identify performance measures that are easy to measure, count and collect, and then report on everything collected rather than clearly identifying the information needs and then carefully designing the most appropriate indicators to assess performance.

2.6.4 KPIs and office politics

Moore (2006) asserted that if a KPI is going to be of any value, there must be a way to accurately define and measure it. However, while many actions are measurable, as suggested by the Balanced Score Card model (Kaplan 2010; Kaplan and Norton 1996), Thomas (2006) found that the opposite also applies where the performance measurement of processes undertaken by management and employees is not crucial to the organization's success. When defining KPIs, Eckerson (2006) noted that it is critical to limit them to those factors that are essential to the organization reaching its goals. That is, there will likely be three or four KPIs for the company. However, when exploring why quantitative measures often make performance worse not better, Dionne (2008) noted that this effect is often
because the quantifiable objectives may be more about office politics than performance – a factor that might be linked to problems associated with bounded rationality theory.

Office politics occur when organizational members pursue private agendas, such as building one’s career to the detriment of fellow employees, or building a greater personal/organizational empire. Filliol (2008) used the following example to demonstrate why today’s obsession with quantifiable KPIs is more often about office politics than performance:

“I was working for a well-known European government a couple of decades ago, in the days when quantifiable objectives for performance measurement were new and exciting, at least if you were excited by quantifiable measures of performance objectives … The department where I was working, which spent most of its time, was involved in complicated international negotiations. So when approached by management planners and instructed to develop quantifiable KPIs, the department in question said, ‘Sorry no can do. You don’t understand; our work can’t be reduced to quantifiable targets, because too many other people in all sorts of countries are involved. No one organization, or even country, controls the process.’ ‘No’, said the management planners, ‘you don’t understand. If you don’t have any quantifiable objectives already, you’d better make some up’.”

Dionne (2008) argued that performance measurement often does not work well because what is measured is not the most important work process or outcome requiring performance measurement. Furthermore, this failure to measure what requires measuring also applies when employees feel they have no power to change ‘bad’ KPIs, or influence the performance activities within the organization. Furthermore, Dionne (2008) contended that performance often declines when it is measured, because once employees have reached their target there is no incentive to exceed it, or they are demoralize when confronted by tasks that they feel they could not change.

2.6.5 Implications of KPIs on politicians

Dionne (2008) argued that the use of tactical positioning, either individually or corporate, rather than adding community value through activity outcomes achieved by the individual politician or political party on behalf of its constituents, is detrimental to the reputation of politicians and politics in general.
Suggesting a possible solution to the vagaries’ of political funding, Dionne (2008) used the following example. At a basic level, it may be that the goal is to answer 90% of constituent inquiries. Given this parameter, should the politician answer less than 90%, it may mean that the politician does not receive added party financial support at the next election. Answering more than 90%, the politician may receive extra financial support from the party. However, the paradox of this strategy could lead to politicians doing the bare minimum of work to reach 90%, but not striving to answer 100% of constituent inquiries. Dionne (2008) reasoned that if the party’s goal is to answer as many queries as possible, a better solution would be to use a quota approach: that is, achieve the target and receive a portion of the financial support being offered – answer between 90 and 95% of inquiries and receive a bigger portion, answer between 96 and 99% of inquiries and receive an even bigger financial amount, or answer 100% of inquiries and achieve maximum financial support.

Conversely, unnecessary measures of performance can also result in encouraging undesirable behaviour. Dionne (2008) noted that too many KPIs can ruin a measurement system by making it overly complex and confusing for the participants.

2.7 Implications of measurement on performance through management and task controls

Barnat (2005) defined organizational planning and control as focusing on specific, discrete tasks, and the process of ensuring that those tasks are done effectively and efficiently. As the definition suggests, the focus of operational control is on individual tasks or transactions. For example scheduling and controlling individual jobs through a shop, as contrasted with measuring the performance of the shop as a whole; and procuring specific items for inventory, as contrasted with management of inventory. Broken down further, Stewart (2008) argued that organizational control structures are contingent upon:

- organizational environments
- institutional environments
- laws and political institutions
- technical environments
- product and markets
- information and production technology
- organizational goals and objectives.
2.7.1 Distinctions between task control and management control

Task control is distinguished from management control in the following ways:

- The management control system is basically similar throughout the organization; however, each task type requires a different task control system.
- In management control, managers interact with other managers; in task control neither person is involved, or at the very least, the interaction is between the organizational manager and a non-manager.
- In management control the focus is on organizational units called responsibility centres; in task control the focus is on specific tasks.

Barnat (2005) stressed that management control relates to activities that are not specified; whereas task control relates to specified tasks. In management control, the focus is equally on planning and on execution; in task control it is primarily on execution. An essential characteristic of the process is that the standard against which actual performance is measured needs to be consistent with the organization’s strategies.

Stewart (2008) further pointed out that management control systems consist of a corporate culture, control activities, and compensation and incentives. Whereas task control activities consist of task specification, programming and quality control. However, as identified by both Barnat (2005) and Stewart (2008), an organization’s management control practices are applied through its task control system.

2.7.2 Implications of management and task controls on the organization

An essential characteristic of management and task controls in the organization is the standard of consistency by which actual performance is measured in line with the organization’s strategies and processes. Prusak and Matson (2010) maintained that in undertaking task control, managers monitor the work being done by employees and organizational systems by comparing actual progress against planned progress. When commenting on this point, Franceschini and Galetto (2007) noted that generally, human, technical or environmental issues such as employee illness, database issues or other environmental issues that in some cases may force the closure of a business’s operations have always created problems that impact on the organization’s business plan (Franceschini
and Galetto 2007). Therefore, it can be argued that even performance measurement in the closed systems generally found in business environments is complex and has problems for management and employees alike. So what does this mean for performance measurement systems used in the public sector environment and individual politicians?

2.7.3 Introduction of NPM and its relation to the task control and management control function of a public organization

Frey, Homberg and Osterloh (2013) highlighted that control and performance measurement systems are critical to how any organization functions (Scott 1992; Meyer and Gupta 1994; Meyer and Evans 2003). Yet abundant literature highlights the link between the design of control systems and the organization's task environment (Ouchi 1977, 1979; Turner and Makhija 2006; Cardinal 2001; Kirsch 1996), it has mainly concentrated on private sector firms. Traditionally, it appears there has been a general disinterest in measuring the performance of public sector organizations by researchers (Mahoney, McGahan and Pitelis 2009), even though such insights could be of relevance for organizational management in general (Benz and Frey 2007). This disinterest appears to have been the same when measuring the performance of politicians (Rais 2013).

2.7.3.1 Implications of NPM on public sector

Martin (1997) argued that public services have always represented an important factor for social cohesion, and make a significant contribution to the economic infrastructures essential for the operation of social market economies. Yet in public debate, public services are often perceived as inefficient, ineffective and over-expensive (Martin 1997). León, Simmonds and Roman (2012) proposed that the implementation of public sector innovations and reforms in the 1990s have generally been accepted by business and government as an imperative for governments to find radical solutions to protect services while dramatically cutting costs.

2.7.3.2 Addressing perceived public service inefficiencies

To address public and industry concerns about the performance of public service departments (Martin 1997), NPM was first introduced by European governments to address previous public service deficiencies relating to effectiveness, transparency and overall performance management (Tonnisson 2004). NPM was a term first referred to by Hood
Hood’s (1991) basic hypothesis held that the market-orientated management of the public sector had the potential to lead to greater cost-efficiency for governments, without having negative side-effects on other objectives and considerations. Ferlie et al. (1996) described ‘New Public Management in Action’ as involving the introduction into public services of the ‘three Ms’: markets, managers and measurement. As a result of the introduction of NPM, output-related performance measures and rewards became commonplace in public sector organizations across many countries (OECD, 2003; Lah and Perry 2008; Perry, Engbers and Jun 2009).

In turn, output-related performance measures and rewards became major characteristics of public sector reform (McNulty and Ferlie 2004; Varone and Giauque 2001; Mascarenhas 1993; Sherwood and Wechsler 1986; Siegel 1987). The theory behind output-related performance measures and rewards assumed it is possible to raise public servants’ motivation and remuneration to enhance service quality. It was common for employee performance management reviews to be linked into pay-for-performance schemes as a symbol of modern quality management (Moynihan and Pandey 2010). As a consequence, NPM diffused into many public areas including university education (Meyer and Evans 2003), general teaching (Wragg et al. 2004; Thomas and Davies 2005), the healthcare sector (Finn, Currie and Martin 2010; Mueller et al. 2004) and government agencies (Bertelli 2006).

However, many researchers noted the difficulties inherent in the introduction of such control systems in general (Frey 2007; Lindenberg 2001; Lindenberg and Foss 2011; Falk and Kosfeld 2006; Bowles 2008; Bowles and Polania-Reyes 2012), as well as in the public sector (e.g. Milkovich and Wigdor 1991; Perry 1986; Ingraham 1993; Kellough and Lu 1993; Perry, Mesch and Paarlberg 2006). Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson (2000) argued that the practical effects are equally uncertain, as NPM is not just about pay-for-performance. Frey, Homberg and Osterloh (2013) highlighted the point that during a review investigating 57 studies on pay-for-performance in the public sector, they concluded that even though ‘performance-related pay’ continues to be adopted, it also persistently fails to deliver on its promise (Perry, Engbers and Jun 2009).

While Dubnick (2005) believes that the popular acceptance of various NPM reform initiatives is based in part on the unchallenged rhetoric that greater accountability for results and
outcomes produced by employees and management alike means improved performance; thus resulting in more satisfied stakeholders and constituents. Frey, Homberg and Osterloh (2013) argued that one major problem in translating greater accountability to improved performance is the lack of an adequate theoretical underpinning of NPM. They noted that this problem, as addressed earlier by Perry (1986), still exists today.

Perry (1986) argued that public service motivation (PSM) is an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions (Perry and Wise 1990). Perry (1986) further argues the PSM construct should be perceived as a type of motivation in the public sector, with altruistic and disinterested components as distinct from other specific public sector motivations. However, PSM does not cover all motives in the public sector; extrinsic motivational factors such as pay or job security also coexists with intrinsic factors like PSM. As noted by Frey, Homberg and Osterloh (2013), in NPM reform there is no systematic review of the efficacy of pay-for-performance initiatives in the public sector. Another issue is the lack of research that focuses on public sector organizations that use and link the alignment of tasks to the control-and-reward system (Frey, Homberg and Osterloh 2013).

2.8 Identifying and managing ambiguity

Institutionalist theorists, particularly those associated with public and third sector theories utilizing bounded rationality i.e., Modell (2004), Brignall and Modell (2000) and Moore (1996), have often argued that organizational management controls the overall business plan and adjusts it when required, and that this cycle continues until the task is complete. Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) confirmed that organizational decision-makers have always had to process large amounts of information including internal and external stakeholder and personal communications. As a result, this data and information has not always been readily clear or understandable.

The accumulation of excessive performance information, some of which may be superfluous to operational needs, tends to cause confusion for management when determining the needs of the organization and the best use of its human resources. The risk of information overload increases this confusion even more; thus reducing the effectiveness of the organization and its management to compete in its particular market segment. Modell
Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) commented on the argument of Modell (2004), and Brignall and Modell (2000) noting that another problem faced by organizational management is that they often distrust the professionalism of their employees. On one hand there is distrust between management and employees, yet employees are necessary for the organization to meet its performance targets. As an example, Davies and Lampel’s (1998) assessment of performance management in the British National Health Service highlighted that as a way of intervening in the doctor-patient relationship, managers use performance information as a tactic. To achieve this intervention, these managers have developed a plethora of KPIs to counterbalance the doctors’ professional knowledge.

Therein lays the paradox. Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) argued that on the one hand, trust in the professionalism of employees is vital, yet management is reluctant to grant this trust and continues to fall back on control and audit methods. Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) noted that these performance audits are mainly about creating an illusion of control for stakeholders by organizational management. Furthermore, Van de Walle and Roberts (2008) contended that similar performance measurement issues exist in both the public and private sectors.

It has been suggested that a solution would be to make performance management in the public sector ambiguity proof. As the context of public administration is both complex and ambiguous (Van Dooren and Thijs 2010). Kravchuk and Schack (1996) defined complexity as ‘indeterminate objective functions, multiple administrative layers, and collective action problems’. Nordquist (2013) further defined corporate ambiguity as ‘the presence of two or more possible meanings in a single passage or action’; for example, a newspaper’s headline declaring ‘Union Demands Increased Unemployment’. Earlier on, Empson (1947; 2003) described ambiguity as follows:

"We call it ambiguous, I think, when we recognize that there could be a puzzle as to what the author meant, in that alternative views might be taken without sheer misreading. If a pun is quite obvious it would not be called ambiguous, because
An argument has been mounted that the paradox of improving performance management systems often involves job and information overloads, together with an increased scope and scale of operations (Van Dooren and Thijs 2010). To support this assertion, Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) cited Noordegraaf and Abma (2003) who found that current performance management, which they labelled as ‘management by measurement’, only fits the rare clear and unambiguous contextual situations. Therefore, since ambiguity is everywhere, Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) concluded that the potential to ambiguity-proof performance management is limited.

Yet Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) went on to say that performance management practice should be revisited in order to make it ambiguity-proof. They argued that this could be done by treating complexity and ambiguity as a given and changing the practice of performance management based on this foundation. In a similar vein of thought, Radin (2006) used the following example to point out that many problems with performance measurement and management could be attributed to faulty points of departure. In the example, he argued that intelligence (including beliefs and values) is not based on universal principles or literal meanings; rather, it is based on multiple sources, situational knowledge, and literal and symbolic meanings that are important for making sense of a relationship, situation or activity.

Radin’s (2008) perspective paints a picture of complexity, interdependence and unplanned change. Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) agreed with the ‘Implications of performance information on constituencies’ the formal view that performance measurement is and must be a rigid process. Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) believed that performance management needs to be: (a) agile; (b) close to the action; and (c) political in nature.

In summary of the above, Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) noted that:

- (a) Performance measurement needs to be agile, in that KPIs need to be used for learning rather than accountability. Such KPIs have to be an accurate representation of ‘real’ performance, and the performance assessment needs to be qualitative, quantitative or both (Van Dooren and Thijs 2010). However, in a complex technology based or politically sensitive environment it might make more sense to hold
organizational managers accountable for, among other things, the way they facilitate learning from KPIs, rather than the KPIs themselves (Moynihan 2008; De Lancer Julnes 2008; Gregory and Lonti 2008).

(b) Performance management needs to be close to the action and decentralized. Bouckaert and Halligan (2008) confirmed that recurrent financial, human resource management and contract cycles are the main vehicles for incorporating performance information in decision-making. However, complex policy and management processes, the demand for performance information can arise relatively unexpectedly. Performance information brokers need to be able to both capture the need for and understand the availability of the performance information gathered (Bouckaert and Halligan 2008; Pollitt 2008; Behn 2004; Kettl 2002).

Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) argued that performance management in complex political contexts may benefit from stronger decentralization. Rather than devising top-down systems, performance management needs to be in the hands of middle managers and front-line supervisors who best understand the situational requirements. Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) further contended that this strategy may bring about the abilities of public managers that Behn (2004) referred to as 'performance leadership'. While opposing the performance top-down leadership model, Behn (2004) focused on general performance systems and structures. He argued that middle management and front-line supervisors need the leadership capacity to improve performance. From a political performance perspective, this approach suggests introducing performance information into budget negotiations through policy networks, rather than systematically reporting performance in the budget document voted on in parliament (Moynihan 2009; Bourdeaux 2008). Confirmation of this approach was found in an OECD survey on performance budgeting, showing that a number of countries use performance information to inform, but not determine, budget allocations (Curristine 2005).

(c) Performance management also needs to be political in nature. Based on this, it is argued that performance management is central in the government’s decision-making processes when determining who gets scarce human and economic resources, and when they get those (Innes 1990). Innes (1990) further noted that good performance information should strengthen the evidence base for solving the political problems of who gets what, when and how. Issues of who gets what, when
and how are at play at all levels: in government-wide policymaking, in policy sectors and networks, in organizational management, and in micro-management (Innes 1990).

Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) in turn, also believed that KPIs can elevate the quality of political discussions at all of those levels. However, they did not suggest that the political institutions (e.g. the executive, parliaments, parties, legislatures) have to interfere with all performance issues of these levels. Rather, Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) stressed the importance of recognizing the political nature of performance management (Innes 1990). Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) also argued that performance management should involve more rather than fewer actors in complex settings, as performance management is mainly about making sense of the particular situation at that time (Bouckaert and Halligan 2008). However, while Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) mostly dealt with the political nature of performance management (and not so much the political institutions), there have also been some efforts to strengthen the role of performance information in political institutions (Moynihan 2009; Bourdeaux 2008).

2.8.1 Decoupling and new institutional theory

Meyer and Rowan (1977) contended that organizations often adopt formal structures defined as policies, plans and programs that conform to socially sanctioned purposes, rather than those that are described as agile, close to the action and political in nature (Van Dooren and Thijs 2010; Innes 1990). It may be that organizational management decouple these formal structures from actual and ongoing practices in the organization to buffer internal routines from external uncertainties; thus enhancing flexibility while still maintaining legitimacy among important stakeholders (Meyer and Rowan 1977).

In organizational studies, and particularly on new institutional theory, decoupling is the creation and maintenance of gaps between formal policies and actual organizational practices (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Organizational researchers have documented decoupling in a variety of organizations, including schools (Meyer and Rowan 1978; Delucchi 2000), corporations (Westphal and Zajac 2001), government agencies (Tilcsik 2010) and social movement organizations (Elsbach and Sutton 1992). These researchers
have proposed a number of explanations on why organizations engage in decoupling. Some have noted that decoupling enables organizations to gain legitimacy among their external members while simultaneously maintaining internal flexibility to address practical considerations (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Others have proposed that decoupling may occur because it serves the interests of powerful organizational leaders (Westphal and Zajac 2001), or because it allows organizational decision-makers to avoid implementing policies that conflict with their ideological beliefs (Tilcsik 2010). Recent research has also identified the reverse of decoupling, which is recoupling (Tilcsik 2010; Hallett 2010) – the process whereby policies and practices that were once decoupled may eventually become recoupled (Tilcsik 2010).

Westphal and Zajac (2001) cited Meyer and Rowan’s (1977) development of a decoupling theory from their qualitative work in educational institutions, which indicated that formally adopted standards and procedures that appear to address government mandates and community demands are decoupled from the ongoing routines of teaching and administration. Those that follow new institutional theory argue that decoupling in organizations is the creation and maintenance of gaps between formal policies and actual organisational practices (Meyer and Rowan 1977). The rationale for decoupling in organizations is that it can be seen as an attempt to maintain some rough equilibrium between inconsistent norms (Meyer 1996). In contrast, the scope for such managerial tactics is more limited when change is imposed on organizations in a more coercive manner. In such circumstances, shifting performance management practices seem to follow a more deterministic model of change, which organizational management can draw on to justify workplace change initiatives.

Brignall and Modell (2000) noted that the performance paradox is that proactive managerial attempts to balance conflicting stakeholder interests through decoupling may have induced organizational stability rather than change. They cited the findings of Abernethy and Chua (1996), who found that the scope of managerial control choices can be significant, even when certain political constituencies exercise considerable power. Yet even though these findings support the view that management is proactive and intentional, Oliver (1991) identified factors that constrain managerial choice, including the organization’s dependence on a particular constituency and the coerciveness of institutional pressures.
Brignall and Modell (2000) acknowledged the possibility of intentional managerial choice in the design and implementation of performance measurement and management systems. However in contrast, Czarniawska and Sevon (1996) noted that it can be misleading to equate proactive managerial choice with organizational change, given that stabilizing forces such as institutional constraints co-exist with intentional choices, and it instead may be that these constraints are responsible for producing organizational paradoxes.

Van Dooren and Thijs (2010), drawing on Meyer and Rowan’s (1978, 1977) research, highlighted that in the previous decade, several performance management experts had pleaded for a focus on measuring outcomes instead of outputs or processes (Hatry 2002; Perrin 2003). The over-riding argument was that only outcomes are ‘real’ key results (i.e. results that matter for society). As an example, it does not matter how many police patrols are negotiating the streets (which is an output), citizens want safety (which is an outcome). Therefore, performance measurement should primarily focus on outcomes. Yet, and therein lies the paradox, performance outcomes are in many instances hard to count. We know that what is measured receives attention, but we also know that many important dimensions are difficult to measure.

2.8.2 Implications of performance information on constituencies

Brignall and Modell (2000) contended that the more organizational management and stakeholders (in this case political parties and stakeholders with vested interests) try to affect political change by exercising choice, the less change they might actually produce, since their choices may be negated by influential actors (Meyer and Jepperson 2000) with conflicting interests (Modell 2003). Therefore, the relative force of the pressures exerted by various stakeholders is more likely to influence the balance between different performance dimensions (Meyer and Jepperson 2000), as a result of management’s information needs when making decisions pertaining to specific stakeholder interests (Modell 2003). The information used to target and garner stakeholder support is frequently limited and biased to favour a particular course of action (Brunsson 1990), which may lead to some imbalance between various performance dimensions. The organization’s management (in this case a political party) therefore also need incentives to ally with targeted stakeholders due to the organization’s dependence on them (Modell 2003).
2.8.3 Conflicting institutional pressures in public sector organizations

To deal with the conflicts inherent in such dialogue trade-offs as previously mentioned, political parties and politicians in line with bounded rationality theory, for example, need to adopt seemingly ambiguous, irrational or ‘hypocritical’ strategies (Brunsson 1990) when providing customized information and courses of action for different stakeholder groups. Yet, even though such a scenario frequently appears to emerge spontaneously, rather than as a result of active managerial intervention, management (politicians and political parties) may consciously manipulate the information provided to different groups of stakeholders or political factions, particularly if this information has exerted an increased but minor institutional pressure on the organization (Oliver 1991).

In a normative environment, Johnsen (2009) contended that when dealing with conflicting institutional pressures in public sector organizations, public policy is one of the most effective methods of control used. Public policy orientation is multidisciplinary, multi-method and problem-focused; it is concerned with mapping the contextuality of the policy process, analysing the policy options and evaluating the policy outcomes. The general goal of public policy is to integrate knowledge, to analyze public choices and decision-making in order to contribute to a democratic society (Parsons 1996). However, while performance measurement in the public sector has been studied for around 100 years (Williams 2003), little is known about the way performance information is used in modern democracies’ public policies (Van Dooren and Van de Walle 2008; De Lancer Julnes 2006; Pollitt 2006a).

Nonetheless, the potential for decision-makers to use performance information to assess and enhance efficiency and effectiveness, as well as to provide feedback to stakeholders about accountability and the need for policy innovation in the political system, is extensive (Behn 2003; Jackson 1993; Mayston 1985). Johnsen (2009) suggested noted that performance information, in the form of [organization developed or related] balanced scorecards or target-based regimes, is often used for implementing formal strategies based on organizational objectives. Performance information is also often used to place issues on the agenda and to facilitate decision-making (Askim 2007), which often improves performance and provides innovation (Johnsen 2005). However, Johnsen (2009) also noted that managerial preoccupation with bad performance is more often observed, rather than best practice. Furthermore, there is also the likelihood that some employees) will resist performance
management because of the increased measurement costs. In this sense it is perfectly rational to resist or postpone performance management reforms, as this may undermine the authority and legitimacy of structures currently in place (Pache 2012; OECD 2003).

2.8.4 The performance measuring paradox

Meyer and Rowan (1977), in relation to the issue of paradoxical use of information, noted that many actors in the process demand performance information but seldom use it, even when there is an ample supply. A common explanation is that politicians and managers use information for ritualistic purposes, since systematic data collection signals rationality (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Daft and Lengel 1990; Moore 1996; Bouckaert and Peters 2002). As a result, minimal information is often used. Daft and Lengel (1990) further argued that politicians prefer to use rich, informal information such as that provided by personal conversations, face-to-face contacts and informal meetings, rather than formal information such as that provided by KPIs. Furthermore, this author has noted from personal experience that employee and/or managerial distrust of organizational data management systems is more likely the reason for the overabundance of performance information demanded by management.

A potential conclusion from the seemingly low use of performance information in both a general and political context could be that much of that collected for public policy is unnecessary. Bouckaert and Peters (2002) noted that performance measurement is the ‘Achilles heel’ of many public sector reforms. They further argued that performance information is one of the most divisive aspects of public management reform, as the information collected is all-encompassing, untargeted and lacks integrity for users of the information, leading to information overload and ‘analysis paralysis’ (Van Dooren 2008; Van Dooren, Bouckaert and Halligan 2010). Yet the use of performance measurement has gone beyond the public sector reforms of the 1990s and has infused itself into contemporary public management and public policy activities (Van Dooren 2008; Van Dooren, Bouckaert and Halligan 2010).

2.9 KPIs, NPM and performance management in the public sector

While interest in performance measurement has grown along with performance leadership, both its shortcomings and the negative effects of performance measurement and
management should be considered (Serrat 2010). It is important to understand that the paradox is not about performance itself, but rather the reports that arise from the performance activities. KPIs alone do not give an accurate report of performance (Van Thiel and Leeuw 2002). For example, Van Thiel and Leeuw (2002) highlighted the point that in some cases this has meant that performance is worse than reported (over-representation). Conversely, performance may have been better than reported (under-representation), which results in the belief that the performance measurement paradox is harmless. However, when the results of performance assessments are used to evaluate the organization or individual, negative situations relating to performance can arise when these are unjustly sanctioned (Van Thiel and Leeuw 2002).

Serrat (2010) noted that conflicting definitions of KPIs often abound, both in market-based and public service organizations. Quite often a lack of understanding of what constitutes goals, objectives and KPIs used by those charged with improving the organization’s performance is evident. This results in KPIs being merged with the objectives, which effectively become the targets to be achieved. As a result, efficiencies and effectiveness suffer (Serrat 2010; Van Thiel and Leeuw 2002).

In line with this, Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) argued that one of the paradoxes in improving public service performance management focuses on performance systems and structures. Rather than developing public service managers with high levels of leadership capacity to improve the performance of their agencies, governments and agencies create extensive human and technology based performance systems to achieve these improvements. As a result of this paradoxical situation, Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) stated:

“To be successful, middle management and front-line supervisors needed stronger levels of managerial trust, increased management support, and an increased leadership capacity.”

Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) further argued that the introduction of NPM results in an irrational increase of systems surveillance and performance measurement systems. By increasing direct surveillance systems and potentially alienating employees, this ensures that NPM is never successful in fully improving public sector performance (Van Dooren and Thijs 2010).
2.10  Rational models of performance

When measuring performance, Jensen and Meckling (2009) believed that KPIs should reflect the functions of different business units, which in turn require monitoring by organizational management to ensure the organizational goals and objectives, are being met. However, Serrat (2010) stated that the paradoxical issue of performance reporting is whether managers should be held accountable for things they cannot influence. Therefore, the manner in which performance is measured, monitored, controlled and reported on by the executive, often by means of budgets, is particularly important. Serrat (2010) noted that evidence from the public sector suggests that personnel need to follow so many processes that fidelity to these processes generally supplants their devotion to achieving results. Serrat (2010) also believed that what matters most in organizations are the intangible sources of value, such as human and customer capital, and their measurement and management. Citing Behn (2006), Serrat (2010) stated that:

“Good performance cannot be compelled, commanded, or coerced.”

In market-based business environments, performance management has long been the organizational approach for monitoring how a business, service or individual is performing. It includes methodologies, metrics, processes, systems and software used for monitoring the health and managing the business performance of an enterprise and its employees; the satisfaction levels of individuals (Yi 1991); and market forces (Johnson, Anderson and Fornell 1995). Neely (1999) stated that the benefits encourage value-creating investments by both stakeholders and management. However, a question arises as to whether market-based BPM and management processes can be effectively used in a normative working environment where the person or business is not involved in the traditional provision of production. Baker and Branch (2002) argued that this is indeed possible, as the tenets of BPM and management have, over time, become all-encompassing to private, public and third sector organizations alike.

2.11  Measuring private vs. normative performance

2.11.1  Defining performance in a normative environment

Hyland et al. (2009) argued that the goal of a performance measurement system is to communicate and implement strategy as well as to ensure alignment between relevant
management and employee actions, objectives and strategies. Consequently, performance measurement systems and frameworks need to measure how activities and processes contribute separately and jointly in meeting an organization’s or program’s strategic objectives, link operations to strategic goals, focus business activities on the customer, drive future activities and needs, and enhance performance (Cross and Lynch 1989). It is important that any measurement of performance outcomes provides meaningful measures of activities, processes and achievements, and allows for feedback between key stakeholders in the organization (Hyland et al. 2009).

Furthermore, Dorschel (1988) contended that in philosophy, normative statements make claims about how things should or ought to be, how to value them, which things are good or bad, and which actions are right or wrong. Likewise, Sinha, Macri and McAleer (2007) argued that normative political theory primarily involves theorization at the level of ‘what ought to be’ as against ‘what is’ in political life. Normative claims are usually contrasted with positive (i.e. descriptive, explanatory or constative) claims when describing types of theories, beliefs or propositions. In contrast, positive statements are claimed to be factual statements that attempt to describe reality. Normative statements and norms, as well as their meanings, are an integral part of human life. Dorschel (1988) further noted that they are fundamental for prioritizing goals and organizing and planning thought, belief, emotion and action, and are the basis of much ethical and political discourse, as normativity is arguably the key feature distinguishing political discourse from other discourses such as natural science.

In addition, Dorschel (1988) conveyed that in the social sciences, the term ‘normative’ has broadly the same meaning as its usage in philosophy, but may also relate, in a sociological context, to the role of cultural ‘norms’ (i.e. the shared values or institutions that structural functionalists regard as constitutive of the social structure and social cohesion). These values and units of socialization thus act to encourage or enforce social activity and outcomes that ought to (with respect to the norms implicit in those structures) occur, while discouraging or preventing social activity that ought not to occur. That is, they promote social activity that is socially valued, as described above.

Druckman, Green and Kuklinski (2011) defined political science as ‘the allocation and transfer of power in decision-making, the roles and systems of governance including governments and international organizations, political behaviour and public policies’. In line with this, Stoner (2008) argued that political scientists measure the success of governance
and specific policies by examining many factors, including stability, justice, material wealth and peace. Other political scientists advance normative theses by making specific policy recommendations (APSR 2009). However, evolutionary psychologist Petersen (2011) argued that humans have evolved a highly developed set of psychological mechanisms for dealing with politics. Yet these mechanisms only deal with small-group politics that characterized the ancestral environment, not the much larger political structures of today (Petersen 2011).

From these explanations it can be seen that compared with the rather simple definition of private, for-profit based performance measurement (Hyland et al. 2009), defining what constitutes performance in a normative environment rich in context and complexity is very difficult and full of contradictions (Petersen 2011; APSR 2009; Stoner 2008; Dorschel 1988).

2.11.2 Measuring output performance

Denning (2011) argued that management, whether private sector-based or political in nature, should only measure employees based on results or outcomes. By only counting outputs (i.e. numbers produced), management potentially misses what really drives the business – the outcomes with customers. However, Moore (1996) noted that measuring outputs is cheaper and easier than measuring outcomes. Furthermore, measuring outputs contributes to improving the performance of mid-level managers, because unlike outcomes, outputs are mostly within the mid-level manager’s direct control (Moore 1996).

These observations add insight into why outputs have traditionally been measured rather than outcomes. Yet, while it may be tempting for public sector managers to rely solely on the measurement of outputs, problems arise in that public service organizational outputs are not the same as the production of something tangible; not even in terms of producing client satisfaction, let alone in terms of the achievement of desired social outcomes. Both outcomes and outputs are important and useful to measure. Given the limitations in both systems, Moore (1996) believes the right course of action is to measure both. Moore (1996), however, also acknowledged that measuring multiple dimensions of performance makes it harder for managers to focus on the production of goods and services they are trying to manage.
2.11.3 Measuring financial and social outcomes

Moore (1996) argued that one reason not to measure outcomes is cost. KPIs and supporting return-on-investment measures are used in measuring performance because they represent a reasonably costed objective and a direct measure of value. Moore (1996) proposed that it is the individual’s choice to spend their own money on a given product or service. The second reason involves revenue earned through the sale of products and services (as an outcome measurement). This information is collected at the moment of transaction, and the judgment of value is received right at the point of delivery.

While constituents and stakeholders often focus on the importance of financial outcomes across all sectors, in reality they are also interested in the social outcomes produced by government organizations (Moore 1996). It appears that stakeholders and constituents, besides demanding more information on the processes used to achieve such outcomes, also require assurance that their elected representatives actively display certain personal values such as trustworthiness and fairness in addition to economic and technical efficiency.

Yet while Moore (1996) believed that there is support in the argument for measuring outcomes, he also suggested that performance management principles apply equally to all individuals in the workforce, even though the individuals may be employed in differing roles and industries (Daniels 2004).

It is acknowledged that it is not always feasible, or even desirable, for all organizations to develop metrics at all levels on the logic chain. Ebrahim and Rangan’s (2010) contingency approach suggests that, given the varied work, aims and capacities of social sector organizations, some should be measuring long-term impacts, while others should stick to measuring shorter-term results. The contingency framework also offers some general cautions about performance measurement. It is further suggested that measuring impacts makes sense in only a limited set of circumstances. For example, when an organization operates at an ecosystem level, and exercises sufficient control over results to attribute impacts to its work.

2.11.4 Reasons to measure client satisfaction

In relation to the provision of government services, customer satisfaction is also influenced by the individual’s expectations and perceived service quality (Moore 2006; Johnson et al.
Public sector clients have legal rights that are protected in the delivery of services. To the extent that the individuals confronted by government organizations enjoy having their rights protected, public organizations also need to make a commitment by satisfying individual client’s needs (Moore 2006). Both Moore (2006) and Clark (2008) argued that customer satisfaction in service encountered and obligation encountered in the public sector need to be designed not only to protect rights and ensure some level of client satisfaction, but also to produce changes required to achieve the desired outcomes. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between those outcomes desired by the collective client and those desired by the individual client. This mindset would assist management to discover how close they are to meeting services as they attempt to make good on commitments to produce the goods and services that client’s value (Clark 2008; Moore 2006).

2.12 Neo organizational logic

From the previous discussion it can be seen that there are certain commonalities between performance management and how those principles are applied to all organizations, regardless of whether they are market-based, public service or third sector oriented. In all cases these principles remain similar and include making decisions, measuring outputs and outcomes, and ensuring positive customer satisfaction. Yet while the principles of performance management are relatively clear in the for-profit sector, the opposite generally applies in the normative-based environments of the public service and TSOs.

One area in common to all organizations is the difficulty of adhering to or complying with the measures of performance set by the organizational due to the aforementioned paradoxical outcomes that often arise. Because of this, researchers into normative-based structures have devised new approaches to age-old problems of measuring performance in the for-profit, public sector and TSOs.

More recent studies of performance measurement and management relating to organizations have adopted an institutional theory perspective which has become one of the dominant research streams in public sector accounting literature (Modell 2009; Van Helden, Johnsen and Vakkuri 2008). This body of research has evolved from a relatively static depiction of how institutional constituencies influence performance measurement and management practices (Brignall and Modell 2000; Johnsen 1999), and pays increasing
attention to how such practices are implicated in the wider processes of organizational and institutional change (Adolfsson and Wikstrom 2007; Modell 2001, 2005; Modell 2007; Ostergren 2006; Siti-Nabiha and Scapens 2005).

Over time, the organization and management sciences literature have increasingly recognized the shortcomings of generic approaches. Although all organizations have to address some common functions (as previously discussed), some have different emphases and approaches. This recognition gives rise to the identification of new performance functions, such as change management, organizational learning, knowledge management, organizational partnerships and network formation, innovation, and creativity (Modell 2009; Van Helden, Johnsen and Vakkuri 2008).

Drawing from Langley's (1989) framework of decision process rationality, Mueller, Mone and Barker (2007) examined the effects of formal analyses for the purposes of information, persuasion and communication, control and direction, and symbolism. Using survey data from senior management teams in 42 organizations, Mueller, Mone and Barker (2007) found that in both high and low dynamic environments, the instrumental use of information in decision processes is positively linked to organizational performance. However, in dynamic environments, while analyses for symbolic and control purposes is positively associated with performance, the analyses for persuasion is negatively associated. Mueller, Mone and Barker (2007) believed that by unravelling the performance effects of different elements of decision-making rationality, practitioners could better understand the nature of relationships between strategic decision processes and organizational performance, which might ultimately lead to better strategic decision-making in organizations. Using Miles and Snow's (1978) typology as a measure of the organizational approach toward innovation, Musteen, Barker and Beaten (2011) undertook a study which investigated the effects of CEOs’ attitudes toward change, based on the emphasis of innovation in competitive strategies. The data came from multiple respondents at non-profit organizations, and was gathered in a manner that eliminated the possibility of common method variance – a problem that has plagued past studies linking executives’ attitudes and organization-level innovation.

Musteen, Barker and Beaton’s (2011) findings suggest that organizations headed by CEOs with more liberal attitudes toward change tend to follow ‘prospector’ strategies characterized by high levels of exploration to develop innovations. However, organizations managed by CEOs with more conservative attitudes toward change are found to focus more on ‘defender’
strategies that exploit existing advantages rather than develop innovations. Unlike business managers, politicians are short-term focused, and when elections do not sufficiently reflect the success of past policies or work undertaken on behalf of the community, politicians always use the popular concerns of stakeholders and constituents to ensure the politician's 'successes' (Muller 2007).

2.13 Implications of stakeholders and constituents and neo organizational logic

While the list of potential stakeholders influencing public sector organizations is extensive (Pollitt 1986), DiMaggio and Powell (1983) contended that the two primary institutional stakeholders in society have always been the state and the various professions. Modell (2004), Brignall and Modell (2000), and Ansari and Bell (1991) noted that institutional theories have always assumed that a primary determinant of organizational structure is the pressure exerted by external and internal constituencies on the organization to conform to a certain set of expectations. This is necessary to gain environmental legitimacy and to secure access to vital resources that guarantee the organization’s long-term survival.

Scott (1987) argued that an important insight from institutional theory is that performance can be viewed as institutionally-defined, as institutional needs determine the interests pursued by organizations. More succinctly, Meyer and Zucker (1989) claimed that:

“Generally, performance will be defined narrowly to the extent that (a) elites dominate an organization, (b) a high degree of professionalization exists, and (c) the organization performs a technical function, outputs of which are measurable. Furthermore, performance will be construed much more broadly, by contrast, to the extent that (a) the norm of participative democratic governance operates, sometimes in the formal structure or rules of an organization, (b) the interests of multiple constituencies are given recognition, and (c) the organization’s function is non-technical and outputs elude measurement.”

In addition to these determinants of what is regarded as 'good' performance, it is important to consider the dependence of the organization on the various groups of stakeholders and constituents. Brignall and Modell (2000), citing Meyer and Zucker (1989), stated that the narrowing of performance may be interpreted as a power struggle between management and professional stakeholders, in an attempt to redefine organizational priorities. For example, a recurring theme throughout this thesis concerns the ambiguous attitude of organizational management toward professional expertise. On the one hand, professionals
are the key to better performance; yet on the other, management often expresses a certain amount of distrust in the professional’s expertise. In an example of this attitude, Radin (2006) pointed to the ‘No Child Left Behind’ initiative in public schools in the USA, and asserted that the standardized tests that allegedly did not allow for teachers’ discretion in who sat the exam. As such, there was a clear paradox. Trust in professionalism is vital in an increasingly complex society, yet managers are reluctant to grant this trust and therefore fall back on control and audit to justify actions taken. According to Power (1997), these audits are to a large extent ceremonial, referring to them as ‘rituals of verification’. Supporting this argument, Radin (2006) and Van de Walle and Roberts (2008) argued that audits in many cases are mainly about creating an illusion of control.

Furthermore, many public sector organizations have a history of resolving the often ambiguous and multifaceted nature of their objectives by reaching some politically negotiated consensus regarding which objectives to pursue (Hofstede 1981; Bourn and Ezzamel 1986). This suggests that, in practice, performance in public sector organizations has long been construed more narrowly than the normative statements in contemporary performance measurement and management literature suggest (Modell 2005). However, this tendency to funnel performance requires careful consideration if we are to understand how multidimensional performance measurement and management might work in such organizations. Brignall and Modell (2000) noted that a number of institutional theorists appear to disagree on the extent to which institutional theories have been concerned with the interests and power of different groups of stakeholders. While some have argued (DiMaggio 1988; Oliver 1991) that little attention has been directed to these issues, others like Scott (1987) contended that they are really the core of institutional analyses.

From a political perspective, governments like to take responsibility for high performance; whereas for opposition parties, there is minimal reward in identifying the high performance of the government in power. Rather, opposition parties gain more from identifying the negative aspects of the government’s performance. Given this, it is important for the government to identify and prevent bad performance. Identifying bad performance reframes the problem in a way that enables the government to motivate, mobilize and legitimize change (Brunsson 1990). Hence, focusing on bad performance may pay off both for politicians and stakeholders who want change. Furthermore, the management of public assets in the government context ensures managers and policymakers continually search
for low systematic performance, and that others such as auditors and media focus on areas where low performance is performed. For example, measuring performance levels of schools and hospitals where funding is dependent on certain performance standards being met.

### 2.14 Models of man

In order to get a better understanding why bad economic, administrative and political results get attention, Thaler and Sunstein (2008) observed that knowledge about the three simple models or theories of man is essential.

The first theory is the economic man (Thaler and Sunstein 2008), which states that the actor has clear preferences, has knowledge about all alternatives, calculated benefits and costs for all alternatives, and is able to rationally choose the alternative which maximizes net benefit relative to his preferences. Simon (1997) noted that while the economic man theory is unrealistic as a description of factual behaviour in decision-making processes, it is a good model to use as a benchmark or an ideal type in designing performance management systems.

The second theory is the administrative man, which underlies much of the thinking in accounting. This theory assumes limited (bounded) rationality (Simon 1997). This theory asserts that it is difficult to choose clear preferences (goals) if one has not selected an alternative and learnt through action what is preferred and what the benefits and costs of the alternatives are. The administrative man model explicitly deals with limited human cognitive capabilities.

The third theory is the political man, which has limited rationality but is cognizant of how different institutions counteract limited rationality at the individual level, at the same time as different actors pursue their own interests (Downs 1957). The political man uses information strategically, which means information is used to pursue individual interests, assuming that all other actors do the same (Feldman and March 1981). The political man theory can be more difficult to use for predicting behaviour than the theory of the administrative man. However, the political man theory is suitable in studies of how institutions are designed, and how professional politicians, bureaucrats and other political and administrative actors use performance information.
2.14.1 Political impacts of the models of man

In line with the explanation of economic, administrative man, political aspects also require exploration. To date, it can be argued that relevant information is often available, but that organizational employees do not use the information for the multitude of reasons as previously discussed. In turn, this implies that political considerations as in organizational politics are important when trying to understand the use of performance management in the organization. In public sector management, as opposed to for-profit managers, there is a tendency to highlight poor performance as opposed to highlighting excellence. In the public sector, avoiding low performance that may result in ‘naming, shaming and blaming’ is often as strong an incentive as performing well, as the reputation of the organization is paramount for ensuring the continued support of stakeholders and constituents. In addition, most organizations have their own distinctive social norms; they generally have formal rules, censures and punishments (e.g. Australian Public Service Code of Conduct and Regulations) to penalize their non-performers.

2.14.2 Understanding ambiguity in administrative and economic man performance

So how does a public sector reconcile the differences in performance management by the administrative and economic approaches? Simon (1976) argued that to understand the differences (in approaching performance management), there are fundamental and philosophical differences that need to be taken into account.

Simon (1976) contended that economic man represents the objective rationality in an ideal model; yet performance is limited by the individual’s unconscious skills, habits and reflexes influenced by their values and conceptions of purpose, which often diverge from the organization’s beliefs and goals. This is further impacted by the extent of the individual’s knowledge and the information available (Simon 1976). Simon believed that actual behaviour is limited when compared with objective rationality, in at least three ways:

1. Rationality requires a complete knowledge and anticipation of the consequences that will follow from each choice.

2. An individual’s imagination must supply the lack of experienced feeling in attaching value to future events; values can only be imperfectly anticipated.
3. Rationality requires a clear choice among all possible alternative behaviours, when in fact only a few of them generally come to mind.

Drawing on Simon’s concept, Jepperson (1991) observed that the administrative man model is different from the economic man in two major ways:

1. While the economic man maximizes performance by selecting the best alternative from among those available to him, the administrative man only looks for a course of action that is satisfactory or ‘good enough’.

2. Economic man deals with the ‘real world’ in all its complexities; administrative man views it from a simplified perspective. The economic man’s choices are made via a simplistic perspective of the situation, which only takes into account a few of the factors he regards as most relevant and crucial.

In line with this, Simon (1976) further argued that administrative man perceives a world that is simple in nature. Bakka and Fivesdal (1986) likewise contended that the administrative man always has a simplified view of the relevant situation, that he seeks only a limited number of alternatives and/or information about the consequences of different alternatives. Decision-making processes are predetermined and are only occasionally influenced by the need to maximize performance. Given that administrative man is generally satisfied with an ambiguous and limited knowledge of the situation. Performance decisions are generally made in accordance with his personal beliefs and values, influenced by discoveries, understanding or solving problems personally, or by experimenting and evaluating possible answers or solutions that do not require an impossible or unrealistic overview or insight (Bakka and Fivesdal 1986).

2.14.3 Ambiguity, communication and performance management

Strongman (2011) highlighted that ambiguity in business and organizational communication needs to be understood more thoroughly due to the inevitable result of workplace protocols, changeability of meaning based on language used in interpersonal and strategic communication contexts, and as a consequence of the uncertainty of change in organizations. When working in an ambiguous environment, Strongman (2011) suggested
that employees need to be trained in the use of conflict management strategies to enable them to deal with situations of ambiguity and uncertainty. As Robbins (1993) pointed out, conflict often results from incompatibility over goals, differing interpretations of facts, disagreements about behavioural expectations, and arguments over resources.

2.15 Implications of measuring performance for politicians

2.15.1 An example of consequences

Performance information that helps politicians and other policymakers express their views, obtain relevant evidence, and make policy and society transparent can often be conducive for open societies and democratic discourses (Popper 1945, 1966). These processes facilitate effectiveness because of their ability to inform policy decisions about business and social benefits, and costs of policy, and policy failure. For example, inadequate literacy skills in the workplace, as revealed by KPIs, evoke high business and social costs for individuals as well as for society. An example of this is when Norwegian citizens complained about public services, when they felt that service provision was unjust (Rolland 2003). The KPI results (as well as other performance information) provided data that gave many stakeholders and constituents reasons for doubting the performance of the Norwegian school system. As a result, the design, implementation and use of performance management shifted the balance of power in the polity. However, interference from other stakeholders due to public discourses on performance information did not sit well with all stakeholders in the process, as it reduced the Norwegian unions’ influence on public policy. By making performance information available in the public realm, it introduced transparency and increased parliamentary, political and market-based accountability relative to the traditional professional control and market cooperation (Bergesen 2006).

2.15.2 Implications of using performance information

After an organizational performance measurement system was put into use, claims of costly measures, data with low reliability and validity, and critical reports of non-performing behaviour (De Bruijn 2002) and dysfunctional effects (Smith 2005) emerged. Furthermore, employees adjusted their behaviour when exposed to the information, even without being told to do so by a central body (Brown and Deegan 1998; Becker 1996). Hence, performance information and naming and shaming, caused employees to adjust behaviour via self-control – a central element in performance management models using management by objectives.
However, the self-control effect is not dependent on the formulation of objectives, but only on the agent's (public) exposure to performance information (Brown and Deegan 1998).

The theory of performance paradox by Meyer and Gupta (1994) is grounded in three characteristics of performance measurement. First, there are many performance metrics, and the number continues to grow. Second, most measures of performance, even those that are used most frequently, exhibit little to no correlation with one another. Third, the dominant performance measures at any given point in time change continuously. As a result, the KPIs no longer show variation between organizations. This has become known as the ‘running down’ of performance measures (Meyer and Gupta 1994).

### 2.15.3 Explaining the running down process

The running down process refers to the fact that the comparability and variability of performance measures erodes over time, prompting the perpetual need for new performance measures in the same setting. Meyer and Gupta (1994) connected five key factors to the running down process, including positive learning, perverse learning, selection, suppression and external conditions. They argued that positive learning accounts for the fact that over time, the existence of specific performance measures contributes to the improved performance of individuals. This leads to a general decrease in the variability of results, and thus less effective performance measures. Conversely, perverse learning results in stagnated performance levels within an organization, because it encourages individuals to focus on improving their outcomes in performance measures rather than their actual performance. Contrary to positive learning, perverse learning leads to a decreased variability in measured performance levels.

### 2.16 Summary of Chapter 2

Consistent with the view of closed, rational organizations, early management literature generally assumed that most organizations are generic.

Seldon and Sowa (2004) pointed out that organizational managers have long been preoccupied with identifying the ‘best’ measure of organizational performance. Few topics have raised more interest among organizational theorist and practitioners than the question of what constitutes organizational performance and effectiveness. Numerous theorists
throughout the development of organization theory have focused on developing the best way to define and/or measure it.

Organization theory has produced numerous models exploring organizational performance, and some researchers have noted that there are as many models as there are studies of organizational performance or effectiveness. The rational goal, or purposive-rational model, of organizational performance assumes that organizations are designed to achieve certain goals, both formally specified and implicit.

In line with a century of management and organizational theory, theorists and practitioners including Fayol (1910), Taylor (1911), Sloan (1964), Drucker (1977), Reh (2011) Heskett (2011) and Clifford (2011) have stated that unless an organization’s management measures the performance of a specific action or outcome, they will not know whether the organization’s performance has become better or worse. From a performance measurement and management perspective, performance management influences the organization management team: (1) how do I measure progress toward those goals; and (2) how do I know if I’m succeeding?

Marr (2011) argued that the main reasons for measuring performance are: (1) learning and improvement; and (2) control and monitoring. However, Dionne (2008) contended that performance measurement often does not work well because what is measured is not the most important element. Furthermore, this situation also applies when employees feel they have no power to change bad KPIs, or influence the performance activities within the organization.

Stewart (2008) argued that organizational control structures are often contingent upon:

- organizational environments
- organizational goals objectives.

That is, management control relates to activities that are not specified, task control relates to specified tasks. Barnat (2005) maintained that task control is distinguished from management control in the following ways:

- The management control system is basically similar throughout the organization
- Managers interact with other managers within the organization to ensure consistency in measure the performance of task related activities
- Management control relates to activities that are not specified, while task control relates to specified tasks.

A result of the introduction of NPM in the late 1980s, output-related performance measures and rewards more appropriate to the private sector have become commonplace in public sector organizations in many countries (OECD 2003; Lah and Perry 2008; Perry, Engbers and Jun 2009). However, organizational theorists, particularly those associated with the public sector and TSOs, have argued that the accumulation of excessive performance information, some of which may have been superfluous to operational needs, has caused confusion for management when determining the needs of the organization.

Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) argued that performance audits are often focused on creating an illusion of control. Furthermore, Van de Walle and Roberts (2008) contended that similar arguments can be made for other performance measurement initiatives in addition to performance audits in both public and private sectors.

Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) suggested that a solution to this illusion of control would be to make performance management in the public sector ambiguity-proof. However, as ambiguity is everywhere, they further argued that the potential for ambiguity-proofing performance management is limited. They stated that contrary to the formal view, that performance measurement must be a rigid process, users of performance management must recognize that performance measurement and management need to be agile, decentralized and political in nature.

Performance management is often used to control implementation and is also important for decentralization. Performance measurement is often used to put issues on the agenda and to facilitate decision-making (Askim 2007), which improves performance and provides innovation (Johnsen 2005). It is also likely in some cases that some process stakeholders will resist performance management because of the increased measurement costs. In this sense, it is perfectly rational to resist or postpone performance management reforms.

A potential conclusion from the seemingly low use of performance information could be that much of what is collected for public policy is unnecessary. In line with this, Bouckaert and Peters (2002) argued that performance measurement is the Achilles heel of many public sector reforms. Yet performance measurement has now infused itself into most public
management and public policy activities (Van Dooren 2008; Van Dooren, Bouckaert and Halligan 2010).

While interest in performance measurement had grown along with performance leadership, one also needs to examine both their shortcomings and the negative effects of performance measurement and management (Serrat 2010). It is important to understand that the paradox is not about performance itself, rather the reports on the measurement of performance activities. Conversely, performance may have been better than reported (under-representation), which results in the belief that performance paradox is harmless (Meyer and Gupta 1994).

Serrat (2010) stated that conflicting definitions of performance indicators often abound both in market-based and public service organizations. NPM was therefore introduced (Hood 1994) with the objective of cutting budgets and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service bureaucracy.

Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) argued that one of the paradoxes in improving the public service performance management leadership model is focused on performance systems and structures. That is, rather than developing public service managers with high levels of leadership capacity to improve the performance of their agencies, governments and other agencies should seek to create performance systems that impose such improvements.

When measuring organizational performance, Jensen and Meckling (2009) argued that KPIs should reflect the functions of different business units. KPIs and supporting return-on-investment measures can be used to measure performance because they represent a reasonably costed objective, and a direct measure of value.

Conversely, management of public assets ensures that politicians and policymakers generally search for low systematic performance, while others such as auditors and media focus on areas where low performance is expected. For example, measuring performance levels of schools and hospitals where funding is dependent on certain performance standards being met.

Political considerations are important when trying to understand the use of performance management in the public sector organization. In public sector management as opposed to
for-profit organizational management, there is a tendency to highlight poor performance as opposed to highlighting excellence.

The theory of performance paradox by Meyer and Gupta (1994) is grounded in three characteristics of performance measurement. First, there are many performance metrics, and the number continues to grow. Second, most measures of performance, even those that are used most frequently, exhibit little to no correlation with one another. Third, the dominant performance measures at any given point in time changes continuously (Goldstein and Myers 1996). As a result, the KPI no longer shows variation between organizations, which is the running down of performance measures (Meyer and Gupta 1994).

While Chapter 2 has primarily examined questions concerning performance management in the for-profit and public sector organizations, Chapter 3 will explore and identify issues concerning performance measurement in the public service and TSOs.
CHAPTER 3: ISSUES WITH PUBLIC SERVICE AND TSO PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 identified the benefits of for-profit organizations using performance management principles and techniques. It confirmed that performance management encourages value-creating investments by both the organization and its employees. However, this performance information can also have both positive and negative impacts. Avoiding low performance that could result in naming, shaming and blaming in the public sector may be a strong incentive for performing well. For many public services, avoiding low performance by achieving a basic or average level of performance for specific, often vulnerable users and clients is often more important than achieving a high level (Johnsen 2008). Chapter 3 will therefore explore issues concerning performance measurement in the public sector and TSOs, because they are essentially normative value-based organizations where assessing performance is subjective and more difficult than in the private sector. Similar conditions are faced by politicians as those who impose policies and performance criteria on the public service. Chapter 3 will therefore investigate and report on how these findings impact on the personal performance of individual politicians.

3.2 Public service and NPM

Although the characteristics of NPM, as discussed in Chapter 1, provided a new alternative performance measurement model for the public sector, theorists have argued that NPM does not represent the paradigm change in performance management (Osborne and Gaebler 1992; Jenkins, Leeuw and Van Thiel 2003; Vakkuri 2007; Serrat 2010). In reality, the practitioner theory underlying the move from traditional performance measurement systems to NPM is based on the view that politicians and governments should stick to their core business. That is, developing new policies to realize (political) goals which benefit the public sector, the not-for-profit organizations (third sector) and for-profit businesses alike, rather than operating the government’s own subsidized businesses in competition with the private sector.

Osborne and Gaebler’s (1992) theory is that government and public service bodies should be “steering not rowing”. They argued that the separation of policy, administration and
implementation is facilitated through contracts being drawn up between the government and semi-autonomous (for-profit based) business units or private sector organizations to implement the policy. The Government’s business provider’s performance is expressed in overall terms of KPIs met (i.e. number of goods or services rendered); thus reducing the government’s overall exposure to rising financial and human resource costs involved in the provision of public services. These changes within the public sector will likely lead to the adoption of a large number of private sector techniques being used to measure and improve public service performance, such as KPIs, as Jenkins, Leeuw and Van Thiel (2003) confirmed:

“Not only do indicators enable politicians to measure and evaluate the performance of public and private policy implementing organizations, they also increase the opportunities to account for performance; a major goal of administrative reform.”

It appears that these changes have been fed by a strong governmental belief in the measurability of performance within the public sector. Furthermore, Serrat (2010) acknowledged that public sector interest in performance management has steadily grown as confirmed by the way it has approached planning, monitoring and evaluation of government-initiated business outcomes.

3.2.1 NPM and performance measurement ambiguity

3.2.1.1 Creating the foundation for a performance measurement system

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, successful performance measurement systems adhere to the principles of: (1) measuring only what is important, as it is argued that if we measure too much it may result in unintended consequences; and (2) focusing on customer needs.

Briefly, the US Department of Energy (DOE) stated that an effective performance measurement system involves identifying the work process flow and establishing consistent performance goal(s) or standards, even if the goal is subjective. The next step involves establishing performance measurement(s) by identifying individual measures, and identifying the responsible parties (as in a team or an individual) who will be assigned the responsibilities for monitoring and implementing each of the steps in the performance measurement process. Once these processes have been put in place, the responsible entity has to collect and pre-analyze the data in a timely fashion, and note any early trends to
confirm the adequacy of the data collection system. The next process involves analyzing and reporting on the actual performance of the system. In turn, a comparison of actual performance to stated goal(s) needs to be conducted to determine any variations. Furthermore, it is important that the entity recognizes that goals, standards and ‘efficiency artefacts’, also known as performance measures, need periodic evaluation to keep them in line with the latest organizational processes.

3.2.1.2 What are efficiency artefacts?
From a managerial perspective, efficiency artefacts or performance measures are recognized as an important element of measuring the performance of the business in which they the measures are involved in (Robey and Sales 1994). This involvement could range from managing a bakery or supermarket that sells bread and other goods, a financial planner that sells their financial knowledge, a public service manager who oversees the collection of taxes or a politician who listens to his constituents, and develops and implements public policies in an efficient and effective manner. Managers and supervisors directing the efforts of an organization have a responsibility to know how, when and where to institute a wide range of changes (Robey and Sales 1994).

As part of its performance measurement process, The DOE contended that most performance measures can be grouped into one of the following six general categories. However, it also noted that other organizations may develop their own categories as appropriate, depending on the organization's mission:

1. Effectiveness: A process characteristic indicating the degree to which the process output (work product) conforms to requirements.
2. Efficiency: A process characteristic indicating the degree to which the process produces the required output at minimum resource cost.
3. Quality: The degree to which a product or service meets customer requirements and expectations.
4. Timeliness: Measures whether a unit of work was done correctly and on time. Criteria must be established to define what constitutes timeliness for a given unit of work.
5. Productivity: The value added by the process, divided by the value of the labour and capital consumed.
6. Safety: Measures the overall health of the organization and the working environment of its employees.
The following contributors have also been identified by the DOE as reflecting the attributes of an ideal unit of efficient performance measurement:

1. reflects the customer’s needs as well as our own
2. provides an agreed-upon basis for decision-making
3. is understandable
4. applies broadly
5. may be interpreted uniformly
6. is compatible with existing sensors
7. is precise in interpreting the results
8. is economical to apply.

In turn, the DOE noted that the performance data obtained in the course of the business must support the organization’s mission statement(s), from the highest organizational level down to the lowest performance level. Furthermore, within such a system, the units of measure should be interconnected. The DOE further noted that the interrelationships between the organization’s mission, management processes, task processes and work outcomes should be examined via performance measures and KPIs, or in other terms efficiency artefacts:

1. At the top of the organization are the financial and upper management units of performance measurement that serve the needs of management at the highest levels in the organization: corporate, divisional and functional. Efficiency artefacts in this case would include managerial measures consisting mostly of composites of data expressed, such as summaries, ratios and indexes.

2. The next level consists of units of measure that serve to gauge performance for entire departments, product lines and services produced. In large organizations there may be multiple layers of this. Efficiency artefacts for upper management would include measures to evaluate broad performance matters including data systems, reports, audits and personal observations.
3. The next level of units summarizes data (e.g. percent defective for specific processes, documents, product components, service cycles and personnel). Efficiency artefacts would include departmental summaries of product and process performance, derived from inspections and tests, reports of non-conformance, as well as personal observations.

4. The final level involves technological units that form the basis of the organization. These are measures of individual units of products and of individual elements of service. Efficiency artefacts here would include numerous technological instruments to measure technological product and process features.

Likewise, Serrat (2010) found that performance can be an amalgam of dimensions, some of which conflict. Performance measuring requires an appropriate mixture of benchmarks, developed with full knowledge of their interrelationships.

3.2.1.3 Public managers’ use of NPM instruments
Vakkuri (2007) commented on his research concerning public managers as users of NPM instruments (i.e. efficiency measures, or as otherwise known – efficiency or evidentiary artefacts – Eyben 2013), arguing that they are used to increase rationality and efficiency in the public service. To be more precise, efficiency artefacts are instruments that increase order and alleviate ambiguity in public management. However, Vakkuri questioned whether they are able to do this, and what kind of order is created when analyzed from the viewpoint of uses and users. His research examined public managers as users of efficiency artefacts in their attempts to solve the ‘doing’ questions, such as: (1) how does one know how to act upon the conception of efficient practices; or (2) is it possible to enable high performance through efficiency artefacts?

Vakkuri’s (2007) research addressed three different theoretical viewpoints. First, users of the use of efficiency artefacts are from a systems theory perspective – the chain of logic from designing the artefacts, and implementing and using them, to the effects of those uses. Second, a more sociologically and institutionally-oriented approach emphasizes the nature of efficiency artefacts as structures both embodying and enacting social behaviour. Vakkuri (2007) therefore asked whether public managers can be regarded as intentional subjects
influencing artefacts through the use of performance measurement processes. However, as established by Schneider and Sadowski (2009), Weichselbaumer and Winter-Ebner (2007), and Jaeger, Grau and Haber (2005), Vakkuri (2007) argued that theoretically, artefacts are not stable. Third, Vakkuri (2007) contended that the theory of bounded rationality is needed to understand ambiguous efficiency artefacts and the processes of their use, with a focus on public organizations and public managers, and the way in which they perceive causalities in performance. He further argued that the theory of bounded rationality clearly maintains that, as paradoxical it may seem; efficiency artefacts do not always simplify the business world.

Vakkuri (2007) tentatively identified four uses of efficiency artefacts, each of which represents a distinct approach to 'use':

1. Decoupled use is an extension of practice-based reasoning, where public managers retain an option to 'choose otherwise', even if this means circumventing the original design of the efficiency artefact. Furthermore, it may result in what is known as the symbolic use of performance measurement and evaluation. As discussed in Chapter 2, uses of artefacts are complex combinations of original artefact properties and their applications. The simultaneous use of efficiency artefacts stems from the user’s needs. Efficiency artefacts are used in a specific historical, institutional and political decision-making context.

2. For uses in decision-making, efficiency artefacts are expected to provide marginal changes to an existing structure. However, because needs evolve over time, uses tend to be sporadic and incremental. Using efficiency artefacts therefore appears to include enacting specific sub-structures of the artefacts. The rationale is to consciously select those properties and structures that are most applicable to the decision-making context.

3. The process is also about modifying efficiency artefacts, to align them with the requirements of public administration. The question is what evidential or efficiency artefacts (Eyben 2013) are the organizations using?

4. The integrative use is about creating a cultural mindset for public management through conceptualizations and applications of efficiency artefacts; that uses of efficiency artefacts are about establishing a 'rationality vocabulary'. Uses of
efficiency artefacts are influenced and determined by identities and social norms of actors. Conversely, artefacts and their uses may create new identities for public managers.

In solving the doing’ problem, Vakkuri (2007) reasoned that public managers attempt to create order and meaning for their leadership activities – a point supported by Eyben (2013) in several ways using different instruments. Efficiency or evidentiary artefacts are examples of such instruments. For example organizational managers, artefacts can be seen as methods to cope with decision-making ambiguity. However, Vakkuri (2007) further noted that there is a need for a more analytical understanding of bounded rationality when implementing performance improvements in the public sector as the rational intentions of the process may turn into something unexpected but not necessarily ‘irrational’. Vakkuri (2007) further highlighted that one continuing and important aim in current global political systems is to improve the productivity and performance of public sector systems by making increased use of the scarce resources available.

3.2.2 Implications of efficiency artefacts on politicians

Eyben (2013) noted that in the field of international aid, little research has so far been done on the influence of efficiency artefacts on politicians, especially in relation to why they distribute scarce economic resources to some areas while foregoing aid to others. Eyben (2013) pondered whether it is because there is a lack of hard evidence, rigorous data, tangible results, value for money or a lack of clarity in the international development sector, or is it due to definitional disputes and vested interests? Alternatively it could be the contested worldview that makes it difficult for researchers to understand the decision making processes used by politicians. It should be noted that Eyben (2013) used the term evidence artefacts’ in the same way that Vakkuri (2007) and others including the DOE used the term ‘efficiency artefacts’ when articulating performance measures and results.

For Eyben (2013), evidence artefacts include:

1. randomized control trials
2. systematic reviews
3. cost-effectiveness analysis
4. option appraisals
5. social return on investment
However, while noting that results and evidence artefacts can be beneficial for organizational managers, Eyben (2013) also highlighted that they can be misused when users insist on using them in inappropriate circumstances. Although the effects that such artefacts have on the individual also depend on the kind of organization they work for – not only with respect to its position in the community, but also its institutional culture and leadership (Eyben 2013). Eyben further argued that while results and evidence artefacts are intended to improve clarity and thought, they can also have perverse consequences, such as when used in an organization where ambiguous (Vakkuri 2007) powers determine what knowledge counts, or where hierarchical ways of working block communication and dialogue (Foucault 1980).

While the artefacts, more than the discourse that has produced them, shape users’ organizational lives, artefacts are also ‘technologies of power’, implemented and enforced by authority, but often internalized so that no obvious external control is required (Foucault 1980). With such internalization, Eyben (2013) noted that artefacts take on a life of their own, independent of the authority that has initially required their use.

### 3.2.3 NPM and the Swedish experience

While acknowledging the paradoxical nature of efficiency artefacts (Eyben 2013; Vakkuri 2007) (i.e. artefacts often make performance management difficult), Vakkuri (2007) further acknowledged that performance measurement is nothing new in the public sector, and that there has been an increasing interest in performance measurement techniques since the arrival of NPM in the early 1990s (Bowerman et al. 2002; Williams 2003; Johnsen 2005). Even though several researchers have maintained that NPM has been an ineffective technique for improving performance in the public sector (e.g. Power 1997; Nørreklit 2000, 2003; De Bruijn and Van Helden 2005), its popularity has increased among managers of public organizations (Johnsen 2005; Van Helden and Tillema 2005; Siverbo and Johansson 2006). NPM has also been used to put issues on the agenda and facilitate decision-making (Askim 2007), which Johnsen (2005) contended improves performance and provides innovation.
Johansson and Siverbo’s (2007) research found that one of the more lasting imprints that NPM has made in the public sector is the increased popularity of performance measurement. Sweden is one country where performance measurement has gained in popularity in the public sector. Since the mid-1990s, the Swedish Government has used a model under which ministries and authorities are controlled through performance evaluation using multiple ratios (Holmblad and Brunsson 2002). Swedish local governments also use their own self-developed performance measurement models, while state initiatives make it easier for them to mutually compare their performances.

At the local government level, and particularly in regards to the use of relative performance evaluations (RPEs), many of the performance evaluations conducted in Swedish municipalities involve comparison with other municipalities’ performances; thus providing relative performance evaluations (Northcott and Llewellyn 2003). In RPEs, ratios are used to reduce uncertainty in relation to quality, productivity and efficiency of the organization by comparing it with other organizations. However, RPE is not the same as benchmarking where the performance evaluation is followed by a process evaluation (i.e. comparison of production processes in order to identify reasons for the discrepancies in performance). RPE is not generally practised by for-profit organizations, which instead tend to use benchmarking when comparing outcomes against other firms (Cox 1997; Bowerman et al. 2002; Tyler 2005; Siverbo and Johansson 2006). Johansson and Siverbo’s (2007) research jointly tested economic, political and institutional/cultural explanations to clarify the relative utilization of RPEs.

Johansson and Siverbo’s (2007) research into the use of RPEs in the Swedish local government sectors resulted in a number of hypotheses guided by economic, political and institutional/cultural theory. In turn, this raised a need to explore why NPM has encouraged greater performance measurement in the public service, but not on individual politicians, particularly when politicians actively demand and encourage the use of NPM in the public sector workplace at both organizational and individual employee levels.

### 3.3 Implications of NPM on public sector and TSOs

For-profit business performance theory works on the assumption that everything can be measured, even non-financial data and information (Kaplan and Norton 1992, 1996). Likewise, NPM assumes that the performance of individual public servants and politicians is open to some sort of performance measurement and scrutiny, as suggested in the Balanced
Score Card model (Power 1997; Nørreklit 2000, 2003; De Bruijn and Van Helden 2005; Vakkuri 2007; Van Dooren and Thijs 2010). This provides a problem when attempting to measure the performance of the government department and individual public servants as Wilson (1989) noted that public sector bureaucracies: (1) cannot lawfully retain and distribute the profits of the organization to employees; (2) cannot allocate the resources of production (land, labour, capital) in accordance with the preferences of administrators; and (3) must serve goals not of the organization’s own choosing. Therefore, control over revenues, productive factors, agency goals and practices is vested in entities external to the public service department in charge, such as government treasuries, legislatures, courts, politicians and specific interest groups such as the ombudsman or other oversighting bodies. As a result, with few exceptions, the human and financial resources of public sector managers are contingent upon the goodwill of politicians and other policymakers; not the goodwill of customers and other stakeholders as in the for-profit sector (Wilson 1989).

Dilulio (1993) argued that in most government agencies, the relationship between valued inputs (people, money) and desired outputs (less crime, better public health) is ambiguous. That is, the concept of efficiency is irrelevant to many, if not most, public management tasks. Since public management and private management are fundamentally similar in some respects, it makes little sense to argue the fact that “government isn’t run like a business”, or to assume that government agencies are inherently less efficient than private firms (Allison 1992). Allison (1992) believed that the notion that there is a significant body of private management practices and skills that can be transferred directly to public management tasks to produce significant improvements is wrong. Wilson (1989) in turn argued that it is not always possible for public managers to strengthen the relationship between administration and goals, inputs and outputs, processes, and performance. However, regardless of whether the organization resides in the for-profit, public or third sector, the systematic process of planning work and setting expectations, continually monitoring performance, developing the capacity to perform, periodically rating performance in a summary fashion, and rewarding good performance remain the same (United States Office of Personnel Management 2011).

However, for politicians there is the added requirement of public accountability and public trust – qualities that appear to be in short supply. McCandless (2013) argued in the Ottawa Hill Times that parliament can regain public respect if, when political parties and individual politicians next discuss the benefits and costs of a particular project, it asks whose benefits
and whose costs. In doing so, it would go a long way to improving public accountability. He went on to contend that:

“The lack of public respect for the Canadian Senate and House of Commons means that Canadian society doesn’t work properly … Citizens have yet to cause legislative processes that progress to practices [through physically demonstrations] that help citizens fairly assess legislators’ motivations and abilities.”

Supporting McCandless’s (2013) argument, Pidd (2012, 2005) maintained that public accountability is one of the most commonly cited justifications for the publication of KPIs in the public sector. Nur Barizah, Zakiah and Muslim (2011) highlighted in their response to the (then) new Malaysian premier’s pledge toward a more accountable and transparent government, that the political system would be handicapped if the KPI results were kept from the public’s view. Furthermore, Buang (2009) argued that a government that is accountable should not be afraid of public scrutiny if it is genuinely trying to fulfil its obligations to the community (Nur Barizah, Zakiah and Muslim 2011).

Pidd (2012) also contended that an important concern in contemporary society relates to the issue of public accountability and public trust. Pidd (2012, 2005) believed that KPIs adequately demonstrate the performance of public services, however Townley (2005) found that the introduction of performance measurement highlighted the difference between aspirations and the problems encountered in the development and implementation of performance measurement.

3.4 Strategic uses of public and third sector performance measurement

Performance measures based on the needs of society have always been useful for policymakers (Simon 1947). Moore (1996) noted that in a narrow sense, the standard set of ideas on the managerial use of performance measures is almost identical for businesses, public sector and TSOs:

1. to meet demands for external accountability
2. to foster a strong sense of internal accountability.

Moore (1996) also argued that the use of performance measurement makes all members of the organization feel accountable to meet targets via the setting and enforcing of rigorous performance standards.

Moore (1996) suggested that in relation to decision-making, one of the best ways to guarantee legitimacy is an invitation to all employees to support and embrace accountability for defining and recognizing public value. He went on to say that public servants have a professional and ethical obligation to be accountable for their performance, to those who have the power and authority to determine expectations of performance, and call them to account. This means developing concrete methods of measuring specific aspects of performance. Furthermore, the effort to develop and use performance measures forces the user to be more concrete and explicit about the nature of the public value they are trying to create on behalf of the stakeholders. However, if the public value identified cannot be explicitly stated, then it cannot be measured.

Moore (1996) contended that identifying the public value makes it essential for politicians and organizational management to foster a strong sense of internal accountability, giving employees’ guidance so that they can focus on finding the means of improving performance as well as add value to the good or service they are producing through organizational learning and reflection. Moore (2006) further noted that the ability to meet these requirements depends on the organizational capacity to measure individual employee’s performance consistently and reliably. Furthermore, the definition of public purpose, the mobilization of support, and the exploitation of operational capacities are dependent on improving performance inside the organization, either via a rigid structure of accountability or through a softer version that emphasizes personal learning.

3.4.1 Implications of NPM on strategic governments

Reflecting on the two basic concepts regarding the recognition of public value of public policy initiatives and the performance of government organizations, Moore (2006) noted that the theory and practice of ‘benefit/cost analysis’ has always had a strong theoretical basis in welfare economics (Waud et al. 1992; Jackson et al. 1998). The core idea of benefit/cost
analysis is that individuals in a society are the only ones who decide whether public policy results are valuable, and the only way to interpret this is to ask individuals how they feel about them. In effect, the only way to discover the overall value of a public policy is to sum up those individual valuations. If, for any given policy, there is enough value created for the beneficiaries of the policy to compensate those who suffer losses from it, then arguably some public value is created by the proposed policy (Moore 2006).

The other form of benefit/cost analysis is closely related to a second method of public value production (Bridgman and Davis 2000), and is referred to as ‘program evaluation’. The techniques of program evaluation require an analyst to develop a conception of public value creation by imagining what policymakers are trying to achieve through a particular set of policies and programs (often through a review of the parliamentary policy draughtsman notes). Using this conception of public value, it is the aspirations of policymakers to achieve particular social results as the proper basis for defining value, not necessarily those of individuals who experienced the social results. This is often referred to in political science as ‘political engineering’ (Swirski 2011; Willard 1992; Popper 1971), where a political engineer is one who tries to significantly influence popular attitudes, social behaviours and resource management via political policy (Popper 1971).

Moore (2006) argued that options available to organizational management when defining the objectives of performance measurement include: (1) concentrating on managing performance measurement at the level of activity, processes and procedures; or (2) monitoring outputs, workload measures and measures of productivity. This is essential as government organizations are being pushed to measure performance even further down the value chain in the direction of greater client satisfaction or outcomes. Using community policing as an example, Moore (2006) highlighted that it relies on inputs of both public funds and public authority. Because the police use authority as well as money, and are engaged in obligation as well as service encounters, police operations have to be evaluated in two distinct normative frameworks: (1) a utilitarian framework to assess the effectiveness of inputs of labour and resources; and (2) a justice framework to assess the degree to which the police help in producing justice and behaving justly and fairly in the pursuit of both the practical goals of reducing crime and the principled goal of assuring justice.
3.5 Measuring organizational performance and recognizing public value

Performance management has important political dimensions beyond the obvious administrative and technical dimensions (Gallop 2006). Moore (2006) noted that the work of developing and improving performance measurement systems involves examining philosophical and normative, as well as scientific and cognitive impacts. Moore (2006) further stated that the obvious way for public service managers to initiate and continue a dialogue with the political world is to ask those in the political authorizing environment what they think is valuable. Furthermore, public service managers need to engage their political masters in serious and sustained discussions about their definition of public value, and the publicly valued dimensions of performance for their organizations. In doing so, they then might be able to arrive at a conclusion as to the definition of public value (Gallop 2006). Yet engaging in such a discussion might well expose the manager and their organization to criticism from the politicians, and to the risk of a real and objective failure to produce what the public really want.

Moore (1996) believed that in relation to the criticism raised by Gallop (2006) there are a number of areas that might motivate a public service manager to begin working in this risky and ambiguous environment, that is, to take up the challenge of recognizing and defining the creation of public value with the input and oversight of the political authorising authorizing environment: (1) questions remain as to how managers could construct the systems that allow them to recognize public value when they do not know what they are trying to produce or whether they are succeeding; (2) confronting unresolved conflicts between the organizational activities being undertaken and the performances measures used to measure their effectiveness. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 2, Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) argued that processing large amounts of data and information – sometimes ambiguous and not always clear or understandable – often causes confusion for management when determining the needs of the organization, defining what it adds to public value, and how it defines organizational relationships in the political authorizing environment.

Moore’s (1996) research found that in reality, the main factors that add public value are the knowledge that the public service cannot run external organizations without understanding the social and political cultures, and its relationship to the organization’s performance. Furthermore, besides knowing what constitutes political and public value, the organization
also needs to know how politicians contribute to their existence within the public service framework. In pursuit of finding answers to this problem for public sector managers, Moore (1996) developed a framework for thinking about strategic management in government, which is represented in the 'strategic triangle', Figure 1 below:

![Figure 1: The strategic triangle, Moore (1995)](image)

Moore (1996) proposed that an important goal of public and third sector management is the need to find the ‘fit’ between the conception of the public value that their organization seeks to produce, while ensuring the continuing flow of resources to the organization by building legitimacy and support, in what he termed the ‘authorizing environment’. In addition, for any particular conception of public value to be strategically viable, these managers need to be able to build sufficient operational and organizational capabilities to achieve results. The significance of Moore’s (1995) model is the idea of trying to fit a public sector or third sector organization into the concept of a dynamic private sector environment. The public service environment is, on the one hand, a task environment where public servants develop a portfolio of programs, policies and procedures to produce public value, while it is also an authorizing environment, consisting of the citizens, legislators, interest groups and other
parties that inform the manager about the extent of the environment that the public servant is expected and authorized to operate in.

3.6 Implications of ambiguity on performance measurement

Both Moore (1995) and Gallop (2006) believed that performance measurement in the public service is best achieved via close collaboration between public service managers and politicians. This collaboration also requires both the political minister and organizational management to define public value, how the organization contributes to increasing public value, and how that increase in public value can be recognized by all stakeholders and constituents. Smith (2004) noted that public value is not only the property of particular political parties, public service institutions, academic disciplines or professions, but is defined and redefined through social and political interaction. Such interaction involves politicians, officials and communities. Focusing on public value enables one to aggregate issues for analysis, in terms that should also make sense to citizens and communities, political activists, and those responsible for delivering public services.

Mendel and Brudney (2012) argued that since creation of the term ‘public value’ a term coined by Moore in 1995 and also defined as ‘public values’ by Bozeman (2002, 2007), researchers of public administration and related fields have considered the concept primarily from the perspective of the public sector and for the purposes of public management (Williams and Shearer 2011; Benington 2011; O’Flynn 2007; Alford and Hughes 2007). From the public sector perspective, public value is advanced when governments make contributions to societies that benefit from the public good. These contributions might be physically tangible such as public infrastructure or tax collection, or intangible such as increased citizen participation or awareness (Stoker 2006). According to Jorgensen and Bozeman (2007), public values are principles that guide public managers and contribute to the common good and possessed elements of altruism. Public values are sustainable environmentally and financially, and stimulate the public to perceive government as stable, dignified and trustworthy (Alford and Hughes 2007; Stoker 2006).

Vakkuri and Melkin (2006) argued that performance measurement research has largely been built upon the theories of the rational and calculative behaviour of social actors and organizations. It appears that it has become standard practice in the private sector as well as public sector organizations, for the problem of performance measurement to be solved...
through the introduction of more sophisticated performance measurement methodologies, techniques, standards and indicators. It has further been suggested by Vakkuri and Melkin (2006) and Vakkuri (2007) that the issues around ambiguity in decision-making have not been given enough attention. Issues of decision-making ambiguity have been around for a considerable time, and a number of studies have attempted to address these concerns (Petkova et al. 2013; Vakkuri 2007; Srivastava 1997; Hogarth 1989; Becker and Brownson 1964).

Ellsberg (1961) defined the ambiguity effect as a cognitive bias where decision-making is affected by a lack of information or ambiguity. The effect implies that organizational management tend to select options for which the probability of a favourable outcome is known, over an option where it is unknown. Ellsberg (1961) highlighted an example where public service managers had defined and created a number of decision-making rules to avoid options when information was unknown or missing. This often led public service managers to seek out the unknown or missing information. Generally, the search for missing information was initiated as the result of a senior public service manager identifying a particular unknown or missing piece of information and bringing it to the middle manager’s attention (Ellsberg 1961; Frisch and Baron 1988). Ellsberg (1961) and Becker and Brownson (1964) have argued that many public service managers besides adding subjective probability and subjective utility in their decision-making processes, have also incorporated ambiguity into their decision-making procedure as the decision-maker does not know enough about the problem to rule out probabilities that will have an effect on the outcomes of the decision.

Ellsberg (1961) and Becker and Brownson (1964) further contended that ambiguity is a subjective variable which determines the decision-maker’s confidence in their probability estimates. Zahariadis (2003) offered a theory that political decision-making incorporates policymaking where there is ambiguity and is often irreconcilable. This expanded and extended on Kingdon's (1984) influential 'multiple streams' model that explained agenda-setting. That is: (1) identification of policy problems; (2) agenda-setting (focusing governmental attention to the problem); (3) development of policy proposals; (4) adoption of policies; (5) implementation of policies; and (6) evaluation of policy implementation and impact. Zahariadis (2003) argued that manipulation (i.e. the bending of ideas, processes and beliefs to get what you want out of the policy) is integral to understanding the dynamics of policy decision-making in such conditions of ambiguity.
Vakkuri and Melkin (2006) noted that the lack of agreement by organizational theorists concerning definition, development and implementation of decision-making and the effects of ambiguity on the process is especially complicated for public and not-for-profit sector performance measurement, where the need for understanding political decision-making and measurement information is even more crucial (Lapsley and Mitchell 1996). Vakkuri and Melkin (2006) therefore adopted the pragmatic view that despite all the complexities and limitations, performance is adequately measured and measurements are widely used in contemporary organizations (Bhimani 1994; Porter 1995; Power 1997). Therefore, ambiguity is something that decision-makers and users of performance measurement information generally cope with (Foss 2001). Vakkuri and Melkin (2006) confirmed that the ambiguity perspective in performance measurement originates from the bounded rationality tradition (March and Simon 1958; March 1978; March and Olsen 1987; Simon 1978, 1991).

Two major directions of performance measurement research resulted. First, Vakkuri and Melkin (2006) suggested that it is possible to examine performance measurement as a system of decision-making and performance measurement actions which can be ‘decomposed’ into a series of decisions made by performance measurers, organizations, teams and individual decision-makers, utilizing performance measurement information. Furthermore, decision-making can be studied by reflecting on general theories of organizational behaviour (Cyert and March 1963) and information problems in organizations (March 1987). Second, the ambiguity perspective maintains that the social world of decision-making and performance measurement is not completely rational (Davis and Hersh 1986) – that it is filled with limitations, conflicting interests, uncertainties, paradoxes and ambivalences, which make performance measurement a difficult undertaking. As a result, specific challenges are introduced into the process. In turn, Foss (2001) contended that there are a number of limitations that must be appreciated by any decision-maker when focusing attention on organizational performance measurement. These include limitations of memory, limitations in understanding the cause and effect relationships of complex organizations, and limitations in communicating for and about organizational performance. Accordingly, the decision-maker is incapable of making completely rational (maximizing) decisions (Foss 2001).
3.7 Reflections of performance measurement

Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004) argued that performance measurement is a ‘fuzzy’ concept, with different theorists giving substantially different meanings to it. Van Dooren, Bouckaert and Halligan (2010) believed that performance is not only a concept but also an agenda. Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) subsequently commented on this point, arguing that the agenda is often brought about by management’s need to set often-conflicting agendas as each manager competes to appear the most productive and important in the organization. They noted that implementation failures are regularly caused by a lack of managerial ownership in the agenda-setting process, where management creates ambiguous conditions when defining what is required. Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) also suggested that this process allows management to shift responsibility to another area, should the decision-making procedure and any subsequent negative fall-out occur after implementation.

Improved implementation of performance measurement and management requires that those who are affected by the system have to accept and internalize it (Van Dooren, Bouckaert and Halligan 2010). However, in a thrust to assure internal ownership, performance management reforms often fall victim to over-commitment (Pollitt 2008). Many organizational managers and employees need to be convinced in order to introduce a performance management system, including politicians, top and middle managers, professionals, and front-line workers. Therefore, while an adequate performance measurement strategy creates high expectations and plays down the costs, this strategy may prove successful in the short term. However, Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) contend that the strategy may fail in the medium term if it is not accepted (or ‘owned’) by organizational management or employees groups.

Van Dooren and Thijs (2010) went on to state that typically, the costs of a performance management system are tangible and become apparent shortly after the introduction of the system. However, they further state that performance systems that do not deliver may have a major impact and undermine confidence. Therefore, any failure of the performance management effort may result in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Johnsen (2004) and Covey (2008) both argued that performance measurement is influenced not only by tangible outcomes and qualities such as economic output, but also by many intangibles such as honesty, the quality of organizational members lives, social inclusion, social trust and societal fairness. Performance measurement also has important beneficial
effects (Johnsen 2005; De Bruijn 2007; Spekle and Verbeeten 2009). That is, both the organization as well as external stakeholders benefit from the information and transparency that performance measures provide. Johnsen (2005); De Bruijn (2007); Spekle and Verbeeten (2009) contend that performance measurement serves the purpose of accountability and legitimization of the organization, and this external transparency enables external parties to benchmark the organization’s performance and stimulate competition. From this perspective, performance measurement provides the organization with an incentive to improve its performance relative to its competitors.

The perverse effect of performance measurement is especially likely to occur in professional organizations, including politicians that work in specialized fields with a relatively autonomous position (Smith 1995; Goddard, Mannion and Smith 2000). As a result, performance measurement is often claimed to de-professionalize public sector organizations (Noordegraaf 2006), and potentially drive out the professional perspective toward public service delivery. De Bruijn (2007) noted that the uniform and unambiguous product definitions associated with performance measurement are often at odds with the professional’s multiple value reality, and as a result, performance measurement takes the trade-off between conflicting values (efficiency and quality) out of the hands of the public servant, and places it in the hands of the politician who may have ulterior motives for requiring certain outcomes (i.e. ensuring policy is enacted to be seen to actually achieve a result, thus enhancing their re-election capabilities (De Bruijn 2007)).

### 3.8 Implications of organizational culture on performance measurement

The Australian system of parliamentary democracy is a form of liberal democracy. Liberal democracy is a form of indirect or representative democracy where limits are placed upon the power of government in the form of various institutional checks and balances, such as the separation of powers.

Culture, whether it is political, managerial or organizational, is often treated as an object of management control. For example, Ouchi and Wilkins (1985) noted that:

> “The contemporary student of organizational culture often sees the organization not as a natural solution to deep and universal forces, but rather as a rational instrument
Accordingly, a lot of research on corporate culture and organizational symbolism has tended to focus on sets of meanings, symbols, values and ideas presumed to be manageable and directly related to effectiveness and performance measurement. Horkheimer and Adorno (1947) and Marcuse (1964) found that instrumental reasoning dominates; that is, quantifiable values and the optimization of means for the attainment of pre-given ends often define rationality. However, Ouchi and Wilkins (1985) also found that many previous aspects of organizational culture had since been disregarded. Examples include values such as bureaucratic-meritocratic hierarchies; unequal distribution of privileges and rewards; a mixture of individualism and conformity; emphasis on money, economic growth, consumerism and advanced technology; exploitation of the natural environment; and the equation of economic criteria with rationality. Ouchi and Wilkins (1985) also identified that subordinating organizational cultural thinking and narrowly defined instrumental concerns often reduces the potential for culture to assist managerial actions.

Organizational culture calls for considerations that break away from some of the assumptions that characterize technical thinking, such as the idea that a particular input leads to a predictable effect. In line with this, Baker (1980) argued that good or valuable cultures often equate with strong cultures which are characterized by norms beneficial to the organization, to customers and to mankind via good performance in general. Good cultures, according to Baker (1980), are those that incorporate all good things in peaceful coexistence. Other authors have identified virtues, attitudes and behaviour that are often useful in achieving the corporate goals defined by management (e.g. Deal and Kennedy 1982; Trice and Beyer 1985).

Wiener (1998) argued that instrumental reasoning does not consider the ambiguity or virtue of culture, or what has been accomplished in terms of goal realization. That is, the assumption that culture cannot be simply evaluated in terms of right and wrong through 'motherhood' statements: i.e. “the wrong values make the culture a major liability” (Wiener 1988); “a culture has a positive impact on an organization when it points behaviour in the right direction” (Kilmann 1985); and conversely, “a culture has a negative impact when it points behaviour in the wrong direction” (Wilkins and Patterson 1985). Likewise, Kanter
(1983) also voiced concerns about ‘cultures of pride’ which are deemed ‘good’, and ‘cultures of inferiority’ which most people would want to avoid at all costs.

Schein (1985) argued that basically, culture is instrumental in relation to achieving the formal goals of an organization and management objectives or tasks associated with those goals (i.e. external and internal effectiveness). Of course, changing circumstances can make a culture dysfunctional – calling for planned, intentional change – but this approach assumes that culture is or could be good for some worthwhile purpose (Robey and Sales 1994).

For the most part, culture is conceived as a building block in organizational design; a subsystem (Robey and Sales 1994), well-demarcated from other parts of the organization, which includes norms, values, beliefs and behavioural styles of management and employees. Kilmann (1985) described culture along the lines of a physical force whereby:

> “Culture provides meaning, direction, and mobilization ... the social energy that moves the corporation into allocation ... the energy that flows from shared commitments among group members and the force controlling behaviour at every level in the organization.”

The crucial dimension of culture, according to Kilmann (1985), is norms; he believed that it is here where culture is most easily controlled. ‘Norms’ refers to the superficial and behaviour near aspect that captures culture. However, norms and behaviours are affected by many dimensions other than culture. For instance, within a culture there are a number of norms relating to an enormous variety of different behaviours (Anderson and Narus 1990).

A related problem to this behaviour-near view on culture is the tendency to see culture as more or less forcefully affecting behaviour. A strong culture is thus characterized by homogeneity, simplicity and clearly ordered assumptions. In contrast, a complex culture, by definition any culture, assumptions will probably be difficult to identify and rank. However, it can be argued that such a measurement approach distorts the phenomena it is supposed to study (Robey and Sales 1994). Fitzgerald (1988) described the co-existence of culture and values as such:
“Values do not exist as isolated, independent, or incremental entities. Values have their own inner dynamic: dignity, order, progress, equality, security of which implies other values, as well as their opposites.”

3.9 Summary of Chapter 3

In Chapter 3 it has been argued that the theory underlying the move to NPM from traditional performance management system is based on the view that politicians and governments should stick to their core business; that is, developing new policies that realize (political) goals which benefit the community and businesses alike. Osborne and Gaebler’s (1992) corresponding theory is that government and public service should be steering not rowing.

As discussed in this chapter, successful performance measurement systems adhere to the principles of: (1) measuring only what is important, as it is argued that if we measure too much, it may result in unintended consequences; and (2) focusing on customer needs. From a managerial perspective, performance measures are recognized as an important element of measuring the performance of the organization in which they are involved in (Robey and Sales 1994). Efficiency artefacts are and include wide-ranging performance measures to evaluate matters including data systems, reports, audits and personal observations. Vakkuri (2007) described public service managers as users of NPM instruments (efficiency measures, or efficiency or evidentiary artefacts – Eyben 2013), arguing that these increase rationality and efficiency in public service.

The use of efficiency artefacts stems from the user needs. Efficiency artefacts are generally used in a specific historical, institutional and political decision-making context. However, the use of efficiency artefacts appears to include enacting specific sub-structures of the artefacts, it is also about modifying them to fit to the requirements of public administration. The integrative use of efficiency or evidentiary artefacts is about creating a cultural mindset for public management through conceptualization and application of efficiency artefacts. Furthermore for organizational managers, artefacts can be used as method to cope with decision-making ambiguity.

Eyben (2013) contended that in the field of international aid, minimal research has been conducted on the influence of results of evidence or efficiency artefacts on politicians. He argued that a politician’s personality and political experience may also influence their response, especially if they want to operate in ambiguous environments that allow them to
evade accountability for actions they undertake in the performance of their duties and responsibilities to others in the community. However, the emotional effects such artefacts have on the politician also depend on the kind of organization they work for – not only with respect to its position in the community, but also its institutional culture and leadership (Eyben 2013).

While acknowledging the paradoxical nature of efficiency artefacts (i.e. artefacts often make performance management difficult), Vakkuri (2007) further acknowledged that performance measurement is nothing new in the public sector, even though there has been an increased interest in performance measurement techniques since the arrival of NPM in the early 1990s (Bowerman et al. 2002; Williams 2003; Johnsen 2005). Although several researchers have maintained that performance measurement is an ineffective technique for improving performance in the public sector (e.g. Power 1997; Nørreklit 2000, 2003; De Bruijn and Van Helden 2005), it has also been acknowledged that its popularity has increased (Johnsen 2005; Van Helden and Tillema 2005; Siverbo and Johansson 2006). It is also noted that performance information is used to put issues on the agenda and to facilitate decision-making (Askim 2007), which both improves performance and provides innovation (Johnsen 2005).

Johansson and Siverbo’s (2007) research found that one of the more lasting imprints that NPM has made in the public sector and with politicians is the increased popularity of performance measurement. In Sweden, performance measurement has gained increasing popularity both within the public sector and politicians in general. Swedish local governments use their own self-developed performance measurement models, with many involving comparison with other municipalities’ performances; thus providing relative and comparative performance evaluations (Northcott and Llewellyn 2003).

The question that if NPM has encouraged greater performance measurement in the Swedish public service and politicians, why has it not flowed on to the measurement of individual politicians in other countries such as Australia who actively embrace NPM as a way of ensuring better provision of public services to its constituents? After all, Australian politicians actively demand and encourage the use of NPM in the public sector at both organizational and individual employee levels, generally through annual discussions concerning wage and performance increases between government departments and the Australian Productivity Commission.
NPM assumes that the performance of individual public servants and politicians is open to some sort of performance measurement and scrutiny, as suggested in the Balanced Score Card model (Power 1997; Nørreklit 2000, 2003; De Bruijn and Van Helden 2005; Vakkuri 2007; Van Dooren and Thijs 2010). However, the concept of efficiency is irrelevant to many, if not most, public management tasks, as the effectiveness in producing results is all that matters. Wilson (1989) argued that it is not always possible for public service managers to strengthen the relationship between administration and goals, inputs and outputs, processes, and performance, due to the need to ensure a multitude of political-based outcomes are met. For politicians, however, there is the added requirement of public accountability and public trust – qualities that presently appear to be in short supply. Commenting on this statement, Pidd (2012, 2005) maintained that public accountability is one of the most commonly cited justifications for the publication of KPIs in the public sector. This is also supported by Nur Barizah, Zakiah and Muslim (2011) from a Malaysian perspective, who along with Buang (2009) contended that a government that is accountable should not be afraid of public scrutiny if it is genuinely trying to fulfil its obligations to the community.

Performance measures based on the needs of society have always been useful for policymakers (Simon 1947, 1997). Moore (1996) confirmed that in a narrow sense, the standard set of ideas about the managerial use of performance measures is almost identical for business, public and third sector organizations. Moore (1996) noted that the use of performance measurement makes everybody feel accountable to meet targets via the setting and enforcing of rigorous performance standards. This means developing concrete methods of measuring specific aspects of performance.

Reflecting on the two basic ideas regarding the recognition of public value of public policy initiatives and the performance of government organizations, Moore (2006) noted that the first of these is the theory and practice of benefit/cost analysis. Moore (2006) noted that: (1) concentrating on managing performance measurement at the level of activity, processes and procedures; or (2) monitoring outputs, workload measures, and measures of productivity.

To achieve better performance outcomes, public service managers need to engage their political masters in serious and sustained discussions about their definition of public value, and the publicly valued dimensions of performance for their organizations. Moore’s (1996)
research found that in reality, the main area that add value are the knowledge that the public service cannot run organizations without understanding the political culture, and its relationship to the organization’s performance.

Both Moore (1995) and Gallop (2006) argued that performance measurement in the public service is best achieved via close collaboration between public service managers and politicians. This collaboration also requires both the political minister and organizational management to define public value, how the organization contributes to increasing public value, and how that increase in public value can be recognized by all stakeholders and constituents.

It is generally agreed that performance measurement has important beneficial effects (Johnsen 2005; De Bruijn 2007; Spekle and Verbeeten 2009). Organizations, employees, as well as external stakeholders benefit from the information and transparency that performance measures provide. Performance measurement provides accountability and legitimization of the organization. Furthermore, the perverse effect of performance measurement is more likely to occur in professional organizations due to managerial distrust of employees’ knowledge and abilities, plus the need to retain levels of power and control. As a result, performance measurement is often claimed to de-professionalize public sector organizations (Noordegraaf 2006), and potentially drive out the professional perspective of public service delivery. De Bruijn (2007) argued that the uniform and unambiguous product definitions associated with performance measurement are often at odds with the professional’s multiple value reality, and the multidimensional issues associated with high, medium and low aspects of culture.
CHAPTER 4: POLITICS AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3 it was argued that the theory underlying the move from a traditional Performance Management System to NPM is based on the view that politicians and governments should keep to their core business; that is, developing new policies that realize (political) goals which benefit the community and businesses alike. In line with this, Osborne and Gaebler’s (1992) theory noted that the government and public service should be steering not rowing. As discussed in the previous chapters, successful performance measurement systems adhere to the principles of: (1) measuring only what is important, as it is argued that if we measure too much, it may result in unintended consequences; and (2) focusing on customer needs. Efficiency artefacts include wide-ranging performance measures to evaluate matters including data systems, reports, audits and personal observations. Commenting on public managers as users of NPM instruments (efficiency measures, or efficiency or evidentiary artefacts – Eyben 2013) Vakkuri (2007) contended that efficiency artefacts are instruments to increase rationality and efficiency in public service. Efficiency artefacts are generally used in specific historical, institutional and political decision-making contexts.

Both Moore (1995) and Gallop (2006) reasoned that performance measurement in the public service is best secured via close collaboration between public service managers and politicians. This collaboration also requires both the political minister and organizational management to define public value, how the organization contributes to increasing public value, and how that increase in public value can be recognized by all stakeholders and constituents.

It is generally agreed that performance measurement has important beneficial effects (Johnsen 2005; De Bruijn 2007; Spekle and Verbeeten 2009). That is, organizations and their employees, as well as external stakeholders, benefit from the information and transparency that performance measures provide; it serves the purpose of accountability and legitimization of the organization. The perverse effects of performance measurement, however, are more likely to occur in professional organizations due to managerial distrust of employees’ knowledge and abilities, plus the need to retain power and control. As a result, performance measurement is often claimed to de-professionalize public sector organizations (Noordegraaf 2006), and potentially drive out the professional attitude toward
public service delivery (Gallop 2006). In Chapter 4 it is therefore proposed to examine this argument further by exploring the links or lack thereof between performance measurement and measuring the performance of individual Australian politicians.

4.2 Measuring politicians’ performance

The historical ‘activist’ culture of community organizations has generally presented problems in the development of performance measurement systems for normative organizations (Moore 2006). Consequently, to ensure effective performance measurement, these systems should deliver a succinct, whole-of-organization report that allows the organization to identify the KPIs that best inform performance on main areas of interest. However, external accountability, based on performance measurement systems in normative focused organizations generally result in those organizations being weighed down by reporting requirements for multiple stakeholders. For performance management to work in a sustainable manner, it is important that the right balance is struck between managing resources and achieving outcomes, and managing individual behaviour through a values-based system (Campbell 2010).

When discussing performance, and its application to politics and politicians, it is important to understand the term ‘hegemony’ or the “dominance of one state (metaphorically and/or literally) over another”, and the processes of social formation or cultural change particular to those specific organizations.

Politics is the science and art of running a government. However, most constituents tend to associate politics and politicians with opportunistic, manipulative or devious behaviours. The German novelist Thomas Mann (1924) penned the line that:

“There is nothing that is not political. Everything is politics.”

Assuming that politics consist of the strategies we use to generally accomplish our goals, Mann (1924) noted that anytime you try to achieve a goal you are being political. If we use this definition, then politics is a major part of each individual (Haynes 2009).

In a recent state Liberal Party pre-selection process for the seat of Kew in Victoria, it was expected that the current Member for Doncaster, Mary Wooldridge (whose seat was set to be removed after a redistribution of seats by the Australian Electoral Commission at the next
election in December 2014), would prevail over the former Stonington Council Mayor, Tim Smith (Campbell 2014). However, this prediction did not eventuate. As reported by Campbell (2014), even though Wooldridge had the strong support of the current Liberal Premier Dennis Napthine, the Cabinet, and assorted state and federal members of parliament, it was the federal member for Kooyong, Josh Frydenberg with an electorate including the state seat of Kew, who ultimately determined the outcome.

Campbell (2014) contended that Wooldridge’s loss was put down to the fact that even as late as last December 2013, Frydenberg had shown strong support for Smith. After Wooldridge’s nomination for pre-selection earlier in 2014, Frydenberg went to great lengths to inform everyone that as the sitting federal member, he would not attempt to influence the outcome of this state pre-selection event in any way. Yet this did not turn out to be the case, and as later results showed, his support for Smith as the eventual winner of the pre-selection battle placed the present Victorian Government and Premier behind in the opinion polls. It is now in an awkward position of entering the upcoming election period as being seen by the public and opposition alike as a weak leader, unable to influence those within its own party.

Campbell (2014) further reported that Liberal Party members and insiders told him that Frydenberg could have stopped Smith’s pre-selection campaign at any time. However, the reality is that Frydenberg chose to display the power and control he has in his electorate by showing he has the ability to select the local state member of parliament, rather than the Premier of Victoria. Campbell (2014) claimed that:

“The result for Frydenberg is that he has shown he is God in his own little acre, able to pick and choose the local state MP. He has achieved that, however, by earning the enmity of a large swathe of the Victorian Liberal Party. While Frydenberg is an adept flatterer and self-promoter – until Sunday few had grasped that he was prepared to put his own self-interest above the survival of the Victorian Liberal Government. However, they do now.”

4.3 Politician and constituency behaviours

Mitchell (1958) defined an individual politician as ‘a person who campaigns for an elective public office and when elected, undertakes numerous public duties including participating in
the formulation of public policies, mobilization of support for those policies, and in the
administration of those policies once duly enacted’. Furthermore, Mitchell (1958) noted that
the politician more often than not is forced to perform their roles and functions in a highly
ambiguous, competitive and uncertain environment. Prediction and control are extremely
difficult, and the politician must be willing and able to make decisions in a short period of
time, and generally on the basis of little, if not infrequently, unreliable information.

Mitchell (1958) also highlighted that some private organizational managers, such as a
corporation president, may well decide the fate of more employees and their dependants
than low-ranking politicians; but that the politician’s decisions generally affect more people
on a day-to-day basis. The main point made by Mitchell (1958) that still has currency for
today’s politicians and political parties is that “because the politician is a public official, or
aspiring to be one, their statements about the goals of society and their statements of fact
are about societal efforts to meet the goals”.

Rosenzweig (1958) contended that the first variable in relation to measuring a politician’s
performance to be considered involves the evaluation of the skills needed to be successful
in politics. Apart from dealings with constituents, an elected politician must perform a variety
of tasks more narrowly related to the position itself. The politician is called upon to draft and
interpret legislation, participate in committees, question witnesses at hearings, prowess in
debating other politicians and constituents, manoeuvre for choice positions (on the front
bench), have firsthand knowledge of parliamentary procedures, and perform other tasks too
numerous to list. However, as also noted by Rosenzweig (1958), any observer of politics
can cite instances of politicians who were highly skilled in the techniques of mass
manipulation and persuasion, yet inept at being a successful parliamentarian. The point
highlighted by Rosenzweig (1958) in that there are two identifiable roles that call for different
political skills, for which the politician is called upon to perform. The way that the politician
perceives these roles and the skills needed to undertake them, combined with the weight
the politician places on each of them, may give us an indication as to how that politician will
perform as a local member and as a parliamentarian.

De Grazia (1958) noted that profiles developed during his research suggest propositions
about relations between economic, social and political practices, and their influence on
political behaviour. Furthermore, the politician is called upon to draft and interpret legislation,
participating committees, question witnesses at hearings, be a skilful debater, manoeuvre
for choice positions, have first-hand knowledge of parliamentary procedures and perform numerous other tasks. In a 1958 editorial article (Author unknown) on what constitutes political behaviour, it was asked whether political behaviour is a type, or set of types, of the following subject matter: party discipline, social stratification, political roles and responsibilities, decision-making, policy science, informal organization, attitude clusters, or human relations management. Contrary to this progressive research in the area of political behaviour, not all agreed with the views of researchers in 1958. Rather, in 1958 the editor in a journal known as *The Political Research Organization and Design* which was later renamed *The American Behavioral Scientist* (further details not known) instead mounted an argument of what political behaviour is not. Mitchell (1958) took a somewhat different viewpoint on the subject of politicians, political scientists and behaviouralism; an approach of political science which emerged in the 1930s in the United States.

Behaviouralism represented a sharp break from previous political science theories. This is because it emphasizes an objective, quantified approach to explain and predict political behaviour (Guy 2000; Petro 1995). Behaviouralism has been often associated with the rise of the behavioural sciences, modelled after the natural sciences (Guy 2000). In turn, behaviouralism is supposed to explain political behaviour from an unbiased, neutral point of view (Guy 2000). Mitchell (1958) argued that while political scientists have learnt much from politicians, the reverse is not often the case. Lawyers, economists and other liberal arts professionals are considered more useful to politicians than traditional political scientists. However, behaviouralism promises to inform the politician and help them control their environment, leading to the conviction that it is the path to an instrumentally potent political science. Davis (1957) had contended that while political theory has been subjected to speculative analyses for centuries, little effort had been made to study the outcomes of the normative statements contained in those analyses, and its impact on the attitudes of constituents and stakeholders.

Linz (1959) identified that those parties successful in national elections tend to be less so in local politics. In relation to the Netherlands, data from the Dutch government survey undertaken in 1954 titled ‘The Dutch voter: A study of his behaviour and opinions’ published in 1956 (Visser 1996) revealed that communal politics was of more interest in small population centres, although even in cities of 500,000+, 13% mentioned communal politics. In Spain, Linz (1959) found that ‘common’ people talk much about the government in terms of concrete policies and administration of their towns, or the capacities or incapacities of the
provincial governor. In turn, he found that this leads to voter dissatisfaction and eventual negative consequences for the politicians.

De Grazia (1958) stated that in political science, the main value of central concern is political power:

“When trying to define the relations between, and distribution of, political activity and leadership, activity was considered as efforts towards gaining greater power, and leadership is the possession of that power.”

**Political behaviour and its impact on politicians’ performance**

The comments by Davis (1957), Rosenzweig (1958) and De Grazia (1958) highlighted that to date, the measurement of performance involving individual politicians has been limited (Jessinghaus 1999; De Bruijn 2002; Ter Bogt 2002). In line with Linz’s (1959) and Rosenzweig’s (1958) comments, it would appear that becoming a politician involves many steps, from gaining pre-selection in one of the many political parties to running as an ‘independent’ candidate. The latter may be particularly daunting, as independents do not generally have the same financial or resource support that Australian Liberal or Labor Party candidates do. Once candidacy is achieved, aspiring politicians then have to face up to two years of touring party branches, visiting shopping centres, meeting and greeting local voters, attending fundraising functions, and being interviewed by numerous media outlets and other groups such as lobbyists or local pressure groups that want support for their cause. This is all in the name of building support that preferably translates into ballot box votes at the next election (this author’s personal reflections 2002 to 2010).

However, it is questionable what the indicators are that assure interested parties that the politician is performing at the desired level. In line with the prevailing distrust in politicians and politics in general (Rickard 2007; ABS 2004, 2006; OECD 2001, 2006; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000), research has found that Australian voters no longer identify with the major parties as much as they have in the past, and are less disposed to automatically vote for the same party (McAllister 2002; ABS 2004, 2006).

Increasing levels of social mobility and education are believed to be the main causes that have underlined the decline in citizens’ traditional class-based identification, and with that
their identification with political parties that have differentiated themselves along class divides (Franklin, Mackie and Valen 1992; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Rickard 2002, 2007). Similarly, when confronted with complex policy choices, a more educated citizenry is less reliant on the information and decision cues provided by political parties, particularly in the context of contemporary mass media and communication (Inglehart 1990; Dalton, Flanagan and Beck, 1984; Rickard 2002; 2007). Inglehart (1990) contended that increased levels of affluence in industrial democracies have resulted in citizens’ concerns shifting away from material issues toward quality of life issues (e.g. the environment and lifestyle choice), which cut across traditional party boundaries and engender or give rise to prominently single political issue groups over time.

When studying the implications of the number of party members and followers, Osbourne and Tourky (2008) found that when the policy space is one-dimensional (e.g. welfare, health or education – Ehlers 2001), candidates form, at the most, two parties (i.e. the Australian Liberal and Labor parties). The weakness of this approach is that effective political parties are usually coalitions of factions or advocacy groups. In addition, while the defining issue dominates one particular electoral campaign (e.g. concerns about the environment and the major parties’ lack of corrective action in that area), sufficiently enough to swing the results, Neighbour (2012) found that success is generally limited, as constituents tend to return to former voting behaviours’ once their key singular issue had been addressed, and traditional issues such as economic and social justice return to the fore.

Whatever the issues, there are also certain consequences of constituency de-alignment that constitute voter non-commitment or non-alignment with government or opposition policies which impact on both voter behaviour and party behaviour (Rickard 2007). Increased constituency de-alignment has previously resulted in an increased pool of non-committed voters who are less mobilized by traditional party symbols and rhetoric (Neighbour 2012). Evidence suggests that de-alignment results in an increase of issues-based voting (i.e. where specific issues are more salient in the voting decisions of unaligned voters), and voting decisions being made closer to the Election Day (Franklin, Mackie and Valen 1992; Dalton, McAllister and Wattenberg 2000; Rickard 2007).

Conversely, the behaviour of political parties also changes in response to this voting behaviour in an attempt to accommodate the changing voter directions. In the context of a growing proportion of non-committed swinging voters who focus on specific issues and
make their voting choices at late stages of election campaigns, there are strong incentives for political parties to develop and communicate their policies, and to conduct their political campaigns in ways that strongly target those voter preferences. Therefore, in the context of constituent de-alignment, it makes pragmatic sense for political parties to ambiguously target their policies toward swinging voters inhabiting the middle-ground.

Rickard (2007) drawing on research undertaken by Hotelling (1929) and Black (1948) argued that the ‘median voter’ theorem dictates that if every voter is assigned a place on a linear scale according to their policy or ideological preference, the optimal ideological or policy position for a political party to adopt is aiming for the voter who occupies the median position. The effect of pursuing this winning strategy would be that their policy offerings would all converge on the same ideological positioning (Hotelling 1929; Black 1948; Downs 1957). This result would be unsettling to the individual politician who has joined a particular party for specific reasons influenced by personal beliefs and values.

In 2007, Rickard’s research into pragmatism and principles in the context of the electoral competition between the Australian Labor and Liberal parties, specifically the outcomes of the 2004 election, found that shaping policy on the basis of polling results to serve a party’s electoral interests is often viewed by voters and some party members as unprincipled politics. Acknowledging this, he argued that this view reflects an impoverished understanding of principles in politics, as the dichotomy between principled and pragmatic or expedient policy is a false one. Rickard (2007) believed that it is defensible for a party to compromise its values on particular occasions, if this serves to maximise the party’s electoral position in the long run. Poll-guided and even poll-driven policy is a strategic tool in the achievement of a party’s principles and ideals. In fact, principled party politics often require a party to pursue expedient policy at the right times (Rickard 2007).

Rickard (2007) further argued that issues around principles and policies are not just a matter of philosophical interest; rather, these principles influence both Labor and Liberal Party policy in conflicting ways. For instance, there is evidence of such inconsistency in the key social policies the Liberal Party took to the 2004 election (e.g. Medicare Plus vs. Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) co-payment increases). Furthermore, Rickard (2007) noted that the Labor Party’s accession at the 2004 election to PBS co-payment rises also reflected a deep tension in its values – a tension which resulted in it giving precedence
to values of economic management over principles of collective social support for citizens’ needs.

Rickard (2007) went on to highlight that the key policy emphases of both major parties converged during the 2004 election, on issues that non-committed voters considered most important. However, he noted that there was not just a commonality of policy between the parties at the 2004 election; there was also a commonality of principle in both economic and social domains. Therefore, the ladder of opportunity theme in the then opposition leader’s (Labor) economic policy and its element of individual and civic responsibility for individuals’ economic outcomes echoed the philosophical themes of the then leader of the Liberal Party and Australia’s Prime Minister. Similarly, the Liberal Party’s increased emphasis on collective responsibility for people’s needs (and its downplaying of user-pays principles) was reflected in the Medicare Plus policy.

Goot (2002) noted that generally the trade-off between principles and pragmatism and its relationship with the constituent’s view of the politician’s (or party’s) performance can be analyzed in a dynamic electoral model, where the voters are not fully informed about the political policy preferences of the individual politician (or party). Longstaff (1996) previously suspected most politicians utilize covert forms of evasion and equivocation when discussing the trade-off between principles and pragmatism with constituents. As noted by Pollak (2012), the political election is often ambiguous in that the campaign is often more about which candidate can best deal with the most pressing political issues impacting on their chances of re-election, rather than espousing and reinforcing the strong values and principles by which the respective parties stand for.

Both Longstaff’s (1996) and Alesina and Cukierman’s (1990) research found that voters generally observe the consequences of the policy actions taken by the particular individual politician or political party in office, but not the direct actions. Since observable outcomes and policy actions are positively correlated, policy outcomes convey some information to voters about the incumbent’s preferences. Longstaff’s (1996) and Alesina and Cukierman’s (1990) research reveals that incumbents generally follow a policy that is intermediate between the other party’s ideal policy and their own ideal policies.
4.4 MP performance issues

4.4.1 What does a member of parliament do?

In brief, MPs provide a direct link between their constituents, the political party and the parliament. The Australian System of Government (ASG) Infosheet No. 20 October (2010) revealed that the federal electoral divisions in Australia have an average of approximately 93,921 eligible voters. MPs are therefore expected to be a spokesperson for local interests, an ombudsman and facilitator that deal with concerns about government matters, a lawmaker, an examiner of the government including how it spends the taxation money it collects, and a contributor to debates on national issues (The ASG Infosheet No. 20 October 2010). In line with this, MPs have three main roles:

1. parliamentarian
2. constituency representative
3. party member.

These different roles can place competing demands on an MP’s time; for example, leaving their electorates to attend parliament while still representing and acting for the constituents. While no position statement or performance agreement formally exists, the following highlights the important skills required by all MPs (The ASG Infosheet No. 20 October 2010), regardless of ideology, position or party.

4.4.2 Key MP skills

Individual MPs are required to have different sets of skills that are often developed through life experiences gained prior to becoming a MP. As in any field of work, MPs develop existing skills and acquire new ones, simply because of the wide variety of tasks they are required to undertake. One of the MP’s most important skills is communicating, receiving, understanding and evaluating information from various sources, and passing this onto parliament and elsewhere, including the government and other stakeholders (Longstaff (1996), Alesina and Cukierman 1990).

While parliamentary or party committee work has always required research in relatively specialized areas, the proliferation of email messages provides a modern challenge to all
Another major parliamentary occupation is speaking both in public and within the parliament. A key aspect of an MP’s communication is keeping constituents informed of developments in government or party policy, and the implications of government decisions and activity. MPs also spend a great deal of time communicating on behalf of their constituents, by taking up the cases of individuals or by relaying the concerns of electors, generally to the government or their parties. Every aspect of an MP’s work involves communicating, including writing letters, talking to large numbers of people both privately and publicly, and perhaps most importantly of all, listening.

4.4.3 MP parliamentary duties and responsibilities

MPs generally work in the House, on parliamentary committees and in their electorates. Each parliamentary committee consists of both government and non-government members. Most MPs except ministers and some of the principal office holders serve on these committees. When not attending formal meetings in the House, MPs often do research, write speeches, meet constituents, address lobbying from interest groups, raise matters of concern with ministers, and participate in party meetings and party committee work.

The hours worked by federal MPs in their electorates are similar to those worked in Canberra. In their electorates MPs meet with community leaders and organizations, make presentations, visit schools, attend party meetings, handle constituent inquiries, speak with the media, and keep themselves up-to-date with electorate developments. Quantitative measurement of this performance lends itself to the traditional business model of performance measurement, such as the Balanced Score Card (Kaplan and Norton 1992), or Neely, Adams and Kennerley’s (2002) Performance Prism model.

4.4.4 MPs, the public service and public policy

The Australian Public Service (APS) is the administrative arm of the executive government, accountable to the relevant ministers and the parliament. It consists of an array of government departments and authorities that are charged with the responsibility of advising the government and implementing its parliamentary decisions (Lucas 2010). The public services are an integral part of society. The Australian Government shares responsibility for
the delivery of public services with the governments of its five states and two territories (Whelan 2011).

Stewart and Ward (1996) noted that the prime minister and Cabinet are at the centre of the public policy process. These policies are developed with the intent of retaining internal party support, as well as broad electoral support for the government (Stewart and Ward 1996). However, Bridgman and Davis (2000) observed that public policy is often made not only by politicians, but also by public servants, constituent petitioners, interest and lobby groups, media comments, unions, corporations, and the community in general. Bridgman and Davis (2000) further implied that while the political domain draws upon parliamentarians, their advisors, party political bodies and lobbyists, it also draws upon the wider public sector such as government agencies, interdepartmental committees and consultative bodies. This subsequently causes difficulties in defining solid performance outcomes due to the differing requirements of the citizenry and interested parties involved.

In its simplest sense, ‘policy’ refers to a broad statement that reflects future goals and aspirations, and provides guidelines for carrying out those goals. Hill (1993) defined policy as ‘the product of political influence, determining and setting limits to what the state does’. To be more precise, when a government makes a decision or chooses a course of action in order to solve a social problem, and adopts a specific strategy for its planning and implementation, it is known as public policy (Anderson 1975).

Schneider and Ingram (1997) stated that the four theories of public policy are:

1. Pluralism: The government should create policy that reflects the desires of the public and the results of negotiations among competing groups. Good public policy is one that is produced through the political process assumption that democracy works well. Such concepts and logic include:
2. Institutions limit the power of government.
3. Institutions ensure politicians respond to public preferences, do not favour any single group, and are held accountable.
4. Policy change is incremental and ‘self-correcting’.

However, major criticisms of this theory concern interest group liberalism (IGs capture policies), and critical theorists who argue that public opinion/participation already exists...
independent of government influence, and therefore pluralism has replaced citizenship with self-interest.

1. Policy sciences: If policy is designed with scientific methods, it will solve problems. However, this process is often ‘bogged down’ by politics.

2. Public choice: People are utility maximizers, market solutions are preferred to government ones, governments may not be able to come to a common solution (Arrow 2004), but empirical evidence shows that self-interest is not the central motivating factor in decision-making.

3. Critical theory: Concern with oppression and domination (Bohman 2012); however, the goal is to produce social change (not new knowledge or good policy).

Schneider and Ingram’s (1997) believe government and individual politician’s performance depends largely on which of the four theories is used to develop the policy, and what is most important to the constituent.

4.4.5 MPs, the constituency and the media

Weller (2010) noted former MP Lindsay Tanner’s argument that the speed and continuity of the media coverage has cheapened political coverage. Weller (2010) further noted that the invasive pressure of the media, including its pursuit of a good and often personally damaging story about politicians and their immediate family members, has created a new level of pressure on politicians and the way they perform. As a result, politicians do not always show their constituency the respect they should as elected parliamentary representatives’. Weller (2010) argued that:

“The problem is there are always difficult problems, and if we keep constructing our national political dialogue around simple solutions, which is necessary for the media and community, we don’t go very far as a nation.”

A negative aspect revealed by this comment is that we run the risk of trivializing the action of politicians to the degree that politicians will deliberately employ ambiguity and secrecy to
avoid transparency and accountability. Weller (2010) also noted a minister’s statements that the least helpful part of the job is the inability to show uncertainty or consideration. The minister pointed out:

“The fact that none of the decision-making process is public is because the idea that decisions aren’t born fully formed like Venus means that there is uncertainty.”

Since media space or time has to be filled every day, not responding to the media leaves an opportunity for the opposition and encourages criticism. It is no longer possible, ministers argue, not to comment. Yet nor is it viable to have ministers providing different responses, in which case the differences rather than the response become the story.

Weller (2010) categorized politicians in the following way:

- The ‘spruiker’ is the minister who has no ideas or policy initiatives, but can run energetically with the suggestions from the department.
- The ‘policy driver’ ministers are those who seek to shape the agenda.
- The ‘warriors’ are those ministers who love a fight, who will pick issues that they know will gain attention and virulent opposition. The battle is the priority– a contest over values and political turf. (Examples of the warrior politician in Australian politics of the 21st century have included Kevin Rudd, Tony Abbott, Julia Gillard and Anthony Albanese who have all enjoyed the fight and wanted to make substantial policy changes in volatile areas of government.)
- The ‘partisans’ are those ministers who have little interest in their portfolio, but are there to provide partisan advice about political advantages.

Weller (2010) argued that:

“In effect, all ministers are partisan’s, all ministers are political – that is the job.”

Weller’s (2010) conclusion noted that the Australian system of government may have become increasingly centralized, but it still remains a Westminster style system and there are still some outcomes that only ministers can provide. For instance, only ministers can present a proposal to Cabinet, and only ministers can introduce legislation in parliament and answer questions on their portfolio.
4.4.6 MPs focus in parliament

In the series Papers on Parliament No. 14 February 1992, former Senators John Black, Michael Macklin and Chris Puplick jointly presented a paper on ‘How parliament works in practice’. In it, Black described the senatorial process as being something akin to a brotherhood:

“Essentially, what we are dealing with in the work that we are attempting is one which is stripped away from party politics.”

In this paper series, Black, Macklin and Puplick (1992) believed that part of the Senate’s role is to analyse problems confronting Australians as individuals, and the problems they have in dealing with a political system. They further argued that it would be preferable for the Australian political system to have one side representing the people and one side seeking to provide leadership; the first side following public opinion and the second side leading public opinion. Black went on to say that if politicians and parties are at least honest about this preference and the two roles are separated, the public would have a better quality of government.

Black, Macklin and Puplick (1992) highlighted the point that there is a great deal written about the Cabinet, Cabinet committees, parliament and parliamentary committees, and even a certain amount about opposition and the process of being in opposition. Such writings generally focus on what talents are required for a leader of the opposition, or how the shadow ministry (or the shadow Cabinet) actually operates.

In relation to an opposition leader’s performance, Black, Macklin and Puplick (1992) briefly reflected on the difficulties in the position of the former leader of the Liberal Party in opposition. They noted that the leader had had a difficult juggling act to perform when selecting the shadow Cabinet, such as how many from each state. They also had to balance the shades of factional opinion. In relation to party support, Black, Macklin and Puplick (1992) further commented that support for this leader was strongest at the top, but the further down you went the weaker it became, until you eventually came to the rank and file party membership at which there was no support whatsoever.
In summing up, Black, Macklin and Puplick (1992) argued that if the electorate actually wanted a fully functioning, democratic, parliamentary government, then the electorate was going to have to pay for it.

### 4.4.7 MPs in office – preparation and performance

In relation to levels of political education and experience concerning new MPs entering a new parliament, Coghill (2001) observed that new ministers are appallingly unprepared for ministerial office – doubly so after an election which has brought in a new and inexperienced government. In line with this, one minister later wrote on his experiences as a new MP:

> “I dithered because … I didn’t know much about being a minister … I didn’t have much idea what I wanted to do. I had no idea where to begin.”

Coghill (2001) contended that what constituents want from MPs is inextricably linked to what the community at large wants from its government, which is good governance. Good governance is defined as a system that is transparent, accountable, just, fair, democratic, and participatory and respondent to people needs (Coghill 2001). Each of these factors – transparency, accountability, justice, fairness, democracy, participation and responsiveness – is important and relevant to how ministers and MPs in general perform. Seward (1996) argued that the constituency expects government to be responsive to its ‘felt needs’ – not simply looking for the electorate’s support at periodic elections. The constituency expects that each individual minister and MP will demonstrate such responsiveness, just as prime ministers and premiers expect all MPs to be responsive; thus presenting a favourable image of the government.

Coghill (2001) went on to say that remarkably little has been done to help future leaders of Australian Government prepare for office. He further highlighted such inadequacies by pointing out that these self-same political executives insist that public service executives running their agencies be highly educated and skilled. Coghill (2001) also raised the viewpoint that few other organizations (public or private) would tolerate such an absence of professional development across their rising generation of executives; yet ministers exercise far more discretionary power on behalf of the community than virtually any other class of executive.
4.5 Perceived representation in Australian Federal Parliament

In 1998, Sawer published research concerning the meaning of representation in parliament with (the then) current members of federal parliament. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 members of federal parliament between November and December 1996. Included in the sample were seven members of the House of Representatives, and seven senators of whom five were Liberal, one National Party, four Labor, two Democrat, one Green and one independent. These interviewees were asked what representation meant to them; their personal representational priorities; how they balanced the interests of majorities and minorities; and whether there were groups which needed better representation, and if so, how this could be achieved.

Overall, one perspective of representation which gained significant attention was the populist view associated with the (former) member for Oxley (and later the leader of the One Nation Party), Pauline Hanson who claimed that existing political parties do not represent ordinary or mainstream Australians. Sawer (1998) explained that Hanson’s argument was that political parties become captured by special interests of one kind or another (ranging from ‘the Aboriginal industry’ to agencies of world government), and therefore do not truly represent the views of ordinary Australians who have voted for them. Sawer (1998) further commented on an editorial in the *West Australian* (6 August 1997), which made the point that politicians do not in general have a mandate to decide issues of personal morality. These are not issues usually included in election platforms where political parties establish their mandate from the people.

In the case of euthanasia, as with abortion, the consciences of politicians differ from majority views of the community revealed in opinion polls (Sawer 1998). The view of representation as expressed by Burke in 1774 (Sawer 1998), states that MPs owe the electorate their informed judgment rather than the slavish following of local prejudice or majority opinion. Sawer (1998) contended that the idea of the politician as the mouthpiece or delegate of the electorate is usually contrasted with the trusteeship model of representation originally expressed by Burke.

Sawer (1998) stated that most of those interviewed were careful to distance themselves from populist constructions of representation, but there were exceptions. One MP explained
that she was unable to accept the concept of a ‘conscience vote’ because she was not the one talking in parliament:

“I’m there to represent [the constituents]. You don’t necessarily believe in everything they say or want, but it’s your job to do so in parliament.” Furthermore, there is an additional responsibility in representation when constituents do not have a complete understanding of the political process and all it entails.”

Politicians have to be in a position to make a decision that reflects the community’s best interests, even if that does not necessarily express their will or view. In many cases, constituents do not have the expertise or training to be familiar with how the legislation works; public sentiment is very dynamic – it ebbs and flows as particular events occurred. Another interviewed MP expressed similar views, talking of transient majorities in the electorate that were likely to shift if people were exposed to the full range of arguments, and that his role as a representative was to reach a judgment on what was right, regardless of the polls (Sawer 1998).

Sawer (1998) found that the Burkean (1774) view of representation also emerged as interviewees discussed their role in taking up issues of national interest, such as foreign policy and international human rights, which were not necessarily of interest to their constituents. In dealing with such issues, These MPs transcended their geographical electorates and became representatives of Australia. Sawer (1998) also reported that one MP talked of these issues in terms of providing direction and leadership in the national parliament – a focus on where Australia might be heading.

Based on these interviews, Sawer (1998) contended that female MPs have generally been found to be less comfortable with the Burkean view of representation and thus performance. This argument has the propensity to open up a number of performance issues, especially the potential for relationship conflict which results in parliamentary, party, electoral and constituent clashes that impede the politician’s ability to perform at high levels.

Sawer (1998) further noted that although modern Australian political parties and levels of stable party identification are very high based on world standards, parties are still largely the gatekeepers to parliament, and party or factional loyalty is usually the price of political success. Studlar and McAllister’s (1996) research found that party allegiance is the most important predictor of the attitudes of legislators in Australia, and also showed that Labor
representatives are more likely to stress party factors than non-Labor representatives. Sawer (1998) contended that this latter claim, that party discipline is more significant in the Labor Party, was taken up by one of the Liberal interviewees who argued that in his party, while MPs generally push the agreed party line, there is greater scope for the exercise of personal discretion and putting the electorate before the party.

However, Sawer (1998) found that the primacy of party representation was put forward most strongly by a Labor senator who claimed that, contrary to the views of the clerk on the role of the Senate, the Senate was the most party political house because most senators there would never have made it except for their position on the ‘party ticket’. The interviewee praised the primacy of party in terms of the discipline it provides and its centrality to responsible government. Sawer (1998) research found another Labor member of the House of Representatives who agreed with this point, noting that the one lesson party politics teaches you – “you are not there because of yourself but because of your party.”

A differing opinion was provided by a Liberal/National senator who spoke of frequent conflicts between the views of his electors and of the party he represented; the latter being constrained by coalition arrangements. He spoke of the need to reassure his constituents on a regular basis that he would represent their views, against the line adopted by his party. Sawer (1998) remarked that the same senator was the most explicit of the interviewees in discussing the role of representing broader functional groups as well as a geographical constituency, although this topic of functional representation also emerged in some of the other interviews.

Allred, Hong and Kalt (2002) noted that most conflicts are rooted in the divergent preferences between two or more parties. This is especially relevant in political parties and other organizations with strong cultures; where the existence of a wide preference gap makes it difficult to resolve the conflict for multiple reasons. They argued that highly divergent preferences make it more challenging to find a mutually acceptable solution. Thus, when they learnt that others had opposing opinions, Allred, Hong and Kalt (2002) concluded that this is the result of the others being irrational or biased in favour of their own self-interests (Bar-Tal and Geva 1986; Fisher and Ury 1981). This explanation also served to dissuade parties from attempting or concluding negotiations. However, perceived preferences, not just actual preferences, are an important influence on the parties’ willingness to work together toward mutually acceptable solutions.
Taking the above conclusions further, one interviewee informed Sawer (1998) that he constantly had to remind others that he was not in parliament to represent the majority viewpoint. He did, however, feel an obligation to represent the majority viewpoint where this was being ignored by the major parties. In his view, "the Liberal Party was never meant to be a conservative party". The same parliamentarian stressed the significance within a 'liberal' philosophy of protecting the rights of minorities, whatever the view of the majority. However, an independent MP no longer bound by a party mandate pointed out that this created a unique problem for him. Contrary to his own expectation that there would now be greater scope for his individual judgment on issues, the expectation of people in his electorate was that since he was no longer bound by party discipline, he would be freer to express their views (Sawer 1998).

Sawer (1998) observed that another form of representation considered by some of the sample revolved around the interests of voteless constituencies. While MPs are elected to represent living voters, some feel strongly about the need to balance the rights and interests of future generations against the demands of the present. One parliamentarian felt that the current system constrains representations on behalf of the myriad of non-human species. There is clearly a section of the electorate that is concerned with these issues, even if they are a minority, and this viewpoint involves post-materialist constituencies (Goot 2001).

Goot (2001) noted that another variant on the voteless constituency is the concept of representing 'disenfranchised views' – views which have been denied a hearing in the mass media and which would be largely unheard if not taken up in the parliamentary arena. Goot went on to say that we are living in a time where voters have become increasingly disengaged from politics, distrustful of politicians and the political process, and disenchanted with the major parties as they are perceived to be unprincipled and inconsistent with constituents stated beliefs and values. Goot (2001) believed that politics, politicians and the political parties have never been particularly highly praised by the Australian public – reports of widespread distrust go back a long way (Pember-Reeves 1902). Indeed, Goot (2001) stated that in the view of one political scientist, Jaensch (1995), the main component of Australian political culture has long been “a combination of apathy towards politics, and scepticism, even a cynicism, towards its institutions and political actors”.

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4.6 Principles, pragmatism and performance

In line with Goot (2001), Rickard (2007) asserted that political parties have been criticised for being unprincipled, or for being inconsistent with their stated beliefs and values, or expedient in their policies, or for serving their own political interests. Yet there is sometimes a tendency for constituents to think of policy as principled only if they agree with it; and unprincipled if they do not. While political parties are nothing more than organizations, it is sometimes argued that the underlying reason for a political party, as an organization, is to gain or maintain power. Just like companies, corporations and associations, political parties exist to further the goals and interests of their membership and stakeholders. Policies are the vehicles through which political parties seek to realize their fundamental political goals and interests (Hedley 2001, 1998).

Rickard (2007) maintained that the true value of political power is the means and capacity to achieve something fundamentally valued. Furthermore, the realization of a party’s values forms its *raison d’etre*, and policy is the key instrument by which this is realized. A political policy is justified in terms of a party’s principles when the policy’s content directly reflects or exemplifies those principles (Norris 2005; O’Reilly 2001). What matters is the degree of match or ‘integrity’ between the party’s values and principles, and what is recommended in the policy. How the policy came to be adopted, how likely its outcomes can be achieved, or what else might happen to achieve it does not matter when deciding if it is justified in terms of its principled integrity, or how true to party principles the goals and content equate with the degree of principled integrity they reflect (Norris 2005).

Policy content can be consistent or inconsistent with a party’s underlying values to varying degrees (Rickard 2007; Marmor, Okma and Latham 2002). A policy can also reflect a number of party values, and possibly values of differing importance and centrality. Moreover, a policy may reflect one important party value very well, but be inconsistent with another similarly important one. For example, a policy that recommends detaining and questioning terrorism suspects without legal representation may be strongly consistent with a party’s or government’s commitment to community security, but may be in tension with other important party values (Hullett and Boster 2001). How well the policy position reflects the values of a party will be a matter of balancing the positive and the negatives, taking into account what is best judged to be the party values, which in turn affects policy integration and performance (Rickard 2007).
4.7 Politicians performance and ambiguity

4.7.1 Criticism and ambiguity

For politicians, especially those newly elected into parliament or the ministry, criticism in any shape or form needs to be avoided at all costs (Coghill 2001; Sawer 1998). However, Holmes (2011) argued that if a new politician does little that is constructive in parliament or their electorate, in an attempt to avoid personal criticism, they may be branded as ineffectual. However, if the politician is elected to actively represent their constituents both in and outside parliament, and assertively pursues political issues that won them office, they may also run the risk of inviting both cross-chamber and internal party criticism if those particular political issues are not regarded as essential to keeping the party in power or have ceased being considered important by the government executive. Other party members may view them as a potential challenger for more power, or someone who is upsetting the existing culture (Holmes 2011). Often the only option the politician has is the incentive to choose procedures and positions that make it difficult to pinpoint their preferences with absolute precision (Alesina and Cukierman 1990, 1987). Where this is relevant, then it may help to explain why politicians prefer to remain ambiguous as a strategy for political survival (Holmes 2011; Alesina and Cukierman 1990, 1987; Shepsie, Ordeshook and Shepsle 1982).

4.7.2 Context, power and ambiguity

Timing and context also play an important part in understanding how individual politicians pursue public careers, make public decisions, and enmesh themselves in public values (Fenno 1986). Given political events happen in real time, a political context is the result of interactions among different constituents and stakeholders with particular interests and ideas about what course of action should be taken. What is political context and why does it matter? Nash, Hudson and Luttrell (2006) asserted that context refers to those aspects of the political environment (e.g. interviews, debates, voting, passing bills, canvassing support, constituencies) that are relevant to an action taken, and includes the arena or location where the action was undertaken (e.g. electorates, media, the House of Parliament).

Context is essential in political relationships for a range of interrelated reasons (Bai and Lagunoff 2013; Nash, Hudson and Luttrell 2006). First, context shapes the likelihood of
change or an event taking place. Second, context shapes the positions and perspectives of politicians with an interest in ensuring an event or action happens. Third, context shapes the effectiveness or appropriateness of different actions undertaken by the politician (Nash, Hudson and Luttrell 2006).

Political context also refers to the political aspects of the environment that are relevant to different actions (Bai and Lagunoff 2013; Nash, Hudson and Luttrell 2006). This context includes aspects such as the distribution of power, the range of organizations or people involved, and their interests (Bai and Lagunoff 2013). For advocates seeking to influence politicians, political context matters because it determines the feasibility, appropriateness and effectiveness of their actions. Furthermore, the individual politician may intentionally seek out a relationship with constituents and stakeholders that utilizes ambiguity when dealing with environmental factors that have positive and negative impacts on their performance, such as how they are seen by colleagues and constituents alike, and whether the politician has engaged with the community in an open and transparent way (Modell 2004; Vakkuri 2003; Aidemark 2001; Johnsen 1999).

Vakkuri and Melkin (2006) also argued that the politician needs to minimize negative comments that may have resulted from the individual’s previous political performances that may not have addressed constituent and/or stakeholder expectations or concerns. However, Bai and Lagunoff (2013) argued that by using ambiguity as a political strategy, the individual politician is more likely to undertake biased actions that have a greater impact on the ability of the politician to gain re-election. They further argued that while an outsider generally observes policy data, they do not observe citizens’ preferences or the underlying distribution of political power (Bai and Lagunoff 2013). However, Chauhan (2013) argued that for the political and government systems to operate effectively, political power – the power to tax, enforce and write law – must be distributed across individual politicians under the guidance of parliament and the executive government body (Chauhan 2013).

4.7.3 Performance, ambiguity and political management

In her 2007 article titled ‘Strategic political steering’, Tilli explored this term based on the introduction of NPM reforms in the 1990s, and focused on the new roles assigned to government ministers. Tilli (2007) concluded that management reforms aimed at introducing
a strategic role for politicians had not been successful. She claimed that this was not a surprise as politics does not follow the logic of rational managerial models. She further noted that unlike commercial or business enterprises, politicians are not eager to define goals or set priorities, as this could open them up to political and/or public ridicule. Another important point brought up by Tilli (2007) related to the fact that the politician would have to actually complete the goal on time and on budget. Politicians are not motivated to consider issues that cannot be realized in the immediate future, as they prefer short-term outcomes which allow them to claim the kudos from the result if successful. Furthermore, politicians tend to focus on specific issues and personally intervene in details traditionally the domain of the public servant tasked with providing the support and advice for the same politician (Tilli 2007).

In turn, Vakkuri and Melkin (2006) argued that performance measurement research has largely been built upon the theories of the rational and calculative behaviour of organizations, its employees and social actors. Whereas Tilli (2007) argued that rational calculative systems are not appropriate in the political context, Vakkuri and Melkin (2006) contended that performance measurement may be able to analyze the intended and unintended consequences of performance measurement systems. Furthermore, they believed that earlier research on the ‘dysfunctions’ of performance measurement (Bleuel 2005) needs to be extended to include the ambiguity perspective in a much wider sense (Vakkuri and Melkin 2006).

Regardless of the lack of agreement between competing theorists, there is an acknowledgement that performance measurement of politicians needs to be expanded to include reviewing the role ambiguity plays in the measurement of a politician’s performance (Vakkuri and Melkin 2006; Bleuel 2005). However, regardless of whatever evidence is collected as a result of research undertaken, it is the constituent who ultimately passes judgment on the performance of MPs at each election. It is also the constituent who has the most to lose if politicians are not required to demonstrate how they have individually performed during their tenure as their representative in parliament (Muller 2007; Vakkuri and Melkin 2006). While no formal position statement or performance agreement currently exists, important skills are required by all individual politicians regardless of ideology, position or party. Muller (2007) opined that the underlying interest and primary goal of any politician is to gain and maintain power as the electorate’s representative. As a result, politicians have become short-term oriented, and when elections do not sufficiently reflect
the success of past policies, they use the ‘popular’ concerns of the public to identify issues aligned with their ‘successes’.

Given the potentially negative influence of ambiguity and its impact on politicians, in her article ‘Conversational impliciture’ Bach (1995) argued that the notion of ambiguity has philosophical applications. For example, identifying something ambiguous can help in solving a philosophical problem. However, Bach (1995) also insisted that gratuitous claims of ambiguity also make for overly simple solutions. Accordingly, the question arises as to how genuine ambiguities can be distinguished from spurious ones. Part of the answer consists in identifying phenomena with which ambiguity is confused, such as vagueness, lack of clarity, inexplicitness and indexicality. Katz and Mair (1995) insisted that from a political perspective, political ambiguity refers to the difficulty of knowing what a candidate or policymaker really believes.

The term ‘political ambiguity’ is often associated with elections, where prospective voters are subjected to competing promises from candidates depending on individual circumstances, not policies. The theory of political ambiguity was developed to understand the reasons why candidates and policymakers are ambiguous about their intentions and beliefs during election cycles. Much of that theory came out of rational choice literature, in which political actors were assumed to be acting out of self-interest (Bach 1995; Katz and Mair 1995).

Shepsle (1972), an early theorist on political ambiguity, asked the following question:

“Why do politicians remain ambiguous when only one policy goal is on the table?”

Shepsle (1972) contended that politicians will present an ambiguous platform by saying one thing to one group and another to another group if they believe the voting population is risk-seeking. In other words, if voters are perceived as willing to risk a politician with different beliefs from theirs, politicians take advantage and use ambiguous platforms with vague and often intentionally misleading arguments (often involving something that was not stated) (Callander and Wilson 2008; Aragones and Postlewaite 2002; Aragones and Neeman 2000; Alvarez 1997; Alesina and Cukierman 1990; Bartels 1986).
However, Brown (2011) argued that while Shepsle's theory is valid, research by Bartels (1986) and Alvarez (1997) suggest that voters are most often risk-averse, which further indicates they would be opposed to political ambiguity. Brown (2011) further debated that these findings present a problem for Shepsle's (1972) contentions, and make it difficult to reconcile the widespread occurrence of political ambiguity in elections with the observed risk aversion in the voting population. Callander and Wilson (2008) further questioned Shepsle's theory, suggesting that his assumption that voters are rational is flawed. They found that when voting is context-dependent, voters adopt a taste for ambiguity. In other words, when voters are routinely confronted with different problems that require different types of solutions, they seek out politicians that can accommodate these various contexts.

Political ambiguity is a natural outcome of the search process. For example, while the new tax would remove existing taxes, the ultimate outcome is often at odds with the original policy intervention. That is, the non-removal of some existing federal and state tax and duties with the introduction of the Australian Goods and Services Tax in 2000 was more about the competing interests of the Labor-based state governments and their need for more revenue, as opposed to the Federal Liberal Government’s desire to streamline and decrease the existing tax base and legislation.

4.7.4 Cartelization of the political process and its impact

In developing and extending procedural cartel theory, Cox and McCubbins (2004) asserted that legislative parties are best compared to legal or accountancy partnerships, with various gradations of junior and senior partners. In this case they specialize in controlling the agenda, rather than controlling votes. Given that one party's legislative accomplishments are another party’s failures, then each member shares within their party a desire to control the agenda. As much as possible, members of the majority party will want to monopolize (or cartelize) control of the legislative agenda for themselves, within the legislature.

The agenda is cartelized when: (1) special agenda-setting powers are formally delegated to various offices, such as committee chairs, and the speakership; (2) the majority party's members secure most of these offices, so that agenda-setting services can only be procured from members of the procedural cartel, just as certain kinds of economic services or goods can only be procured from the relevant economic cartel; and (3) the majority party's senior
partners, who hold these agenda-setting offices, act according to a minimal fiduciary standard – namely, that they do not use their official powers to push legislation that would have the support of the entire legislature against the wishes of most of their party. It is not only the agenda-setting offices but also legislative resources that a cartel seeks to control. Cox and McCubbins (2004) argued that this suggests that legislative resource distribution in parliament is generally biased toward the majority party.

4.7.5 The procedural cartel theory

Cox and McCubbins (2004) maintained that the procedural cartel theory rests on the following assumptions:

1. Politicians seek re-election to the House or Senate; internal advancement within the House or Senate; and majority status.
2. The reputation (or brand name) of a member's party affects both the member's personal probability of re-election and, more substantially, the party's probability of securing a majority.
3. The value of a party's reputation in promoting the (re)election of its candidates depends significantly on the party's record of legislative accomplishment.
4. A party's reputation is a public good, and legislation that affects that reputation is in itself a public good for politicians and members of the party.

Furthermore, Cox and McCubbins (2004) claimed that managing the party 'label' is the primary collective problem that all members of a party must solve; and their collective goal of solving this and other problems is accomplished via this partnership. The key resource that majority parties delegate to their senior parliamentary members (and advisers) is the power to set the legislative agenda. The majority party forms a procedural cartel that collectively monopolizes the agenda-setting power.
4.7.6 How a political cartel works and its effect on constituents

According to Cox and McCubbins (2004), cartels are powerful when the political processes used in parliament have been chosen and accepted by the majority parties. Cox and McCubbins (2004) asserted that when major political parties adopt special agenda-setting or agenda powers, they then have the ability to determine which legislative bills will be considered on the floor and under the procedural process adopted by the cartel. These controlling procedures enable the majority party to stop any unwanted legislation reaching the floor (negative agenda control). In definitional terms, the cartel is a type of party that emerges in advanced democratic politics and is characterized by the interpenetration of party and state, and by a pattern of interparty collusion.

Katz and Mair (1995) contend that with the development of the cartel, the goals of politics become self-referential, professional and technocratic, and what little interparty competition remains becomes focused on the efficient and effective management of the polity at the expense of liberalism (in a philosophical sense), real choice, debate, transparency, equity and trust, both inside and outside parliament and government. In turn, election campaigns conducted by cartel parties are capital-intensive, professionalized and centralized, and organized on the basis of a strong reliance on the state for financial subventions and for other benefits and privileges.

Furthermore, the political system of election and re-election becomes potentially corrupted by the fact that voters through their taxes and other public funds end up financing electoral campaigns rather than the candidate’s political party and fundraising support structure. Within the party, the distinction between party members and non-members becomes blurred. In this sense, during pre-selections and pre-election polling, the parties invite all of their supporters (members or not) to participate in party activities and decision-making. Above all, with the emergence of cartel parties, politics has become increasingly depoliticized (Katz and Mair 1995), and ambiguity reigns as the distinction between political processes and issues of public interest, and perversions of the rules of law become entwined, resulting in a political system that is distrusted by constituents, stakeholders or the community in general (Cox and McCubbins 2004).
4.8 Summary of Chapter 4

In Australia, individual politicians are given significant responsibilities and the trust to manage the political agenda for the community when selected as its representative in the political process. There is an increasing belief at the grassroots community level that politicians and political parties should be subjected to the same levels of transparency and performance demanded from business, the public service and other normative organizations, rather than hiding behind secrecy and ambiguity.

Mitchell (1958) defined an individual politician as ‘a person who campaigns for an elective public office, and when elected undertakes numerous public duties including participating in the formulation of public policies, mobilization of support for those policies, and the administration of those policies once duly enacted’. De Grazia (1958) argued that profiles developed during his research suggest relations between economic, social and political practices influence political behaviour. In a 1958 editorial article (author unknown) on what constitutes political behaviour asked whether political behaviour is a type, or set of types, of subject matter: party discipline, social stratification, political roles and responsibilities, decision-making, policy science, informal organization, attitude clusters, or human relations management.

Behaviouralism represents a sharp break from previous political science theories; it could explain political behaviour from an unbiased, neutral point of view (Guy 2000). Mitchell (1958) argued that while political scientists have learnt much from politicians, the reverse is often the case – lawyers, economists and other professionals are often considered more useful to politicians than traditional political scientists. However, identifying the indicators that assure a politician is performing at the desired level continues to be a challenge. Whatever the causes of voter de-alignment, there are also certain consequences of constituency de-alignment that constitute voter non-commitment or non-alignment with government or opposition policies, which impact on both voter and party behaviour (Rickard 2007). Correspondingly, the behaviour of political parties also changes in response to this voting in an attempt to accommodate the swinging voter. In the context of constituent de-alignment, it makes pragmatic sense for political parties to ambiguously target their policies toward swinging voters inhabiting the middle-ground. However, this may have unsettling effects on individual politicians that have joined a particular party for specific reasons influenced by their personal beliefs and values.
Rickard (2007) has noted that poll-guided and even poll-driven policy is considered a strategic tool in the achievement of a party’s principles and ideals. In fact, principled party politics often require a party to pursue expedient policy at the right times.

Goot (2002) noted that generally the trade-off between principle and pragmatism, and its relationship to the constituent’s view of the politician’s (or party’s) performance, can be analysed in a dynamic electoral model where the voters are not fully informed about the political policy preferences of the individual politician (or party). Longstaff (1996) suspected that most politicians utilize covert forms of evasion and equivocation when discussing such issues with constituents. Longstaff’s (1996) and Alesina and Cukierman’s (1990) research found that voters generally take note of the consequences of the policy actions taken by the particular individual politician or political party in office, but not the direct actions. They further noted that incumbents generally follow a policy that is intermediate between the other party’s ideal policy and their own ideal policies.

Whilst no position statement or performance agreement formally exists for politicians, a key aspect of performance for an MP is keeping constituents informed of developments in government or party policy, and the implications of government decisions and activity. When not attending formal meetings of the House, MPs undertake research, write speeches, meet constituents, are lobbied by interest groups, raise matters of concern with ministers, and participate in party meetings and party committee work.

Policies are developed with the intent of retaining internal party support, as well as broad electoral support for the government (Stewart and Ward 1996). Bridgman and Davis (2000) suggested that while the political domain draws upon parliamentarians, their advisors, party political bodies and lobbyists, it also taps into the wider public sector such as government agencies, interdepartmental committees and consultative bodies. This can create difficulties in defining solid performance outcomes due to the differing requirements of constituents and stakeholders involved. Former Senator Black (1992), in relation to the performance of politicians, argued that if politicians and parties are honest and separate from the roles of policymaker and constituency representative, the public will have a better quality of government.

Sawer (1998) noted that even though modern Australian political parties and levels of stable party identification have been very high according to on world standards, parties are still largely the gatekeepers to parliament, and party or factional loyalty is usually the price of
political success. As a result, Goot (2001) asserted that politics, politicians and political parties have never been particularly highly praised by the Australian public – reports of widespread distrust go back a long way (Pember-Reeves 1902).

In line with Goot (2001), Rickard (2007) asserted that political parties have been criticized for being unprincipled, or for being inconsistent with their stated beliefs and values, or expedient in their policies, or for serving their own political interests. While political parties are nothing more than organizations, it is sometimes argued that the underlying reason for a political party, as an organization, is to gain or maintain power. Just like companies, corporations and associations, political parties exist to further the goals and interests of their memberships and stakeholders. Policies are the vehicles through which political parties seek to realize their fundamental political goals and interests (Hedley 2001, 1998).

Furthermore, the realization of a party’s values forms its *raison d’etre*, and policy is the key instrument by which this is realized. A political policy is justified in terms of a party’s principles when the policy’s content directly reflects or exemplifies those principles (Norris 2005; O’Reilly 2001).

However, policy content can be consistent or inconsistent with a party’s underlying values to varying degrees (Rickard 2007; Marmor, Okma and Latham 2002). A policy can also reflect a number of party values, and possibly values of differing importance and centrality. In the end, how well the policy position reflects the values of a party will be a matter of balancing the positive and the negative priorities, which in turn will affect the policy’s integration and subsequent government performance (Rickard 2007).

While there has been extensive research on voter and political behaviour, there appears to have been minimal research on individual politicians personally describing how performance is defined from a political perspective, and how they recognize and measure a politician’s performance. In chapter 5 the issues raised about performance measurement will be used to develop a contextual framework in which to examine the measurement of politician’s performance.
CHAPTER 5: THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

5. 1 Key issues concerning the measurement of individual politicians’ performance

In the previous chapters the complex issues surrounding performance measurement have been highlighted. In this chapter these issues will be used to understand the performance of politicians.

Effective performance measures let users know how well the organization and its employees are performing, if customers and stakeholders are satisfied, and whether the organization’s processes and performance management systems are effective (Oberoi 2013; Manglani 2013). Performance measures are composed of a numbered unit of measure (Artley and Stroh 2001). Performance measures are always tied to a goal or an objective – that is, the target (Manglani 2013; Pollitt 2006b; Artley and Stroh 2001). Key attributes of a performance measure involve validity, reliability, responsiveness, functionality, credibility, understandability, availability and other tangible measures (Kumar et al. 2010). Performance management is a strategic approach for monitoring how an organization or individual is performing (Oberoi 2013; Kumar et al. 2010). Benefits to organizations using performance management principles and techniques include those encouraging value-creating investments by both the organization and its employees (Oberoi 2013).

Ansari and Bell (1991), and Robey and Sales (1994) linked individual performance to the organization’s control systems. Control systems monitor and evaluate both the organization’s and individual employee’s performance (Oberoi 2013; Ansari and Bell 1991; Robey and Sales 1994). Performance is also used to measure the organization’s and its employees’ competencies and capabilities (Pollitt 2006b; Van Dooren 2005; Artley and Stroh 2001).

Finally, results identify and raise issues about how useful the performance measures are, and in particular the accuracy achieved in measuring the performance measurement process (Oberoi 2013; Pollitt 2006a).

Prior research in the 1950s and 1960s (De Grazia 1958, Mitchell 1958, Rosenzweig 1958) attempted to establish whether the performance measurement and management techniques used in business could be applied in the political context. Attempts to develop a system to
measure the performance of politicians raised issues as to why we should measure the performance of politicians, and in turn, how we measure the performance of an individual politician. More importantly, what their research fails to achieve is finding out how politicians personally define their personal performance in the political sense. Gaining knowledge as to how politicians define personal performance would provide a reference point for both constituents and stakeholders when determining whether the elected political representative is performing within the parameters defined by the personal and political promises made during the election campaign. Such research could also show whether the politician is performing at some undefined level on the surface while hiding behind a veil of ambiguity and secrecy designed to shield the politician and the political process from critical appraisal (Rais 2013; Pollitt 2006b; Jessinghaus 1999).

Furthermore, literature and anecdotal evidence informs us that there has been and continues to be a growing demand within the community to accurately measure the performance of individual politicians in order to judge their performance (Johansson and Silverbo 2007; Vakkuri 2007; Jessinghaus 1999). Therefore, from a political perspective, the following question becomes important: Are there any available KPIs and measures that can be identified and used that would allow voters, constituents and stakeholders to better measure an individual politician’s performance and how individual politicians define and in turn measure the performance of other politicians.

Given that NPM is not just a set of managerial and service delivery innovations (Van de Walle and Hammerschmid 2011; Tolofari 2005), but is also based on a set of ideas about the nature of man and the role of the state in society – with its roots in public-choice thinking and the ideas of deregulation, privatization and also later marketization (Van de Walle and Hammerschmid 2011; Tolofari 2005; Lane 1997) – the philosophy has largely been based on an agenda of privatization, deregulation, marketization, and a small state (Lane 2000). Yet while those ideas are not visible in all relevant reforms, NPM has been blamed for its focus on individual rights rather than collective rights, its belief in individual self-interest as a key guiding principle, and its strong reliance on markets as a core steering mechanism (Van de Walle and Hammerschmid 2011; Holmes 2011; Tolofari 2005).

Protests against NPM-style reforms have been channelled by public sector unions have been particularly critical about the reforms (Van de Walle 2008; Van de Walle and Hammerschmid 2011; Héritier 2001). The onset of those reforms and the search for
improved public performance is seen by some as a questioning of the welfare state (Lane 1997); and reforms of public services of general interest and former state monopolies have been criticized for their potential negative effects on social cohesion and equity. At the same time, however, there has been no correlation between NPM emphasis and politicians or the political incumbency (Hood 1995).

However, given the issues raised in chapters 2, 3 and 4, and the difficulty of such a development, Bourgon (2009) noted the dichotomy between the need for consistency in the public service and political hierarchy, and the simultaneous need for continuous change and improvement. Likewise, Yeo (2009) raised the issue of ‘wicked problems’ or difficult issues that have multiple dimensions. He articulated that such problems require adjustments to the traditional linear public policy approach to finding solutions. From an individual politician’s and political party perspective, Alesina and Cukierman (1990, 1987) suggested that for performance measurement purposes, politicians often face a trade-off between the policies that maximize their chances of re-election and their most preferred policies, or the policies most preferred by the constituency which they represent. Thus, politicians may prefer to be ambiguous and ‘hide’ their true preferences. By promoting and utilizing ambiguity, the politician is able to operate in complex and often highly reactive situations without being held accountable for their actions, unlike their counterparts in the for-profit and public sectors.

In addition, while KPIs can measure specific actions over varying periods of time, Reh (2011) noted that extended periods of performance measurement conflict with political activities, where successful short-term projects are preferred to maximize self-promotion and the success of the individual politician and party. Therefore, it becomes understandable that politicians and political organizations want to avoid any form of performance measurement in case they are tainted by negative results and outcomes (Holmes 2011). Conversely, when project outcomes and results are favourable to the individual politician or its government, it is often suspected that the politician may support performance measurements that highlight positive circumstances (Holmes 2011; Miers 2006).

5.2 Rational approach to performance measuring politicians

The Humanmetrics: Political Performance Indicator (2013) specifies that the fate of people and destinies of nations and history itself are determined to a substantial extent by the
behaviours and actions of politicians (Munroe 2002). When electing a politician, voters frequently base their decision on the image created by mass media and professional image makers (Holmes 2011; Munroe 2002; Dalton and Klingemann 2007). This, unfortunately, often results in bringing a politician to power that eventually damages the country's position or even causes national or international cataclysms (Annan 2013). In line with this, Thomas (2006) reasoned that the performance of a government can only be superficially measured by the increase in the quality of life during the time of its ruling.

Individual traits of many countries' political leaders and politicians across various historical periods have been analyzed and juxtaposed against the performance of their governments to determine their success (Humanmetrics 2013; Dalton and Klingemann 2007). Thomas (2006) maintained that addressing the effective performance management of politicians will in turn lead to better political outcomes and a strengthened democracy (Annan 2013). Once the relevant KPIs have been defined – ones that reflect measurable goals – they can then be used as a performance management tool by the political organization's management team and individual politicians (Heskett 2006; Moore 2006; Eckerson 2006). As with performance management in the private and public sectors, these KPIs will then form part of the political organization's control system that can be used to manage performance of its employees and representatives, namely individual politicians (Heskett 2006; Moore 2006; Eckerson 2006).

A possible reason for the low use of performance information in the public sector and for politicians in general may be that much of this information used in public policy development has unintended consequences because of the performance paradox. As previously discussed in Chapter 4, the performance paradox refers to a weak correlation between performance indicators and performance itself (Van Thiel and Leeuw 2002; Meyer and Gupta 1994; Meyer and O'Shaughnessy 1993). As a result, the relationship between actual and reported performance declines as performance improves, and indicators lose their sensitivity in detecting bad performance (Van Thiel and Leeuw 2002). However, it is important to understand that the paradox is not about the performance itself, but about the performance reports gathered as a result of the measurement process (Van Thiel and Leeuw 2002; Meyer and Gupta 1994; Meyer and O'Shaughnessy 1993). Van Thiel and Leeuw (2002) noted that since the first reforms were initiated some 20 years earlier, it has become clear that performance assessment of politicians and the public sector is not without problems or unintended consequences, including increased compliance costs, and a
propensity to collect all data and information rather than select specific information that assists in defining whether the required performance levels are met (Leeuw 2000; OECD 1996). Added to this, Leeuw, Toulemonde and Brouwers (1999) further argued that poor corporate governance practices in both business and public sector communities have resulted in the rise of legislated audit requirements in an effort to improve accountability and community trust. In turn, this behaviour has led to a strong increase in the number of regulators and auditors – resulting in the negative term ‘audit society mentality’.

In a review of Dutch evaluation studies, Leeuw and Van Gils (1999) revealed that many attempts to introduce results-based management remain unsuccessful – a point considered as relevant today as it was in the late 20th century (Narhetali 2011). Ebrahim (2010) suggested that, given the variation of services provided and the increasingly restricted resources of public sector organisations, some departments should only measure long-term impacts while others should only measure short-term results.

As previously noted, Bouckaert and Peters (2002) defined performance measurement as the Achilles heel of the public sector and other normative organizations, because of the paradoxical behaviour of the information used in public and third sector reforms. To ensure better performance leadership, Serrat (2010) suggested that constituents and stakeholders should examine both the shortcomings and the effects of performance measurement and management. For example, the agent’s (politician’s) performance needs to be expressed in terms of KPIs, such as the number of goods or services rendered. As a result, not only would these indicators enable politicians to measure and evaluate the performance of public and private policy-implementing organizations, they would also increase the opportunities to account for performance – a major goal of administrative reform (Jenkins, Leeuw and Van Thiel 2003). Furthermore, Behn (2003) argued that performance measures are seldom used to make decisions, and they would be misleading if they were used to solely judge performance. Good performance cannot be compelled, commanded or coerced (Behn 2003).

Behn (2003) further noted that measuring multiple dimensions of performance makes it harder for managers to focus on achieving the goals of the entity. KPIs and supporting return-on-investment measures are instead used when measuring performance, because they represent a reasonably objective and direct measure of value. However, Ebrahim (2010) contingency approach suggested that, given the variation of services provided and
the increasing restricted resources of public sector organizations, some departments should only measure long-term impacts, while others should only measure shorter-term results.

Johnsen’s (2012) rationale for exploring how public management culture potentially complements or overrides political explanations (e.g. why countries are ‘leaders’ or ‘late-comers’ to the use of performance management models), rests on Downs (1957) observation that public management culture reflects the same underlying dimensions of ambiguity and uncertainty that politics does (Downs 1957). Johnsen (2012) further asserted that the issue of the prevailing culture in organizations is another factor that has a large impact on how uncertainty and ambiguity is treated when measuring the performance of managers and employees. Johnsen (2012) also maintained that the issue of management’s attitudes toward avoiding uncertainty and regarding authority is the defining factor of how uncertainty and ambiguity are treated, in line with the question of who got what (March 1978; March and Olsen 1987).

5.3 Influences on the performance measurement of politicians

A political system represents politics and government, and it is usually compared with the legal, economic, cultural and other social systems (businessdictionary.com). Other definitions of what constitutes a political system include a complete set of institutions which harbour interest groups such as political parties, trade unions and lobby groups, and the relationships between those institutions and the political norms and rules that govern their functions (i.e. constitution and/or election law). A political system is also composed of the members of a social organization (i.e. a political group or party either individually or in coalition). Furthermore, a political system is a system that has two properties: (1) a set of interdependent components; and (2) boundaries around the environment within which it interacts. Ultimately, a political system is one that ensures the maintenance of order in society, while at the same time enabling individuals and institutions to have their grievances and complaints discussed in the course of social existence (World Bank Group 2013; Mill 1861).

Mill (1861) stated that all political systems have commonalities which include interdependent parts such as culture, whole-of-government, boundaries (common and statute laws), and ‘rights’ such as citizenship, statehood and property. However, it should be noted that a
political system does not inherently require the institution of political parties to advance the politics of its system – political parties are formed after such systems are put in place (Mill 1861; businessdictionary.com).

5.3.2 Political systems and politicians’ behaviours

Bowler, Donovan and Karp (2006) identified that ideological pressures are the competing points of view in an ideal political process. Furthermore, they examined whether MPs and candidates for parliament are motivated by electoral self-interest, values, ideology, or all of these when evaluating proposed changes in political environments and institutions. Using survey data from four countries (Australia, Germany, the Netherlands and New Zealand), Bowler, Donovan and Karp (2006) found that candidates who win elections are generally less supportive of proposals to change institutions than those who lost. Bowler, Donovan and Karp (2006) also revealed that winning candidates share preferences for political institutions that are independent, regardless of whether the candidate is affiliated with the governing or opposition party.

This self-interest effect is accentuated by ideology and attitudes about democracy, and pure self-interest is an incomplete explanation for politicians’ attitudes toward electoral institutions (Bowler, Donovan and Karp 2006). They further noted that even though there are different ways of defining self-interest, winning politicians seek to protect the status quo, consistent with the limitations of information and costliness. Furthermore, even though politicians may well have concerns for maximizing political gains over a short timeframe, these only arise after concerns about political short-term losses have been addressed. Bowler, Donovan and Karp (2006) maintained there are several plausible reasons for expecting that explanations of politicians’ views of institutions are not wholly grounded in self-interest, even including a version of self-interest that takes into account uncertainty and risk aversion. They proposed that an alternative theoretical framework will challenge the primacy of self-interest as an explanation of politicians’ preferences for electoral institutions.

Politicians’ views about democratic processes also mute the potential effect of electoral self-interest, as public values shape the opinions of politicians across a range of issues including institutional ones. Concerns about the democratic process inform views of politicians, political institutions and even the mass public (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; Tyler 1990).
Bowler, Donovan and Karp (2006) maintained that political elites have views that are strongly constrained or shaped by ideology. Therefore, politicians have to accept commitment to values that shape their views of how the electoral process should be structured.

When examining politicians’ attitudes about proposals to change electoral institutions, Bowler, Donovan and Karp (2006) further found that politicians are significantly affected by ideology and personal electoral self-interest, which in turn impacts on how they act privately, publicly and in parliament. These findings, however, are tempered by the acknowledgement that self-interest is not the entire explanation of how politicians view electoral institutions. While self-interest is a major determinant of attitudes, other factors also play a significant role. Values and ideology play an important, although not quite as predictable, part when structuring politicians’ responses to institutions.

Bowler, Donovan and Karp (2006) also found an important difference between personal and partisan electoral interests. A politician’s personal electoral self-interest has a systematic effect on attitudes about changing political institutions that remain significant even after evaluations of how democracy is working and how their values and ideology are accounted for. Politicians from both government and opposition parties appear to a greater degree to be similar in their views about change. Cox and McCubbins (2004) contended that this finding is consistent with the party cartel theory that assumes politicians in office share an incentive to limit competition to those who are out of office. In politics, a cartel party or political party is one which uses the resources of the state to maintain its position within the political system. Katz and Mair (1995) argued that:

“Parties in Western Europe have adapted themselves to declining levels of participation and involvement in party activities by not only turning to resources provided by the state, but by doing so in a collusive manner.”

Detterbeck (2005) insists Katz and Mair’s (1995) findings ask an important question: If individual and political values and ideology have effects that are as substantively significant as electoral self-interest, then why do electoral institutions remain so stable in established democracies? That is, why don’t these institutions change more often when candidates with different values and ideology defeat incumbent politicians?
5.4 Basis of a conceptual framework linking individual politicians’ performance

5.4.1 Introduction

The literature reviewed so far has maintained that KPIs and performance standards play a key role in determining the success or failure of a business. Efforts to improve performance are also considered because they provide the ‘yardsticks’ against which performance is measured (Nickols 2011).

Jackson (1993) argued that, ideally, KPIs should be:

1. Bounded: Concentrate on a limited number of key indices of performance.
2. Comprehensive: Do the indicators reflect those aspects of behaviour that are important to management decision-makers?

Furthermore, he believed that KPIs should have:

- Clarity: KPIs should be simple, well-defined, and easily understood.
- Consistency.
- Comparability.
- Controllability.
- Contingency: Performance is not independent of the environment within which decisions are made.
- Feasibility: Can the targets be reached through reasonable actions?
- Relevance: Many applications require specific KPIs for their special needs and conditions.

Jackson (1993) further argued that when performance standards are valid, such efforts have a better chance of being successful than when they are invalid (i.e. the KPIs being relied upon are incorrect, insufficient or do not fully meet the criteria for measuring the processes being measured. In short, the validity of performance standards is dependent on the ability to accurately measure performance, and is an indispensable condition or qualification of performance measurement. Performance measurement is in turn essential for assuring successful performance improvement programs.
However, Johnsen (2004) contended that the experiences in public management and public sector reforms over the previous 25 years have provided answers to some of the ‘big’ questions in public sector performance measurement. For instance, regarding how to conceptualize and implement performance measures, welfare theory (input-output models) and information economics (decision relevance). Moreover, with respect to how to select valid and reliable performance measures, the running down and subsequent proliferation of performance measures indicate that there are good reasons to accept that the search for better measures is an ongoing effort (Johnsen 2004).

A fundamental issue regarding the validity of performance standards is the way in which performance itself is defined. Nickols (2011) argued that performance is often confused with behaviour, and it pays to keep the two separate. He contended that when managers speak of performance, they are referring to a complex mix of goals, expectations, behaviour, and the effects of that behaviour. Results consist of or are brought about by the effects of behaviour, but behaviours itself is not the result sought (except in certain limited instances). Behaviours may be overt or covert, but it is overt behaviour that is manageable. Conversely, behavioural statements reflect little more than an abstract description of the presumed causes of performance.

Nickols (2011) further asserted that a point seemingly overlooked in many attempts to establish performance standards is that quality, quantity and time are classification categories for standards, not sources of standards. He noted that when behaviour and performance are considered equivalents, attempts to measure performance wrongly focus on behaviour and the behaving individuals instead of the outcomes of the behaviour. Equating behaviour with performance leads to unnecessary conflict between the individual and the manager. Nickols (2011) further argued that confusing behaviour with performance greatly reduces the value of feedback as a technique for maintaining and improving performance, as behavioural descriptions of performance incur high costs. In summary, when behaviour is equated with performance, attempts to establish performance standards are misleading (Behn 2003). Therefore, it is easier to deal with issues of performance when performance standards are valid rather than invalid (Nickols 2011; Behn 2003).

Performance standards for both formative and summative evaluation should reflect the quality of the outcomes of behaviour that define the performance in question. This in turn, contains two points:
1. Performance standards should pertain to the outcomes of behaviour instead of the behaviour itself.
2. Performance standards should pertain to the quality of those outcomes.

However, when performance standards are seen as unrealistic or invalid, people simply refuse to acknowledge them as valid evaluations based on those standards (Nickols 2012). For politicians and local government councillors, attempting to define a set of performance measurement KPIs is difficult due to a number of conflicting factors (Mufamadi 2001). First, the majority of politicians belong to a party. By being a member of that party, the politician is obliged to act in accordance with their rules and procedures or face expulsion to the cross-benches. Second, based on Cox and McCubbins’ (2004) four assumptions on procedural cartel party theory – re-election, reputation, legislative accomplishment and the party’s reputation being defined as a public good – the politician is expected to ensure that their personal beliefs and values match those of the party (even if this conflicts with the views of the constituency). This is because the individual politician’s performance could be viewed unfavourably by peers and political supporters (Young 2011; Papers on Parliament (Australia) No. 44, January 2006; personal reflections of this author).

Conversely, Lupia and McCubbins (1998) argued that democratic theory assumes voters in the mass public hold clear ideological values which allow them to make voting decisions based on the positions candidates hold. However, while Lupia and McCubbins (1998) asserted that citizens or constituents are principals who elect agents to government, the agent is in a position where abuses of constituent and stakeholder trust can occur because it is excessively costly for those principals to monitor every move their agents (politicians) make. This principal-agent problem could be solved if there was a third party, a ‘speaker’. The speaker (not to be confused with the parliamentary speaker of the House) might be a news commentator, a politician, a candidate, an interest group, a trusted friend or some other opinion leader. Principals often chose to heed advice from persuasive speakers – an insight first identified by Rosenzweig (1958). Furthermore, individuals and institutions determine whether particular speakers are persuasive or not, and whether principals view particular speakers as reliable political ‘traffic lights’. Crucially, it also matters whether the principal understands the speaker’s knowledge and incentives.
5.4.2 Consistency in the measurement of individual politicians

Lupia and McCubbins (1998) found that political partisanship, ideology and other information do not uniformly affect voters. Therefore, it is debatable how important performance standards for politicians are, and whether there is a need for these standards to be consistent with those for the public service and private sector. Perhaps the question should be asked as to why we try to adapt the various public service or private sector models to measure politicians’ performance, which to a degree is all about measuring the outcomes of behaviours and resources exhausted to produce a good or service, and in some cases measuring the outcomes of such actions and behaviours given that the performance standards for each politician must be consistent? This is difficult given the common perception that politicians have a penchant for ambiguity and secrecy.

Nickols (2003, 2011, and 2012) asserted that basing performance standards on the outcomes of behaviour offers a couple of advantages:

1. The value of feedback as an integral element in controlling performance is maintained.
2. The solutions to problems of performance, including training programs, are more accurately determined.

Nickols (2003, 2011, and 2012) argued that basing performance standards on the outcomes of behaviour is advantageous, because it also draws attention to many performance-related issues that are not highlighted by purely behavioural descriptions of performance. This includes activities such as the number of constituent requests for assistance successfully dealt with, or the number of newsletter and other media articles written or face-to-face constituent meetings conducted, rather than subjectively measuring how well the politician communicates with electorate party members.

5.5 The conceptual framework linking individual politicians and performance

An important point identified in the literature review concerns the lack of knowledge as to how politicians personally define performance in a political sense. Gaining knowledge as to
how politicians define performance has the ability to provide a reference point for both constituents and stakeholders in determining whether the elected political representative is performing within expected parameters, such as those defined by the personal and political promises made during an election campaign. Furthermore, knowing how politicians define performance has the ability for constituents and stakeholders to determine whether a politician is only performing at some undefined level on the surface while hiding behind a veil of ambiguity and secrecy designed to shield the politician and the political process from critical appraisal.

The conceptual framework below (see Figure 2) identifies internal and external factors that impact on the daily performance of individual politicians. These factors include: the agendas of peers and constituents, the social and political environment, a constituent and politician behaviours, media coverage, power and control, trust, the issue of re-election, and ambiguity. The framework reveals that politicians must manage these factors while attempting to produce outcomes acceptable to constituents and stakeholders. While the management of these factors is based on pragmatism the influence of principle will depend upon the individual politician’s beliefs and values. The question regarding the degree to which a politician is influenced by beliefs and values can only be answered by individual politicians alone.
Figure 2: Conceptual Framework: Factors Influencing Politicians’ Performance

The framework is graphically represented as such:

Point 1 of the framework relates to all internal and external variables, including all stakeholders and constituents in the political process. Other tangible variables that impact upon the politician include socio-economic factors, constituents, information, media, potential conflicts of interest, communication, decision-making and re-election, which have a direct and indirect influence on the present and future conditions that the politician faces. Less tangible variables consist of constituent, peer and stakeholder agendas in the electorate and parliament; ambiguity and secrecy; potential time issues; communication; paradoxical behaviours from both the political party and constituency; and values and beliefs.

Point 2 relates to the individual politician and includes their set of internal beliefs and values, and how these match or differ from those of peers, constituents, stakeholders and the political organization. It is the politician who besides ascribing to the beliefs and values of
their political party also possesses a set of personal beliefs and values that have a major impact on their individual decision-making processes. However, from the individual politician’s perspective, the framework suggests that politicians often face a trade-off between the policies and outcomes that maximize their chances of re-election and their most preferred policies or those policies most preferred by the constituency they represent.

Point 3 relates to the environment of ambiguity, complexity and conflicting sets of priorities, which arise as the result of actions undertaken for and on behalf of constituents and stakeholders. From the individual politician’s perspective, the framework suggests that politicians often face a trade-off between the policies and outcomes that maximize their chances of re-election, and their most preferred policies or those policies most preferred by the constituency they represent. Therefore, the individual politician may prefer to be ambiguous and hide their true preferences. By promoting and utilizing ambiguity, the politician is able to maintain power and control over the situation they face in complex and often highly reactive situations; thus being able to claim performance outcomes.

Point 4 relates to the ability of the individual politician to maintain power and control over their internal and external environments. From a historical perspective, De Grazia’s (1958) contention was that in the political arena, the value of central concern is political power. From a contemporary perspective, it appears that the current Australian political system appears to utilize a form of cartel where both the government and opposition parties use the resources of the state to maintain their position within the political system. Therefore, it is understandable that political ambiguity is a natural outcome of that process.

A fundamental issue regarding the validity of performance standards is the way in which performance itself is defined. How do you define individual political performance when the majority of issues involved are based around a system of personal beliefs and values, and the operating environment is normative in nature and lacks a clear display of tangible outcomes? In business, performance standards are imposed on activity and the outcomes of activity. However, this is difficult in the individual politician's environment where work undertaken is subject to many variables, some of which the politician may not want transmitted to constituents or colleagues at any cost.

Point 5 relates to the ability of the individual politician to produce performance outcomes on behalf of constituents and stakeholders. However, when behaviour is equated with performance, attempts to establish such standards can appear misleading. Performance
standards should pertain to the outcomes of behaviour, and should pertain to the quality of those outcomes. Performance standards for one area of performance should be consistent with the standards in related areas. Performance standards are the area that remains difficult to explain, as the nexus between political behaviours and individual politician performance outcomes has not been addressed.

The ability of the conceptual framework to point to factors that could influence the performance outcomes of politicians and constituent and stakeholder perceptions of politicians’ performance will be explored by seeking answers to the following research questions.

1. How do politicians define performance?
2. How do politicians negotiate difference between their own values and beliefs and those of their party?
3. Why is it difficult for constituents and stakeholders to measure the performance of individual Australian politicians?

5.6 Summary of Chapter 5

Benefits to organizations using performance management principles and techniques ensure that it encourages value-creating investments by both the organization and its employees. Performance measures are composed of numbers and units of measure. Control systems consisting of numbers and units of measure, monitor and evaluate organizational and individual employee performance.

Alesina and Cukierman (1990, 1987) suggested that for performance measurement purposes, politicians often face a trade-off between the policies that maximize their chances of re-election and their most preferred policies, or the policies most preferred by the constituency which they represent. Conversely, where project outcomes and results are favourable to the individual politician or government of the day, it is suspected that the politician may support performance measurements that highlight ‘positive’ circumstances.

The Humanmetrics: Political Performance Indicator (2013) show that the relationship between actual and reported performance declines as performance improves and these indicators lose their sensitivity in detecting bad performance.
KPIs and supporting return-on-investment measures are generally used when measuring performance because they represent a reasonably objective and direct measure of value. Johnsen (2011) believes that performance measurement and management remain contested in the public sector. However, an integrated approach linking together all levels of performance management has become a necessity for performance measurement and management systems (Magretta 2011).

Gallop (2006) and Moore (2006) identified that performance measurement plays an essential role in creating public value through effective management control. Performance measurement is about adding value to the individual and organizational internal and external environmental systems, and therefore, has important political dimensions beyond its obvious internal administrative (strategic and personnel management) and technical skills processes.

Given the lack of agreement between competing theorists concerning what is the best performance measurement and management system to use, there is an acknowledgement that performance measurement of politicians needs to be expanded to include reviewing the role ambiguity plays in the measurement of a politician’s performance. While no formal position statement or performance agreement for politicians currently exists, important skills are required by all politicians regardless of ideology, position or party.

In politics a cartel party or cartel political party is one which uses the resources of the state to maintain its position within the political system. According to Cox and McCubbins (2004), cartels become powerful when the political powers used in parliament have been chosen and accepted by the majority parties. These controlling procedures enable the majority party to stop any unwanted legislation reaching the floor. Furthermore, the political system of election and re-election becomes potentially corrupted by the fact that voters through their taxes and other public funds end up financing electoral campaigns rather than the candidate or political party Cox and McCubbins (2004).

A fundamental issue regarding the validity of performance standards is the way in which performance itself is defined. Nickols (2011) argued that confusing behaviour with performance greatly reduces the value of feedback as a technique for maintaining and improving performance. That is, when behaviour is equated with performance, attempts to establish performance standards are misleading (Behn 2003). For performance measurement to be accurate, the performance standards for each politician must be
consistent. It needs to be asked how much do the principled factors that influence the individual politician’s beliefs and values affect their decisions and performance outcomes, which can only be answered by individual politicians.

Point 1 of the conceptual framework relates to all internal and external variables, including all stakeholders and constituents in the political process. Point 2 relates to the individual politician and includes their sets of internal beliefs and values, and how these match or differ from those of peers, constituents, stakeholders and the political organization. Point 3 suggests that politicians often face a trade-off between the policies and outcomes that maximize their chances of re-election. Point 4 relates to the ability of the individual politician to maintain power and control over their internal and external environments, and Point 5 relates to the actual performance outcomes that arise from the actions of the politician. As a result, all points lead to the research question: Why is it difficult for constituents and stakeholders to measure the performance of individual Australian politicians?
CHAPTER 6: METHOD OF RESEARCH

6.1 Introduction to the research method adopted

6.1.1 Purpose of this research

Using qualitative research methods, the research reported in this thesis will explore the issues surrounding the performance measurement of individual Australian politicians and factors that could influence the performance outcomes of politicians and constituent and stakeholder perceptions of politicians’ performance.

This research will examine the impact on the performance of politicians by various factors both personal and organisational including:

- how politicians view their individual performance while operating in ambiguous and conflicting political environments;
- the environment and context in which politicians operate;
- the role played by communication in the performance of individual politicians;
- the complexity of measuring the outcome of a politician’s performance.

Furthermore, issues of control and power exercised by politicians requires further examination, to determine how politicians undertake their often conflicting duties, while consecutively maintaining credibility and trust with constituents who may not always agree with their behaviours influenced by the imposition of re-election.

6.1.2 Research methods available

When reviewing qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research, Turner (2013) proposed that the main objective or purpose of qualitative research is to:

- gain an understanding of underlying reasons and motivations
- provide insights into the setting of a problem, generating ideas and/or hypotheses for later quantitative research
- uncover prevalent trends in thought and opinion.
Turner (2013) stated that the sample being investigated is generally (but not restricted to) a small number of non-representative cases, where the participants are selected to fulfil a given quota. Data collected can utilize unstructured or semi-structured techniques (e.g. individual depth interviews or group discussions), and are normally non-statistical. The outcomes of qualitative research are generally exploratory in nature and/or investigative.

Qualitative research is generally used to develop an initial understanding of the matter being researched and to provide a sound base for further decision-making (Turner 2013; Creswell 2003). Turner (2013) Cox and McCubbins (2004) observed that while qualitative data research and quantitative research appear to have similarities, quantitative data is generally used to determine the amount of data available to work with. Turner (2013) also conferred that to an extent, action research is done to just start doing research without having a definitive idea mind to begin with. Yet while she proposed that a mix of qualitative and action research is possibly the best method for conducting exploratory research, there is a risk. The risk involved is whether or not there is going to be a long thought-out process before actually conducting the research (Turner 2013).

Turner (2013) and Mora (2010) argued that key strategies, approaches, analyses and enquiries of a mix of qualitative data and action research need to be conducted to develop an initial understanding of the research problem, even if there is no information to go on. Turner (2013) further contended that by doing so, there should be a general understanding of the data from the beginning. Furthermore, qualitative research should be used to identify a range of ideas about the topic to be studied (Turner 2013). Another type of research that qualitative is used for is to identify different types of people (Mora 2010); it is also used as a ‘backbone’ for later quantitative research (Turner 2013).

Turner (2013) drawing on previous research by O’Brien (1998) also noted that the action plan research method has four basic stages: plan, act, observe and reflect. She proposed that as each stage of the research is conducted, there are also steps that must be taken in between each one to ensure that the right path is being followed (O’Brien 1998). The five stages within the four main stages are: identifying the problem, planning a course of action, taking action, evaluating the action after the action has been taken, and identifying the findings (O’Brien 1998).
Conversely, Turner (2013) believed that quantitative research methods are used to:

- quantify data and generalize results from a sample to the population of interest
- measure the incidence of various views and opinions in a chosen sample.

This is sometimes followed after qualitative research has been conducted, which is used to explore some findings further.

Creswell (2003) argued that in quantitative research, the sample being used is usually a large number of cases representing the population of interest, where respondents are randomly selected. Data collected is undertaken using techniques including structured or unstructured methods such as online questionnaires, surveys, and on-street or telephone interviews. Statistical data are usually analysed in the form of tabulations (tabs), and findings are conclusive and usually descriptive in nature, and are used to recommend a final course of action (Creswell 2003).

Mixed method research, on the other hand, involves both collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data include closed-ended information such as that found on or via attitude, behaviour or performance instruments (Turner 2013; Ivankova, Creswell, and Stick 2007; Creswell 2003; Abernethy et al. 1999; Roberts 1999; Lillis 1999). Collection of this kind of data also involves using a closed-ended checklist, where the researcher checks the behaviours observed. The analysis consists of statistically analyzing scores collected on instruments, checklists or public documents to answer research questions or to test hypotheses.

In contrast, qualitative data measure the incidence of various views and opinions in a chosen sample consists of open-ended information that the researcher gathers via interviews with participants (Lillis 1999; Roberts 1999). The use of general, open-ended questions asked during the interview or survey process allows the participant to answer more fully the question in their own words, based on their own perceptions and understanding. Furthermore, qualitative data are also collected by observing participants or sites of research, gathering documents from a private (e.g. diary) or public (e.g. minutes of meetings) source, or collecting audio-visual materials such as videotapes or artefacts. The analysis of the qualitative data (words or text or images) typically follows the path of
aggregating the words or images into categories of information, and presenting the diversity of ideas gathered during data collection.

The open- and closed-ended nature of the data differentiates the two types of research methodology better than the sources of the data. Creswell (2003) argued that the data sources do not often cleanly translate into the respective qualitative and quantitative research approaches, as much as they have in the past. As an example, Creswell (2003) highlighted the use of surveys, a traditional quantitative source of data which is also used in ethnographic qualitative research (LeCompte and Schensul 1999), and narrative stories associated with qualitative research, which are increasingly being linked to quantitative event history modelling (Elliot 2005).

Commenting on methods of conducting psychological research, Matthews (2012) listed the following qualitative methods as most commonly used when undertaking human-related research:

1. surveys – self-reports by participants about their thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, etc., which can often lead to large numbers of respondents, particularly where the use of electronic surveys are used

2. naturalistic observations – individuals observe participants in their natural setting (e.g. classroom, park, places of business) with no intent on manipulating the setting

3. case studies where the researcher gathers in-depth data on a single individual, group or organization.

A further method that can be considered is known as ‘archival’ research (Conti 2004). Archival research is defined as the locating, evaluating, and systematic interpretation and analysis of sources found in archives. Original source materials may be consulted and analysed for purposes other than those for which they were originally collected, to ask new questions of old data, provide a comparison over time or between geographic areas, verify or challenge existing findings, or draw together evidence from disparate sources to provide a bigger picture. Conti (2004) further noted that historical research methods and archival techniques may seem unfamiliar or tedious; for example, social scientists are not used to
working with sources that may be time-consuming and often lacking of written or visual clarity that historians use to research matters of an historical nature (Conti 2004).

### 6.1.3 Differences in research methods

Both Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Smaling (1994) suggested that a researcher’s choice of research methodology is generally influenced by a variety of factors, including their views on man and ideology, epistemological point of view (adj: knowledge), approach within the field of social sciences, as well as their background in research skills and training. Turner (2013) reasoned that even though there are a number of different research methods available, there are four main approaches that are normally used. The other types of research methods are mixed and action research (Turner 2013).

Turner (2013) and Mora (2010) noted that the main difference between qualitative and quantitative research methods is that qualitative is best used when a researcher does not know what to expect. Qualitative data are gathered to determine what the ‘big picture’ is, given the picture is unclear without it. In contrast, quantitative research is more concrete in its information, and is used to quantify problems and identify ways to fix them (Mora 2010). Quantitative research is used to evaluate the data that are already known (Turner 2013).

Nonetheless, Turner (2013) believed that mixed and action research methodologies are different. The use of each one depends on the type of research that is being conducted (Christ 2013). Using a mixed research method, both quantitative and qualitative are integrated in order to obtain an even bigger and better picture (Turner 2013; Christ 2013). In turn, action research means what it says. That is, no real planning goes into the action being undertaken to resolve the problem; the research process involves trial and error. If the action taken does not work out the problem is addressed by adopting an alternative action (Turner 2013; Christ 2013).

However, social scientists, Lewis-Beck, Bryman and Liao (2004) proposed that a fifth research method known as ‘archival research’ is also available. Lewis-Beck, Bryman and Liao (2004) define archival research as the locating, evaluating and systematic interpretation and analysis of sources found in archives. Original source materials may be consulted and analysed for purposes other than those for which they were originally collected, to ask new questions of old data, provide a comparison over time or between geographic areas, verify
or challenge existing findings, or draw together evidence from disparate sources to provide a bigger picture (Lewis-Beck, Bryman and Liao 2004).

As discussed by Smaling (1994), the chosen research approach may be influenced by the research participant’s behavioural, cognitive, phenomenology, ethno-methodological or ethnographical perspectives, which are often paradigmatic (i.e. empirical, analytical, critical and interpretive in nature) (Modell 2007; Brown and Brignall 2007; Bryman 2006; Modell 2005; Smaling 1994; Brewer and Hunter 1989, 2005). Therefore, research and psychological factors to be considered are those of a pragmatic nature, where consideration must be given to the characteristics of the research question, the researcher’s research knowledge and skills, the demands of the research institution, and [in the case of this thesis] the research participants themselves (Smaling 1994).

6.2 Research methodologies associated with this research thesis

6.2.1 Chosen research method

Qualitative research is considered to be the most appropriate method for this thesis, and is employed to answer the ‘how’s and why’s’ of human behaviours, opinions and experiences – that is, information that is difficult to obtain through more quantitatively oriented methods of data collection (Turner 2013; Alvesson and Skoldberg 2009). The qualitative research method was selected as the most appropriate method to investigate why it is difficult to measure the performance of individual Australian politicians because:

1. The exploratory nature of this research lends itself to the concept of qualitative and archival research methods, as a way of gaining a big picture understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for measuring the performance of individual Australian politicians.

2. It provides insight into the problems and issues associated with measuring the performance of individual Australian politicians.

3. It uncovers prevalent trends in individual Australian politicians’ thoughts and opinions through the interpretation of Australian politicians’ opinions and answers, or potentially the lack of answers provided by participants to questions such as either in electronic surveys, or a number of one-on-one, face-to-face interviews.
Furthermore, archival data is then be used to explain and highlight any discrepancies identified through the qualitative research process.

4. It generates ideas and/or hypotheses for later quantitative research, once specific issues and problems gained from the big picture overview have been identified.

In this thesis the qualitative analysis was undertaken by reviewing answers provided in the 2 surveys and identifying common themes that became evident in the data collected. Once those main themes were identified, they were then used as a basis for questions put to the 12 individual politicians’ later interviewed in this research process. It must be noted that during the interview/survey process it was found that questions 13 and 18 appeared to confuse those questioned in the survey process as they were similar to questions previously asked. Therefore, those questions were omitted from the analysis of data collected.

6.2.2 The research participants

As discussed in earlier chapters, individual politicians are generally reluctant to publicly or privately discuss outcome-based performance matters with political outsiders. This reluctance to discuss their performance evaluation may be due to a concern not to present self-interested parties (e.g. constituents, stakeholders, media, colleagues or opposition parties) with information that could be used to destabilize their position within the political world and broader community.

In addition, research undertaken by political researchers and the media strongly suggests that politicians prefer to operate in an environment of ambiguity, which allows them to succeed or fail on certain political outcomes with minimal oversight and accountability (Alesina and Cukierman 1990; Sawer 1998; Coghill 2001; Foss 2001; Goot 2002; Hayes et al. 2008; Callander and Wilson 2008; Adams and Gurney 2010). In addition, Demaj and Summermatter (2012) confirmed that the concerns of political legislators using their own performance information is also crucial, since among other purposes, data on outputs and outcomes can inform the public and politicians about the performance levels of politicians and programs, as well as public organizations. This can ultimately influence politicians on allocation of scarce financial resources and other important matters requiring a political decision. However, Demaj and Summermatter’s (2012) research also revealed that the
limited empirical evidence on parliamentarians’ performance and behaviour provides ambiguous and contradictory findings with respect to using performance data to make such decisions.

### 6.2.3 Data collection

Given the exploratory nature of this research, it was concluded that the most appropriate research method was a qualitative and archival approach. In this case, the sample under investigation is small relative to the general population of Australia. The data collection utilized both structured (surveys) and semi-structured (interviews) for the purposes of obtaining the individual present or former politicians’ reflections on the definition of personal performance, and how politicians define and recognize performance in other politicians. The qualitative research method was used to develop an initial understanding of the subject matter being researched, and to provide a sound basis for further decision-making and potential quantitative research into issues identified (Turner 2013; Ivankova, Creswell, and Stick 2007; Creswell 2003).

The primary characteristic of this research study is that the subject matter in the form of individual politicians was observed and recorded. This process involved: (1) surveys being emailed to all politicians at state and federal levels, as listed in the respective parliamentary or legislator guide or register as noted below; and (2) an invitation to participate in a digitally recorded, one-on-one interview. In the main, the data gained from this process are qualitative in nature and consist of:

1. notes taken during the interviews
2. voice-recorded transcripts based on observations of and interviews with the participant
3. analysis and preparation of a detailed report discussing the results.

To achieve this, the researcher produced a number of institutionally-approved questions sourced from academic literature and practitioners in the field of performance management and politics (refer Annex 1), to be used in the electronic survey of 670 politicians listed on Australian parliamentary registers. The data gained from the interviews will be used for validation purposes, and finally an additional survey of the same 670 politicians will be undertaken to identify differences in the data previously collected. This data will then be analysed to determine why it is difficult for constituents and stakeholders to measure the
performance of individual politicians, using contemporary performance measurement models. Finally, data obtained from the electronic surveys will be used to develop further in-depth questions, which will then be presented to individual research participants who accept an invitation to undertake a personal one-on-one recorded interview with the researcher.

6.2.4 Population and samples used

A population is defined as any set of persons or participants having a common observable characteristic (NMHRC 2012). For example, all individuals who reside in Australia make up a population; likewise, all politicians elected to represent constituents are also a population. The characteristics of a population are called a ‘parameter’; the characteristics of a sample are called a ‘statistic’. In this research project, the population consists of every politician who is presently or was formerly elected to parliament as a representative of either the legislature or Senate (upper) houses – the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory have legislatures rather than parliaments.

For the purpose of ensuring research integrity, and minimal researcher and participant response bias, the electronic survey was sent to all 842 registered Australian politicians including independent state and federal MPs, Liberal and National Party members, Labor and Australian Greens Party members, as well as minority state and federal parties represented in parliament and the territory legislatures and the Senate.

6.2.5 Ethical and other research considerations

6.2.5.1 Ethical considerations from a participant and candidate perspective
Shamoo and Resnik (2009) noted that given the importance of ethics for the conduct of research, many different professional associations, government agencies and universities have adopted specific codes, rules and policies relating to research ethics. Depending on the nature of the research being undertaken and the status of the participant involved, a number of ethical considerations and policies need to be embedded in the research process.

Given this project involves politicians, a number of key factors were considered essential. These included the need for honesty on the part of the researcher, and good communication between the researcher and participants to openly convey how data, results, methods, reports and procedures were conducted and presented. That is, to ensure trust between
participant and researcher, it is essential the participant does not feel that anything written is fabricated, falsified or misrepresented in any shape or form.

Objectivity is also an important ethical consideration. Given the likely natural biases of all who elected to participate in this research project, the researcher felt impelled to ensure that all questions asked avoided bias, including in the survey design, data analysis and data interpretation. The issue of integrity was also just as important for this researcher as it was for the participants. To ensure that participants feel comfortable in discussing the questions asked, the researcher believes it is essential to keep promises and agreements, while acting with sincerity and consistency in both thought and action.

Confidentiality regarding the information provided by the participants is also extremely important, with politicians generally reluctant to publicly discuss their personal views, beliefs and values. This could potentially leave them open to recriminations and censure from colleagues for having entered public debate, which may cause later difficulties for the individual politician and party colleagues alike. As discussed in previous chapters, politicians and political parties appear to prefer to operate in environments of ambiguity and uncertainty, as this enables and gives them the latitude to achieve, or not achieve, certain political outcomes with minimal oversight and accountability (Alesina and Cukierman 1990; Sawer 1998).

Given the focus of this research, there was also a need to avoid discrimination and bias against research participants on the basis of the researcher’s own political beliefs and values. This potential source of bias was acknowledged, and any actions undertaken by the researcher were based on objectivity. Commenting on sources of bias in psychological-based research, Matthews (2012) listed a number of factors that researchers could experience, including personal bias, observer bias and expectancy bias. Matthews (2012) argued that researcher bias has the potential to affect the way a researcher designs a study; for example, the researcher fails to collect sufficient samples, how data are collected, or the researcher’s need to control confounding variables that may cause an unexplainable outcome.

### 6.2.5.2 Applied ethical considerations from an institutional perspective

As part of this thesis, pre-testing of the survey questions was undertaken, as part of the requirement to gain approval from the Swinburne University’s Human Research and Ethics Committee to interview potential research participants. Given the sensitive nature of the
information that was sought, considerable reviews of the research methods and questions to be used were undertaken over a 12-month period. To further strengthen the integrity of the questions devised, they were also reviewed in-depth by a number of independent academics who have extensive teaching and publishing experience in business and social science related areas of performance management, prior to emailing to research participants.

In support of the ethics and research application, it was stated by this researcher that even though the survey would be sent out to every registered politician in Australia. It was also noted in the application that the main risk in conducting this research included the possibility of a small response given the nature of the exploratory investigation. To counter this, further interviewing was conducted with a selection of current and former politicians using a set of semi-structured questions, for the purposes of countering the risk previously noted. Furthermore, it was agreed that by using data and information provided by former politicians not beholden to any group or party, the results would be richer in content and unbiased in nature.

6.3  Response rate considerations

Baruch and Holtom (2008) argue that the majority of empirical studies conducted within the managerial and behavioural sciences use quantitative methodology. The data collection tool most frequently used for acquiring information is the survey method utilizing a questionnaire. They argue that questionnaires provide insight into individual perceptions and attitudes as well as organizational policies and practices. Moreover, given the strengths of questionnaires for assessing organizational concerns, observing trends and evaluating progress, it is not surprising that they are used extensively in organizational research (Kraut, 1996). Tourangeau (2004) argues that surveys reflect societal change in a way that few other research tools do. Over the past two decades, a number of developments have transformed surveys. On one hand, survey organizations have adopted new methods for selecting samples. These new methods have been made possible by the creation of large databases that include commercially gathered personal data in the countries in which they operate.
However, the more pressing development has been the widespread decline in response rates for all types of surveys. In the face of this problem, survey researchers have developed new theories of nonresponse that build on the persuasion literature in social psychology. Baruch and Holtom (2008) argue that to conduct research and publish the results, researchers depend on the willingness of people to respond to these questionnaires. However, unless the questionnaire is coercively administered to the target population, a 100 percent response rate is rarely achieved (Rogelberg & Stanton, 2007). In turn, Young (1996) argues that surveys are the most heavily criticized research method employed by management accounting researchers with the central concern being the reliability of the data obtained (Van der Stede, Young, and Chen 2005; Young 1996).

6.3.1 Survey research and societal change

Tourangeau (2004) argues that surveys reflect societal change in a way that few other research tools do. Over the past two decades, three developments have transformed surveys. First, survey organizations have adopted new methods for selecting telephone samples; these new methods were made possible by the creation of large databases that include all listed telephone numbers in the countries in which they operate. A second development has been the widespread decline in response rates for all types of surveys. In the face of this problem, survey researchers have developed new theories of nonresponse that build on the persuasion literature in social psychology. Finally, surveys have adopted many new methods of data collection; the new modes reflect technological developments in computing and the emergence of the Internet.

In line with is Galea and Tracy (2007) believed that there are two central reasons why nonparticipation in scientific studies has been declining over the past 50 years: potential participants have been increasingly refusing to take part in scientific studies, and it has become harder to find persons who might be eligible study participants. They further suggest that there are probably 4 reasons for this growing refusal to participate.

First, there has been a proliferation of research studies during the past few decades. Thus potential participants (and by potential participants we are considering both persons in the general population and persons in particular subgroups of interest, such as persons with a particular disease) are faced with an increasing number of requests to participate in studies, including health-related research and other academic and government-sponsored research.
This increasing number of requests to participate in research studies may well have the effect of having persons refuse to participate in all studies, which cumulatively are becoming an intrusion on personal lives (Schleifer 1986). Galea and Tracy (2007) state that in addition, as the number of potential research studies in which persons may participate increases, people may view their participation in studies as less and less worthwhile, and they may invest much less effort in making an attempt at participating than they might have when opportunity for study participation was more unusual (Groves 2004, Groves, Cialdini and Couper 1992).

Galea and Tracy (2007) further state that coincident with the increase in research studies in the United States, there has been a proliferation in marketing surveys and political polls that to participants are often indistinguishable from scientific inquiry. This falls within the thoughts of other researchers including Baruch 1999; Tourangeau 2004; and Baruch and Holtom (2008) amongst others. Galea and Tracy (2007) suggest that we have created an “over surveyed” society (Groves 2004, Groves, Cialdini and Couper 1992, Schleifer 1986). It is worth noting that the rise in telemarketing in particular may be a particular threat to epidemiologic study participation (Curtin, Presser and Singer 2005, Fricker and Schonlau 2002, McNutt and Lee 2000, Remington 1992). Tele-marketing, or the practice of calling persons on the telephone at home to sell products or services, has dramatically increased in prominence throughout the last two decades (Remington 1992). Although telemarketing has a clear goal of selling a product or soliciting support for particular causes, the distinction between telemarketing efforts and genuine research efforts may well be blurred in the minds of a substantial proportion of the population (Groves and Couper 1998), often because of efforts to disguise marketing efforts as surveys (Remington 1992, Petty 2000). A second factor likely contributing to increasing participation refusal rates in epidemiologic studies is a general decrease in volunteerism in the United States and in other western countries. Evidence has long suggested that willingness to participate in scientific research parallels participation in community organizations and other activities (Groves and Couper 1998, O'Neil 1979).

Galea and Tracy (2007) go on to say that several studies have shown that participation in organizations and social activities has declined dramatically in the last few decades (Putnam 1995). Therefore, the overall decline in willingness to participate in scientific studies, which may hold little immediate benefit to the participant her/himself, likely, coincides, at least in part, with the overall decline in social participation.
Third, there is abundant evidence that potential participants are much more likely to take part in a study that is concerned with an issue which is particularly salient to the participants’ lives. For example, studies of the relation between cellular phone use and cancer (Putnam 1995) and between fried potato consumption and cancer (Pelucchi et al. 2003) have reported participation rates of 90% or higher. Conversely, people are often reluctant to participate in studies that do not have a personal salience (i.e. politicians commenting on their own self perceived performance) (Groves 2004, Dunn et al. 2004). Similarly, participation rates among cases in case-control studies are consistently higher than those among controls (Olson, 2001, Law, Smith and Roman 2002, Moorman et al. 1999). While the different salience of study topics to participants’ lives may be associated with differential participation rates across studies, it also likely contributes to the overall decline in participation rates over the past few decades.

Furthermore, there appears to be a growing popular disillusionment with science worldwide (Greenwood 1999, Seymour and Hewitt 1997, Horgan 1996, Smith 1973). Contradictory messages about the benefits of health screening (Kopans 1998, Ransohoff and Harris 1997, Strauss 1997, Woolf 1995) and conflicting results of disease prevention trials (Beilin and Puddey 2006, Patrick 2000, Young and Lee 1999), as well as changing recommendations for nutrition and health standards (Willett and Stampfer 2003, Schwartz and Woloshin 1999), may leave the public confused and wary of the validity of research claims. A number of studies regarding willingness to participate in clinical trials and other studies have identified distrust of the medical profession and fear of exploitation or being “experimented on” as a hindrance to participation, especially among minority groups in general, and among African Americans specifically (Ellis 2000, Corbie-Smith, Thomas, Williams and Moody-Ayers 1999, Ross et al.1999, Robinson, Ashley and Haynes 1996, Cunny, K.A., and Miller 1994, Roberson 1994). In some contexts, particularly in the United States and concerning certain topics (e.g., stem cell research), popular debate has cast science in contrast to religious belief, further complicating public perceptions of the scientific enterprise. These broader forces then contribute to diminishing enthusiasm for science in general, and, operationally for participation in scientific studies.

A fourth reason for declining participation in studies is more endemic to the nature of scientific studies themselves. Particularly during the past decade, scientific studies in general, and epidemiologic studies in particular, have become increasingly demanding of participants on multiple fronts. Epidemiologic research has grown increasingly complicated,
involving survey assessments, biologic sampling, and frequently requests for ongoing follow-up that is burdensome for participants. Therefore, participants may be rightly wary of committing their involvement to an endeavour that is likely to take up a substantial amount of their time. Compounding this increasing respondent burden, institutional review board requirements have also become increasingly burdensome for respondents, with often lengthy consent forms written at inappropriately high reading levels (Sin 2005, Mader and Playe 1997, Ogloff and Otto, 1991). One early study in the area assessing the impact of informed consent procedures on survey response found that requiring a signature before the start of a survey reduced the response rate (Singer 1978). More recent studies have suggested that more complex consent procedures discourage study participation (Ellis 2000, Ross et al.1999, Davis et al. 1998).

Galea and Tracy (2007) further argue that overall, persons eligible for research participation are being asked to participate in increasingly complex and demanding research protocols within a climate of more requests for study participation, declining volunteerism and trust in science. It is then little wonder that participation rates have declined over the past several decades, and it is perhaps remarkable that they have not declined even more than the evidence suggests they have.

In line with this, within the polling industry there has been considerable concern over the past two decades about declining response rates for surveys of all types, including surveys backed by million-dollar budgets for government agencies. These concerns about response rates have solid theoretical groundings, as it is argued that a researcher cannot make inferences about a larger group if those in the group will not talk to them (Versta Research 2013).

Most academic-based statistics and margins of error assume they have information from every member of a random sample. However, Versta Research (2013) indicated that the reality for most research studies is that response rates are not generally high. As evidence, it noted that the 2000 US Census achieved a response rate of 67%. Furthermore, the 2009 National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services, a US government survey of organizations rather than individuals, had a response rate of 45%. In addition, the Pew Research Centre reported that response rates for its public opinion polling dropped from 36% in 1997 to 27% over the next six years.
A June 2009 discussion among members of The American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) (2013) suggested that most surveys of the organization’s own members generally receive response rates around 20%, which is low by most quantitative research standards. However, the findings were still accurate, and there was evidence that the lower rates often enabled greater accuracy.

6.3.2 Research into low response rates (a case study)

In one study undertaken by Sturgis, Smith and Hughes (2006) on behalf of the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom, it was noted their anecdotal evidence suggests that surveys of school pupils in England have been in steady decline over recent years. The problem of declining response rates to school surveys was brought into sharp focus in 2003, by the failure of England to meet international response rate benchmarks for the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Failure to meet benchmark response rates requirements for these comparative surveys had serious consequences, including England’s exclusion from published tables of international student achievements, despite the large government investment in these data collection activities.

It is not clear what underlies the apparent downward trend in these school response rates, or why England has consistently experienced greater difficulty than the majority of its international partners, including Scotland and Northern Ireland, in maintaining response rates and meeting the benchmark criteria. The most common reasons given for the low response rates to surveys include:

1. lack of time/excess workloads
2. competing administrative requirements and regulatory inspections
3. lack of relevance/no benefit for the school
4. never receive feedback
5. the information requested was already available elsewhere.

In response to the above case study, Sturgis, Smith and Hughes (2006) made a number of recommendations to address the issue of low response rates, including that the University
of Surrey should set up an archive of metadata on the research it conducts, both on its own account and through its external contractors. The researchers recommended that such an archive contain basic information on the aims of the study, the collectors of the data, target population, issued and achieved sample sizes, and response rates. In addition, Sturgis, Smith and Hughes (2006) recommended that the University should consider taking measures to limit the excessive number of requests to participate in research that UK schools are currently receiving. They argued that their research found evidence that schools are beginning to decline to participate in research they consider of great benefit, because they are too busy to invest the time in discriminating between the many requests they receive. In addition to performing a rationalizing and prioritizing function, such a system might also usefully serve to reduce the large number of speculative and ill thought-out research studies currently conducted in UK schools.

6.4 Surveys with low response rates

In 2003 The Pew Research Centre released findings from a study showing that despite lower response rates, surveys conducted by reputable research organizations were still accurate. In line with this, a study conducted by Visser and colleagues at the Ohio State University in the late 1990s found that a shopping mall survey with a lower response rate was more accurate than a telephone survey with a higher response rate. Numerous other studies have confirmed that higher response rates do not necessarily improve accuracy (Sivo et al. 2006; Porter 2004).

6.5 Representation is what matters!

Discussing why lower response rates do not necessarily mean a sample is skewed; Sivo et al. (2006) argued that even though there are many reasons why people do not participate in research projects, non-participants are generally no different from those who are willing to give their time. The most critical factor about sampling (no matter what the sample size or the response rate) is that the ‘part’ must represent the ‘whole’. If it does, Sivo et al. (2006) contend the conclusions reached will likely be accurate.

Sivo et al. (2006) contended that the bottom line is that response rates matter to the extent that they can indicate response bias, but that even low response rates can yield robust results. An unusually low response rate, measured against what is typical at that time, could signal something more seriously wrong with the survey design or implementation. The
lesson over the past two decades of declining response rates is that good research always aims for the highest standards, and employs rigorous efforts to ensure the greatest response rate possible in the given circumstances.

6.6 Implications for this research

Given the exploratory nature of the research involved and the contentious subject of questioning politicians about their performance, as well as how it is measured, it was jointly predicted between this researcher, research supervisors and other interested academics that a low response rate would be the likely result.

It has been identified that a gap currently exists in academic knowledge concerning the measurement of individual Australian politicians’ performances. As discussed, this exploratory research will provide a basis for closing the gap in academic knowledge that currently exists, and provide an avenue for ongoing research into other unanswered questions that relate to the measuring of an individual politician’s performance in both general and more specific senses.

Addressing this gap in academic knowledge will be achieved by understanding the political processes that politicians use to view their world, and why it is difficult for constituents and stakeholders to measure the performance of individual politicians.

Sampling issues and concerns considered in relation to this included the size of the sample, sample bias from an ideological perspective, a reluctance of potential participants to become involved in the study due to a perceived conflict of interest, the availability of participants for survey and/or interview purposes, and the need for complete anonymity of the participants’ identities.

Given that this researcher proposed to use electronic surveys, it was decided that a large sample base needed to be used. The reason for this was to address the concern that insufficient present and former politicians would participate in the research project. To remedy any issues of small response rates from participants, two (2) electronic surveys (both asking the same questions) were prepared for this research project and approved by Swinburne University’s Human Research and Ethics Committee. The survey process was staggered to allow an opportunity for politicians who had not answered the first survey to
participate in the second. Furthermore, survey responses were coded to provide a range of questions that could be used in the follow-up interview phase consisting of present and former politicians.

Historically, financial costs have been a deterrent to testing the entire population. However, in this case the population size for survey purposes was not an issue due to the availability of a secure email system and a SPSS research software package. For the purposes of ensuring research integrity, and minimal researcher and participant response bias, the survey was sent to all 842 registered politicians including independent state and federal MPs, Liberal and National Party members, Labor and Australian Greens Party members, as well as minority state and federal parties represented in parliament and the territory legislatures and the Senate.

The research addressed a numbers of questions which were put directly to the current and former Australian politicians:

1. How do politicians define performance?
2. How do politicians negotiate their conflict between personal and party beliefs and values?
3. Why is it difficult for constituents and stakeholders to measure the performance of individual politicians?

6.7 Summary of Chapter 6

This research seeks to explore through the use of qualitative research methods how politicians view and define individual performance while operating in ambiguous and conflicting environments. Furthermore, it proposes to address why it is difficult for constituents and stakeholders to measure the performance of individual politicians. In the case of this research project, the population being sampled includes every politician and legislative representative who is presently or was formally elected to parliament, legislature, Senate or upper house of parliament.

For the purposes of ensuring research integrity, and minimal researcher and participant response bias, the survey was sent to all 842 registered politicians including independent state and federal MPs, Liberal and National Party members, Labor and Australian Greens Party, members as well as minority state and federal parties represented in parliament and the territory legislatures and the Senate.
In selecting the most appropriate research method, a number of factors need to be taken into account. In line with this, Smaling (1994) suggested that the researcher’s choice of methodology is generally influenced by a variety of factors, such as their view of man and ideology, epistemological point of view (adj: knowledge), approach within the field of social sciences, as well as their skills and training.

In brief, Turner (2013) argued that the difference between qualitative and quantitative research methods is that qualitative is used when a researcher does not really know what to expect. In contrast, quantitative research is more concrete in its information, and is more often used to quantify problems and identify ways to fix them (Mora 2010). Quantitative research is used to evaluate the data that is already known (Turner 2013).

Sampling issues and concerns considered in relation to this case included the size of the sample to be researched, sample bias from an ideological perspective, potential reluctance of proposed sample to become involved in the study (thus reducing the sample size), availability of participants for survey and/or interview purposes, and the need for complete anonymity of the participants’ identities. Unless otherwise negotiated, all participant data was treated as anonymous, and participants were able to leave the survey or interview at any time without question.

In addressing issues concerning the validity of low response rates, Sivo et al. (2006) and Porter (2004) argued that experiments have shown that a rigorous (and costly) effort to double response rates makes no difference to the statistical outcome. Sivo et al. 2006; Porter 2004) have found that numerous other studies have confirmed that higher response rates do not necessarily improve accuracy.

Sivo et al. (2006) argued that lower response rates do not necessarily mean that a sample is skewed. The most critical thing about sampling, no matter what the sample size and no matter what response rate, is that the part must represent the whole. That is, it is critical to profile survey participants on key dimensions such as demographics to ensure that they represent the full population of interest (Sivo et al. 2006). They further argued that the bottom line is that response rates matter to the extent that they can indicate response bias, but that even low response rates yield robust results. However, an unusually low response rate, measured against what is typical at that time, could signal something more seriously wrong with the survey design or implementation. The lesson over the past two decades of declining
response rates is that good research always aims for the highest standards and employs rigor ous efforts to ensure maximum participation.

In this thesis, it was proposed to use electronic surveys and a large sample base of all present politicians at State, Territory and Federal levels would be used. The reason for this was in response to a concern that insufficient present and former politicians will participate in the research project. To also remedy any issues of small response rates, two (2) electronic surveys (both asking the same questions) were prepared and approved by the Swinburne University’s Human Research and Ethics Committee which is staffed by representatives of all academic disciplines active within the University. In particular, the committee is also made up of academics in the business and social science fields. The Institutional committee also contains a number of lay persons who represent the interests of the community and are engaged to ensure that all research conducted is within the best interests of that community. The survey process was also staggered to allow politicians who had not answered the first survey, the opportunity to participate in the second one. As a result of this survey stage, the responses were coded to provide a range of questions that were used in the follow-up interview phase.

Given the exploratory nature of this research project, in that the research was undertaken to ascertain why it is so difficult to measure the performance of individual Australian politicians, as well as the qualitative nature of the subsequent data, it was concluded that a mixed research method was the most appropriate. The data that were collected utilized both structured (surveys) and semi-structured techniques (e.g. individual in-depth interviews) for the purposes of obtaining individual reflections on the definition of personal performance, and how politicians define and recognize performance of other politicians. This qualitative research method was used to develop a deeper understanding of the matter being researched and to provide a sound basis for further decision-making when assessing the performance of individual politicians (Turner 2013; Creswell 2003).

Methods used to gain the data included:

1. electronic surveys mailed to all politicians at state and federal, levels as listed in each respective parliamentary register
2. face-to-face interviews with participants that fit the criteria of being individual politicians elected to represent constituents at federal, state and local government levels.
Furthermore, evidence was gained from:

3. notes taken during the interviews conducted
4. voice-recording transcripts based on observations of and interviews with the participant
5. analysis and preparation of a detailed report discussing the results.

As discussed, the major objectives of this research are to understand the political processes by which politicians view their world, how individual politicians define individual performance, and how politicians know whether an individual politician is performing well or badly. As a result of the answers received, this thesis addressed the central issue as to why it is difficult for constituents and stakeholders to measure the performance of individual politicians.

The research project addressed a number of relevant questions that were put directly to current and former Australian politicians:

1. How do politicians define performance?
2. How do politicians negotiate their conflict between personal and party beliefs and values?
3. Why is it difficult for constituents and stakeholders to measure the performance of individual Australian politicians?
CHAPTER 7: RESEARCH FINDINGS –SURVEYS OF CURRENT POLITICIANS

7.1 Introduction

In chapter 6 it was stated that for this study investigating the performance measurement of individual Australian politicians the most appropriate method of research was qualitative. The combined method adopted involved developing a survey which was sent electronically to all Australian politicians listed on the public list maintained by the respective Australian state, territory and federal governments as discussed here in Chapter 7. The survey was distributed twice to 842 politicians. This allowed politicians who had not responded to the first distribution an opportunity to participate in the second distribution. Another reason for undertaking the second survey related to a problem identified by this author at the time, was that the Australian Government was experiencing difficulties in passing legislation prior to the ‘summer’ recess and had scheduled extra sitting sessions. These additional sessions caused parliament to operate for extended periods, and required a larger than usual gathering of lower house politicians. The combined pressure of these extra sessions and the usual mass evacuation of politicians from the capital of Australia at the end of the parliamentary period are reflected in the lower than expected participant response rate. A total of 79 completed surveys were returned (40 surveys returned after the first distribution and 39 were returned after the second distribution) giving a response rate of 9.38%.

Given that this result had been considered a potential risk when choosing the best research methods to collect data, an additional stage was undertaken. This involved the collection and analysis of data from structured and semi-structured interviews with 12 present or former politicians from state, territory and federal governments. Answers obtained from participants addressed the following questions:

Why is it difficult for constituents and stakeholders to measure the performance of individual Australian politicians?

To reach this conclusion, answers obtained from participants directly addressed the following questions:

1. How do politicians define performance?
2. How do politicians negotiate their conflict between personal and party beliefs and values?

Given the invitation to participate in this project was voluntary, a large proportion of the sample population, for whatever reason, elected not to take part? Feedback to the electronic invitation mainly consisted of a pre-prepared email acknowledgement that it had been received and forwarded to the politician who would reply when able to do so. In the main, these participants did not reply at a later date. Several email reminders were also on-forwarded to the entire mail list.

Of those who elected not to participate, a small number replied in writing that they were unable to undertake the survey, but wished the researcher well in completing the project. In other cases, the response was received with the invitee personally apologizing (either via telephone or email) for not participating, and providing a reason for it. In other cases, potential participants stated that they were unable to partake due to pressing political issues and workloads. Other potential participants indicated that they would participate, but failed to return the completed survey form.

Of those who did respond and complete at least some of the survey(s), analysis of their feedback highlighted how use of words and terms is subject to the politician’s interpretation. Answers to questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 were summed up by the term:

“It all depends!”

Most comments received could be placed into three groups:

1. agreement with the statement
2. agreement with qualifications to the response
3. disagreement with the statement.

For example, one participant stated that what the politician may think is right may not be what the constituent thinks is right. Others were less sure as to the definition of ‘right’ and its context; that is:

“Various issues [need to be resolved] in determining [if] it is ‘right’.”
7.2 Background information

An electronic survey containing the same questions was distributed to all 842 current Australian politicians on two separate occasions. It should be noted that the diversity of participants ensured that responses received covered the entire spectrum of political representation in Australia, including the Liberal Party of Australia, the Australian Labor Party, the National Party of Australia, the Australian Greens, the Democratic Labor Party, and independent politicians. Responses were received from all houses of parliament within the Australian parliamentary system, and included representatives from all Australian political parties and independents.

7.3 Survey findings

All comments received are reported verbatim from the individual participant. However, minor changes to spelling and grammar have been made for the purposes of improving the readability of the information supplied. In doing so, the author was careful to ensure that the changes made did not change the content or context of the participants' answers as given to the following questions.

7.3.1 Do personal beliefs and values affect ability to perform as a politician?

Overall, participants that chose to reply were in agreement that personal beliefs and values are important to a politician. A sample of the comments received includes:

“… My personal beliefs and values are at the core of what I do. I believe that the state [and] country … can be a better and fairer place for all … to live …”

“Personal integrity, respect, honesty and compassion are values that I apply in the course of my work … My faith are equally important, and my cultural heritage is the essence of who I am …”

“My personal beliefs and values inform my consultation and work for constituents and my decision-making in the parliamentary precinct.”
“Whilst I appreciate the need to represent the constituency, my personal beliefs and values still play a big role in my work.”

“Yes. Without personal beliefs you should not be in politics.”

In the main, participants used value-laden terms like compromise, democracy, flexibility and negation to highlight the environment in which they work, where trust, integrity, honesty and other personal values are an essential ingredient between political representative and constituent. From a performance perspective, it was noted that individual politicians elected as the political representative of constituents would find it difficult to remain as the elected representative if constituents did not feel satisfied that their representative was truly representing them and acting on their behalf. Participants explained that this representation also took into account the relationship between representative and constituent based on a set of shared values and beliefs. Participants also revealed that the majority of politicians are willing to address issues of concern to constituents rather than run the risk of being compromised, both in principle and practice by the interests of outside parties. Furthermore, the politician’s likelihood of re-election is likely to be greatly reduced if that representative is perceived by constituents as merely being another cog in the much larger party machine. In reinforcing this point, one respondent commented that:

“It is easy [for politicians] to slide into the pitfall of compromising principle to make things happen. The risk of excessive compromise is being left with no identifiable values at all. [Furthermore] The challenge for any member of parliament is to know what is negotiable and what isn’t, and remaining true to those things that aren’t.”

In terms of the effect that personal beliefs and values have on a politician’s ability to perform, it was commonly noted that all political careers are terminal. While it is generally accepted that re-election is a necessary part of being a politician, participants replied that effective members of parliament serve their electorate well while remaining true to their own personal values. Perspectives of beliefs and values that were cited include:

- being true to one’s self and others
- personal integrity
- respect for oneself and others
• honesty and compassion
• cultural heritage
• religious faith and beliefs.

7.3.2 How is political performance defined?

Participants generally conceded that the main indicators of performance revolve around meeting goals, both personal and organizational; making a positive difference to people's lives; and achieving positive outcomes for individuals, groups or things that are not in a position to achieve for themselves. These include providing a stable political environment in which positive change can occur, without causing social dislocation to society as a whole. However, the main indicators did not match the traditional role of performance measurement in the business environment, which is geared toward the notion of an input/output-based measurement system. For the individual politician, the ability to anticipate and manage change for the benefit of the largest part of the community, and [being a] team player within the individual’s political party, while standing up for what they believe in is both personally important and an important measure of the politician’s performance as both a local member and parliamentarian.

Participants noted that political KPIs include being honest to your principles while also being accountable and honest to your constituents – an essential element for politicians that wish to be respected. Furthermore, public satisfaction was an important factor when attempting to measure an individual’s or party’s performance in general. One participant noted that the definition of ‘political performance’ changes when an opposition party moves into government. As an opposition member, the individual was able to highlight and publicly argue against perceived inadequacies of the government without incurring the levels of accountability that went along with a failure to remedy those socio-economic and political issues. However, once in government, dealing with those very same issues became the cornerstone of measurement as to whether the government, including its individual members, had successfully performed. On the other hand, the same participant stated that regardless of the individual politician's parliamentary status, successful political performance includes factors such as strong advocacy on behalf of constituents and stakeholders, achievement of tangible outcomes, and introducing and maintaining innovative policies for opposition and government members alike.
Another participant believed that important aspects of political performance include achieving policy objectives, and advancing one’s party and/or self. Another major contributor to defining political performance is time management. Participants noted that politicians need to better manage their time to achieve the required outcomes for local constituents as well as the broader community in which they work. In turn, the issue of time management needs to be balanced against financial and other constraints, including interests such as party-political considerations and electorate requirements.

Other KPIs discussed included the need for better methods of achieving change to improve not only the welfare of the individual, but the welfare of the state as a whole, as well as the ability to argue the issue under discussion rather than the person. As one participant noted:

“I respect a person who is able to astutely argue their position, even if it is an opposing view.”

7.3.3 Is political performance easy to define?

Overall, the participants found it difficult to articulate a response to this question. They generally agreed that good performance in politics is actually difficult to define but easy to recognize if you are involved in the day-to-day business of being a politician. Participants argued that political performance is largely a personal measure that is obtained from community feedback and the politician’s colleagues. They also contended that political performance is subjective; it depends on how achievement is measured, and as noted in the previous question, performance varies between being in government and the opposition. Participants stated that while it is easy for an opposition member to bring the government to task for some inadequacy or oversight, opposition members do not have the same accountability as their government counterparts.

Participants also accepted that once in government, however, the politician’s job is to ensure that such issues are successfully dealt with in an effective and efficient manner, with all the accountability and responsibility that being in government carries. It was argued that in political areas, normative performance cannot be summarized by a KPI; rather, it involves a politician’s availability, willingness to listen, and the ability to achieve a positive result for constituents. In essence, good performance has to include both outcomes and public approval, but these two elements can be subjective and not always mutually exclusive. This
means that, regardless of the outcome, some constituents will believe that the politician’s performance in handling the issues was effective and positive. In contrast, those holding differing value and belief systems may rank the politician’s performance as ineffective or negative, regardless of whether the outcome was good for the community.

Responses also included acknowledgement that there are different sorts of success or degrees of achievement that apply to different classes of politicians. For example, some politicians value being a strong campaigner, while others value eloquence in debate. One participant reasoned that performance is very hard to define, given that most people think of those politicians they have heard of in the media as being the only ones that have performed effectively. An excellent legislator might have zero public profile given that their political activities mainly involve policy work undertaken in the state upper house or federal Senate. Senatorial duties are generally unseen by most members of the community unless the constituents or stakeholders are politically aware, or have an interest in contemporary political affairs and events. One participant commented that [upon being elected to parliament] he had tried to establish his own performance index. He had found this difficult enough, let alone attempting to analyze someone else's performance.

While the responses indicate that it is difficult to articulate a common perspective when attempting to define political performance, there was general agreement that the power of the media appears to have a great influence on politicians. One participant highlighted this point by stating that:

“… [The] greatest difficulty [in] making wise judgment[s] about political performance comes from presentation of issues by the press.”

Other participant’s feedback further highlighted that the press (media) in effect is a double-edged sword. While acknowledging that the press is an essential part of democracy, it is essential that news reported in the media is accurate and subjected to the same levels of integrity and honesty expected of politicians. Furthermore, another participant argued that there is also a need for a better (politically) educated constituency that can appreciate and understand the political issues being discussed or debated (by politicians). The same participant, in a somewhat philosophical viewpoint, highlighted this by stating that:
"If the … items are achieved, better decisions rather than political decisions would be achieved to advance the welfare of mankind."

7.3.4 What influence do personal beliefs and values have on ability to perform as a politician?

As with question 7.3.3, the majority of participants stated that individual personal beliefs and values heavily influence their individual ability to perform as a politician.

The strong response that personal beliefs and values have a strong influence on the individual’s ability to perform the duties of a politician was reinforced by written comments they made. Comments about media intrusion and the media’s reporting on the performance of politicians in their workplace appear to play a considerable role in how individual politicians reflect on the subject of performance. Overall, the majority of participants believed that life experience and personal values politicians develop along the way, including a ‘thick skin’ and having a patient and persistent disposition which allows them to perform despite the constant attacks and negative portrayals that come from elements of the media. These comments highlight the constant state of ambiguity and ambivalence that exists and influences politicians’ perceptions of political performance. However, one could assume that if the coverage was reversed and was more positive to the individual, those same politicians would be lauded in the press as champions of democracy.

Most participants confirmed that beliefs and values affect their ability to perform as a politician; some further stated that personal beliefs are essential for policy formation and decision-making. One participant took a slightly different yet more humane and idealistic point of view, stating that beliefs and values do not affect their ability to perform as a politician; rather, their set of beliefs and values “informed and energized” their work in the constituency and in parliament. The same participant believed that the politician needs to not only have positive personal values that guide their work, but to also positively value the work and worth of each individual in society, supporting their right to be treated with dignity and fairness at all times.

Another participant stated that while having a belief in what they did improved their performance, it is just as important to provide a voice for their constituents who share their
personal and party values. Drawing on classical representations of the self and Etzioni (1986), one participant commented that:

“Philosophy lies at the heart of my values. Ideas applicable in the real [world] are what separate us from the bestial. [In my opinion] … ideas ennable, enrich and create a world of amazing complexity and even more challenges. Ideas are the product of our imagination and are so much more than the sum of our parts. The ideas that have the greatest anti-entropic effect are the ideas that I am most attracted to.”

It is of note that Etzioni (1964) argued that rationality is anti-entropic, where the 'normal' (or base-line) state of human behavior is assumed to be non-rational.

Others conveyed that parliament is a very competitive and adversarial environment involving one side against the other, including colleagues and peers. One participant stated that while most MPs seek to be as effective they can be, they do so in a way that references success. The same participant went on to say that for some, ‘successful performance’ is about being appointed to the front bench and ministry; for others, it is the delivery of a major project (policy or infrastructure). For many of politicians in marginal seats, success is defined as being re-elected and continuing to represent the community as their political representative.

Finally, in answer to what influence personal beliefs and values have on the ability of a politician to perform, one participant (a former barrister and solicitor) stated that:

“The most important personal value is that of searching for the truth on which decisions on any issue can be made, and demonstrating transparency in both the chamber and with the constituency. I could not do this work if I was simply a gun for hire for causes I don't believe in. That's why I gave [up] practicing law.”
7.3.5 In attempting to do the right thing by constituents, a politician should do whatever he or she believes is right?

Participants stated that the politician must always take steps to be personally assured that their actions are reasonably informed by ethical considerations of the actions being undertaken, and have a reasonable regard for due process. It appears that one of the most difficult decisions facing an individual politician is informing the constituent that in their opinion, the constituent was misinformed or the issue is outside what is considered to be in the best interest of the community as a whole, or their request is not appropriate given all the circumstances.

For example, one participant highlighted that they were often asked by constituents to intervene in personal issues where they believed they had been wronged, where ongoing attempts to remedy this wrong had taken over the constituent’s life; yet prospects of success in resolving the tort were often minimal or non-existent. The participant further stated that in their opinion:

“[I personally believe the most appropriate action or correct thing] is to advise them to either let go of the issue, or severely limit its impact on their lives. But [generally this] is not what they want to hear, and it is often difficult to tell them as they will not be happy with the advice.”

Therefore, one can assume that in cases like this, the constituent or stakeholder will be disappointed by the actions or advice given by the politician, which will reduce the level of satisfaction experienced. In turn, the level of satisfaction experienced by the stakeholder or constituent will be affected by the level of negativity commensurate with that satisfaction. One participant argued that this negativity has the potential outcome (when combined with other factors and influences) of the politician either losing their next pre-selection bid for re-election, or facing losing their seat at the next election as a result of a perceived lack of constituent confidence in their performance. This is irrespective and based on analysis of the facts; the politician had indeed made the right decision. Other participants surveyed took on a more community or environment-related perspective, and were of the opinion that the
good of the community or environment always takes precedence over the rights of the individual constituent, while acknowledging the potential for conflict embedded in the participants comments made.

7.3.6 Why has research undertaken to date identified that citizens are increasingly lacking confidence in and do not trust political institutions and politicians?

Overall, the participants found it difficult to articulate a common response; comments were mixed, with some supporting and others disagreeing with the assertion. In essence, all participants argued that many factors affecting the political environment have a differing impact on community and stakeholder perceptions. Analysis of the feedback suggests that the participants fall within three sub-groups of participant responses, with considerable overlap between them. These sub-groups are:

1. blame other politicians and political parties
2. blame the media
3. blame anything but the politician.

7.3.6.1 Blame other politicians and political parties
One group of participants keenly argued that a general decrease in trust of all institutions and political bodies is due to a perceived lack of political commitment to community values, a general decay in trust of politicians within the community, and growing community distrust in previously trusted institutions. This was highlighted by one participant's belief that this lack of confidence is due to a perception by politicians' that stakeholders and constituents lack commitment for, combined with a lack of acceptance in the way decisions are made by politicians and the parliament. This view was reinforced by some politicians' belief that constituents generally believe that politicians tell people only what they want to hear. The same participant noted that even if the stakeholders and constituents disagree with what the politician is saying, they generally appreciate being told what the politician actually believes in.
Another participant commented that one of the reasons for lack of confidence in politicians and political institutions is an increased cynicism among stakeholders and constituents, brought about by the increase of new technologies and media over the last 50 years. Another cited a lack of life skills and knowledge among politicians (including formal training and skills to be a politician) – a point strongly supported by Evans (2006) in that:

“More and more people getting elected have no life experience and little knowledge of the community in which they serve career politicians; [i.e.] going from being a staffer or union official to becoming a politician, doesn’t enable one to understand the needs of one’s community.”

Conversely, one participant argued that this lack of trust and confidence is due to the political party influence on the political system, in that:

“On many occasions, politicians have created that circumstance. I am an independent; therefore not influenced by nor constrained by a party structure. It is the party machine and party contradictions that have caused much of the mistrust.”

Several participants commented that it was unfortunate that some politicians do not work harder and are dismissive of the community. As a result, this had resulted in a traditional distrust of politicians and politics in general. Furthermore, the same group of participants highlighted that this increased cynicism and negative public perception of politicians generally matches a common decay of trust in corporations, such as the military/industrial complex, domestic and international banks, and pharmaceutical companies. In addition, comments included an observation that community-based values have also deteriorated over the years as people have sought and obtained greater personal and community freedoms of expression while attempting to reduce the impacts of government surveillance and censorship. However, not all participants agreed, stating that in their opinion it is not a certainty:

“I don’t think that this [lack of trust and confidence] extends to political institutions beyond the political parties.”
7.3.6.2 Blame the media

A recurring theme across the two surveys (and later among the interviews) is the apparent ambivalence that exists between politicians and media practitioners, who in a fashion are unable to completely exist without the other. Some participants appeared to suggest that the increase of information technologies in recent times is a major factor in the decreasing sets of beliefs and values shared by constituents, stakeholders and politicians alike. One participant argued that contemporary entertainment is centered on betrayal and conflict, and that we live in a world of the sensual (i.e. pertaining to our senses), while personal beliefs and values are not as deeply thought about. However, several participants argued that this was not completely bad either, “as democracy enables us to distrust authority but to also say it.” Yet another participant believed there will come a time when constituents realize that they have to trust their leaders, at least to some degree, or the community in which they live will not function.

Continuing the theme that media coverage is one of the main reasons for the steady decline of public trust in our politicians and political institutions, it was further argued that in regards to politicians and political parties, the lack of confidence is substantially generated by the adversarial nature of our political and legal systems, where personal attacks on each other are encouraged. In turn, the media feeds off this conflict, and this perpetuates the lack of confidence even further. Another participant took issue with the role media has in generating public distrust, commenting that:

“Politicians and the media are in a race to the bottom. Frequently I meet people who say, ‘Oh, you’re really hardworking/nice/decent, [which is] unusual for a politician’. Those same surveys have historically shown that people think politicians as a class are no good, but not my [that person’s] local MP, he/she is really good … helped me with …”

This perspective was taken up and embellished by another participant, agreeing that political representation has become skewed in favour of those who positively assist the ‘individual’ politician’s career; those who can offer more political power, personal gain and political status, rather than acting as the constituents’ representative in parliament and the electorate. The participant commented that:
“Some politicians aren't being genuine; they appear to be in politics for the personal power it gives them, not to represent the community's interests. Political parties are also guilty of this … [they] do whatever it takes to stay in power, not whatever it takes to put us on the road to a better future. Also, politics has become about representing the interests of big business, polluting industries, etc., and people are feeling this. People feel as though their political representatives aren't listening to them anymore.”

7.3.6.3 Blame anything but the individual politician
A third group of participants appears to take a more positive viewpoint about the perceived lack of confidence in politicians. Some commented that in their personal experience, most people respect the individual politician and the work they do. They argued that the problem of stakeholder and constituency distrust is caused by the way politicians are portrayed in the media, and the way that politicians and political parties try to ‘dumb down' political messages for the media. In addition, this perceived lack of trust and confidence by the community was summed up by one participant as being due to:

“The corrupting influence of political donations, especially from big business including developers, alcohol, gambling, mining, etc. [Presently] we have the best democracy that money can buy.”

It should be noted that the reference ‘money can buy’ refers to the established business description of corruption of a system rather than the traditional meaning of personal or criminal corruption. In effect, the participant was putting forth the assertion that the system is failing to operate in the desired manner due to the lobbying of influential stakeholders; thus making it operate unfairly for minor stakeholders and constituents.

7.3.7 Politicians are not trusted by the citizenry

In answering this statement, it was obvious that a large percentage of participants are in agreement that politicians are not trusted by the citizenry. While the majority strongly agreed
or agreed in principle with the statement, it is of concern that another group of participants were unsure, either agreeing or disagreeing. In turn, several participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Other participants, while disagreeing with the contention that politicians are not trusted by the citizenry, only agreed with the statement with certain qualifications. For instance, one participant replied that their confidence in statements that politicians are not trusted was low because:

“I think that surveys asking do you trust politicians are a little like survey that asks do you trust second-hand car dealers. The answer will be a preconditioned negative. My personal experience is that my constituents trust me on many levels with personal and commercially sensitive information. I enhance that trust by not betraying those confidences. A politician is as good as the trust that they build. There are any numbers of very reputable used car dealers in the world, who make a good living from their good names.”

This type of reply was repeated in several participants comments, where it was noted that the vast amount of stakeholders and constituents they come into contact with have complete trust in them as politicians and the work they do. Comments supporting this point of view include:

“While I believe many feel this way, we need to work hard to be trustworthy and credible. Some do, some don’t.”

“Lots of people actually feel more positive about us in practice, and again it depends on who you ask about a particular politician or [just] pollies in general. Also if the citizenry you speak of have met the politician they are asked to pass judgment on.”

“While there is a view about politicians in general, most people who meet a politician or seek their assistance do not share this view. People are often cynical about people they are disconnected from.”

These answers raise further questions as to the personal amount interaction that politicians have with the constituency, stakeholders and public in general. It could be argued that if a politician does not enter the public arena to personally feel and hear what constituents want
or are saying, or relies only on vague polls and messages from the party faithful to guide their performance in the electorate and parliament, then that politician’s ability to perform in the interests of constituents and stakeholders will be seriously reduced.

Another participant argued that the general perception that politicians are not trusted mostly comes from those constituents and stakeholders that have been disadvantaged by political decisions. Furthermore, the lack of trust is perpetuated by both the media and constituents’ lack of any real knowledge of how politics and politicians operate in Australia. One participant went as far as to say that they had been quite disappointed when visiting a school and observed that a tertiary trained teacher appeared to have very little knowledge of who was responsible for providing the different services at local, state and federal political levels. Therefore, from these participants’ comments, it became evident that there is a greater need for better political education of constituents and stakeholders in general. While agreeing with the previous comments in principle, one participant also qualified their comments on the previous argument by contending that:

"However, because of the way I work with my community, those who have any contact with me respect and trust me [and therefore are able to adequately judge and trust my performance]."

7.3.8 Politicians’ thoughts on political knowledge of constituents

Comments made have acknowledged that while the press is an essential part of democracy, it is also essential that what is reported is accurate and subjected to the same levels of integrity and honesty expected of politicians. Further feedback included believing that there is a need for a better (politically) educated constituency that appreciate and understand the political issues being discussed (by politicians).

Overall, most participants argued that the political education levels of constituents on the whole are low due to the lack of any formal political education. Again, participants intimated that most constituents mainly or directly receive their political education through the media; thus implying that the direction being pursued in press reports results in an unfair and biased outcome for politicians and the political system in general. For example, one participant commented on the constituent response to the change of leadership in the Australian Labor Party between Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard by highlighting that:
“People [constituents, stakeholders and the public in general] genuinely seem to think they directly elect the prime minister, and many would not know that Queen Elizabeth II is our head of state.”

Further comments shed light on how politicians view this state of affairs, and in particular the way political parties and politicians have traditionally dealt with the lack of constituent political education. One participant noted that “politics for the sake of power exists”, and that as a result, the quality of any personal or political judgment is guided by the need to retain power at any cost. Furthermore, this participant believed that constituents want leadership to make decisions regardless of whether they are well founded, and want their own needs serviced above all else, which demonstrate a lack of constituent or stakeholder political education. The participant concluded by contending that much needs to be done to improve the quality of constituent analysis and education in the search for [the political] truth. This contention was supported by another participant’s remark that:

“… I often talk to tertiary educated people who don’t have the slightest clue about political or government structures and roles.”

Other comments highlighted the need for improvement in this area, yet while acknowledging that Australia has a reasonably intelligent population, a number of participants felt that young people, particularly those in secondary school and university, need even more opportunities to educate themselves about the democracy they live in and its political systems. Participants further contended that if this was to be achieved, politicians of all creeds need to demystify the political process and do more to engage the community in a bipartisan way. However, in one case the participant took on a more philosophical point of view, stating that while the levels of political education vary, constituents and stakeholders can generally engage in the key issues around elections. While some of the finer points may be lost on some constituents, most understand the basics and make a decision based on what is important to them. However, the obligation fell upon politicians to inform voters. One participant highlighted the point that:

“Perhaps [we need to] broaden civics education in and outside schools [and]; it could always be improved, though overall I think levels aren’t too bad. However, the problem is that the major parties believe they are playing to a generally low level of political education, due to them wanting to win certain marginal electorates. This
tends to lower the tone of political debate in this country and no doubt has a cyclical effect.”

Most participants rated constituency knowledge as low to very low, especially in the ACT which has a unique parliamentary setup. One participant commented that:

“Sometimes I'm amazed and sometimes I'm saddened. As a general rule of thumb there is a percentage of the electorate who couldn't care less about politics (until it effects them), and that is a splendid achievement of our system. Imagine a system that is so safe that many of its users don't care about it. I don't think that Germans in the 1930s were as secure in their system that they didn't have to think about it. In the 1940s it was worse for them, and it's still pretty ordinary for the Libyans.”

Finally, one participant while not exactly sure of what the statement meant replied as follows:

“If it is [about] the constituent's understanding of politics and the political process, then a very basic understanding has been promulgated in schools. A number of the teachers required to lead the classes are themselves confused about state, federal and local government jurisdictions. Many people, however, [are] so busy just surviving, that any in-depth involvement in politics is beyond their time.”

7.3.9 Are constituents well-educated about politics?

Contrary to comments made in the previous section about constituency political knowledge being low to very low, when asked to rank political education levels, one participant strongly agreed that constituents are politically well-educated. Several participants strongly agreed or agreed that constituents are well-educated about politics, while a substantial number adopted a neutral position (neither agreeing nor disagreeing). However, the majority of participants did not agree that constituents are educated about politics, and three strongly disagreed. It is of note that 46 participants elected not to answer this question.
When commenting, several participants qualified their previous answers by stating that constituents are more likely to be politically disengaged rather than politically uneducated. One participant explained that:

“This sort of generalization is difficult, as we have a system that has made a percentage of our electorate politically or civically lazy. That doesn’t mean they are necessarily poorly educated, but merely disengaged.”

Another participant picked up on the theme that ambiguity and the complexity of the Australian political system plays a large role in how much constituents know, and stated that:

“There are exceptions, but plenty of people don’t know which tier of government does what, who represents them, and roughly what their taxes are spent on.”

Another participant, picking up on the way politicians are represented by the media, stated:

“Those who engage with us generally know what’s going on, but most people [in the community] have no idea other than general perceptions based on media.”

7.3.10 Why do constituents expect public servants, like judicial and law enforcement officers, to have higher levels of integrity than politicians?

Overall, several participants strongly disagreed with this proposition, appearing confronted by the question and displaying defensive behaviour in how they answered it. Another participant refused to comment, one commented that they were not surprised, while the majority agreed with the question.

One participant admitted that while they believe all politicians should act honestly and with integrity, they themselves often made mistakes. However, the participant strongly suggested that when they did, it was done with the best of intentions and that they did not deliberately set out to mislead or misrepresent either people or issues. Other participants contended that
while certain levels of behaviour should be expected of public servants, and justice and law enforcement officers, it should also be expected of every other person including politicians. Another participant argued that constituents appear to have little trust in politicians’ levels of integrity because politicians have to make judgment of values rather than simply applying legal rules to circumstances. In turn, this is the inherent challenge of any democracy.

Several participants took exception to this question and commented that there was a distinct difference in the roles. These participants highlighted the point that judicial personnel, law enforcement officers and public servants are not scrutinized as severely as members of parliament. Those other (non-political/administration of law) roles listed had to perform their functions without fear or favour in regards to politicians or constituents alike. By virtue of their position in parliament, politicians are in a position to pick and choose what causes they support. While this isn’t the same as integrity, they believe the politician’s ability to be able to do so add to the confusion felt by constituents and stakeholders.

Most participants reasoned that constituents and stakeholders alike should remember that in the world of politics, people are constantly trying to expose their leaders and peers for all of their shortcomings. Any found are exposed in the media and other ‘courts’ of public opinion. They reasoned that if judges are to receive the same level of scrutiny about their personal conduct, then they would be perceived by constituents and stakeholders in the same way. Participants highlighted an important point in that all public servants should be scrutinized equally, not just politicians.

Shanahan (2013) believes that recent demonstrations of politicians’ behaviour both in and out of the House demonstrate why politicians need stricter scrutiny. After all, they are representing not only their constituents domestically; they are also representing Australia globally in an age of ever-advancing communications. Bad and unruly behaviour such as that displayed in the federal parliament recently (while appealing to certain sections within the political landscape) only reinforces the already biased perceptions of Australians as loud, rude, unsophisticated and boorish louts not worthy of being taken seriously in world and domestic affairs (Williams 2013; McKay 2013).

While another participant found the idea strange that politicians lack higher levels of integrity based on his personal experiences with the public service, he believed constituent and stakeholder distrust of politicians is due to the overall inbred distrust of politicians and politics in Australian society as a whole. Conversely, another participant found the question “kind of
scary” – they believed that all senior public officials (regardless of whether they are lawmakers or politicians, or administrators of the law such as police, judges or public servants) should be required to have the highest levels of integrity. Finally, one participant stated that while all politicians should have high levels of integrity (like Judges etc), it is also important that media scrutiny is better informed.

7.3.11 Should politicians be expected to have higher levels of integrity?

Following on from the previous question, participants were asked whether politicians should be expected to have higher levels of integrity than government administrators of the law. A high percentage of participants (in this case most) elected not to answer this question, while some strongly supported it; others remained neutral or strongly disagreed. In answering this question and while not being compared to any other group, all participants acknowledged that integrity is an essential element for any politician. Several participants stated that:

“[All politicians] should be beyond reproach and should have a higher level of integrity because of the trust placed in them."

“The many politicians I know (from all parties) have a great deal of integrity.”

“Any person who seeks political office needs to bring integrity to that office.”

In an aside, one participant replied that they were unable to answer this question by stating that:

“Sorry, I am out of time.”

One could interpret this particularly ambiguous answer in many ways; either the person did not want to answer the question or simply had run out of time. However, the latter point is highly unlikely given the same respondent went on to answer further questions in the survey. However, given the nature of the question, it is open to why the participant felt that this was the most appropriate way to answer. One might consider that they did not want to answer because it was too confronting and possibly required considerable reflection – something the participant may not have wanted to pursue. Regardless, this question was no more
difficult than those that are put forward to ordinary constituents required to address performance issues and reviews in their own workplaces on a daily basis.

For employees of the respective local, state and federal public services, acting in their everyday working life with integrity, honesty and other values is an expectation that forms part of their biannual performance review. Failure to adhere to those values has often been punished with expulsion from the public service, or at the very least a loss of rank, downgrading in position and salary, a negative comment logged on their employment file, or some sort of monetary fine. In certain cases it has involved a combination of all of the aforementioned disciplinary actions.

Therefore, constituents may well ask why politicians should be treated any differently. After all, a politician’s integrity, honesty and trustworthiness are the benchmarks by which they are elected to represent constituents at an electoral level and in Australia’s houses of parliament (Australian Public Service Commission 2013; State Services Authority (Victoria) 2103; Public Service Commission (NSW) 2013; Queensland Public Service 2013; Northern Territory (NT) Public Service 2013; Western Australia Public Service Commission 2013; SAPlan 2013; Australian Capital Territory Public Sector Management Act 1994; Office of the State Services (Tasmania) 2013).

7.3.12 Do you believe that it is sometimes necessary not to be completely honest when dealing with constituents?

The majority of participants believed that all politicians should be beyond reproach and should have a higher level of integrity because of the trust placed in them to act on behalf of all constituents. In line with this, participants were asked if they believed that politicians did not have to be completely honest when dealing with constituents all of the time. Several responded that in some circumstances it may be necessary. However, the deliberate act of lying to the public is wrong, and when done, is generally exposed at some time in the future anyway.

Most participants pointed out that it all depends on the nature and treatment of the information in question. In some cases there is a ‘need to know’ caveat placed on information, as it may concern an issue or matter that is not in the public domain. At other times it may involve private information that cannot be released. In some cases, not being
completely honest about something is interpreted as not divulging all the information a politician has on an issue or matter before the government or parliament. One participant pointed out that this course of action is probably necessary in politics and for some constituents, stating that:

“Arguable deception was not done in a malicious way of course, but in the knowledge that it was not always necessary [or desirable] to provide people with all the information at hand, particularly if the information related to current negotiations regarding legislation, party room discussions, or meetings with ministers, etc.”

Given this comment, the participant noted that quite often the constituent’s expectations need to be managed around the likelihood of not being able to resolve the issue, but that all dealings should be fundamentally honest:

“After all, we are working for these people.”

Another participant commented that they have to be as honest as they can in all circumstances; however, some politicians (feel obligated) to say the most helpful thing when trying to respond to what can be an impossible demand. Most politicians are not going to tell a constituent that they are totally unreasonable in what they are asking, and would rather talk it through, find out why they are so focused on this particular outcome, point out the difficulty with their approach, and assess whether there is another way their need can be met. In other cases, politicians and staff are often confronted by a person in an unstable condition who is potentially dangerous to those around them. One participant highlighted a sexual molestation example, whereby a male who had current contact with the Department of Child Safety and his children had been removed because of sexual molestation offences, wanted the politician to get his children back. Given the nature of the charges and his background of violence against his family, the politician felt morally unable to comply with the man’s request or provide any information about the children’s whereabouts and ultimately, did not prosecute his case for his children’s return.
7.3.13 Should politicians always be honest when dealing with constituents?

In reply to this question, the majority of participants agreed that politicians should always be honest when dealing with constituents. Overall, a number of participants strongly agreed or agreed that honesty is important in this situation. Several participants replied that they have always been honest even when it has annoyed constituents, as they believe people in general respect honesty from politicians. One participant commented that:

“You shouldn’t be dishonest, which is different from the scenario put forward in the previous question.”

However, one participant commented on the public’s need to know principle, citing the example that:

“You may well have information about an issue that is not in the public domain, so that makes it hard [to be totally honest].”

Overall responses reflect the opinion that politicians should be as open and honest as possible, because:

“Telling lies to ensure people get what they want to hear is a very short-term political strategy.”

7.3.14 How do politicians balance the competing interests of social responsibility and dependence on large business revenue and taxes to fund government business?

When asked how politicians balance the complexities of social responsibility and dependence on taxes to fund government business, only one participant expressed concerns. The participant stated that it is very difficult to balance, because while ensuring that governments perform and act appropriately in the interests of their constituents, that
very same government needs money in the form of taxes for funding public and private programs designed to create work and improve standards of living. From a performance perspective, comments were also made that this question opens individual politicians and governments up to charges of not having performed in the interests of those unable to pay such large amounts of tax; thus ensuring an underclass within society that remains dependent on welfare and government assistance, with little hope of improving their situation.

In one case, a participant reversed the question and asked what the dilemma is, as social responsibility always comes first; while another saw no conflict at all with the proposition. Another participant found the question too confusing to answer, while one argued that the question was wrong because:

“To suppose that these concepts are mutually exclusive is incorrect. I think that the greatest social responsibility of government is to create an economic environment that leads to jobs and to keep that community safe. Business revenue is powered by employed people. People with jobs pay their mortgages and look after their families more effectively than people without jobs.”

Another participant stated that:

“Business revenue has a direct relationship to its ability to provide employment, so I reject the notion that they are mutually exclusive. There is an insatiable demand for tax dollars from communities – roads, schools, hospitals, football oval resurfacing, and lots of teachers, nurses, cops and facilities for them to work in. Much of a politician’s work involves balancing those competing demands.”

Another stated that they did not believe this question needed to be addressed, further ambiguously stating that they never:

“Enter into any negotiations or representations that would compromise my position. I am sure business interests in this town know my value system.”
Finally, one participant neatly summed up the conundrum by making the observation that:

“Business needs governments as much as governments need business. There is no competing interest. Politicians are required to deliver competitive economic conditions that promote jobs as part of their social responsibility.”

Regardless of the comments made by the previous participant, contemporary events such as support and opposition of the Australian [Motor] Grand Prix in Melbourne or the conflict arising from the current Victorian State Government’s decision to cancel all contracts relating to the construction of the ‘East West [Road] Link in the west and eastern suburbs of Melbourne, reveal that constituents may not always agree with or find acceptable the policies undertaken by governments on their behalf, especially when it comes to the ‘hip pocket’ or the natural environment. The most recent European economic crisis is a prime example of mass unrest created by the need for internal state governments to tighten the fiscal belt and reduce debt, due to the previous monetary policies designed to favour constituent approval. Growing opposition in Germany and Britain in having to finance such debt is a prime example of constituents finding it increasingly disgraceful when they have to fund what are seen as irresponsible policies and political actions by members within their government. After all, the average constituent has the right to question why they should have to clean up the mess of those too inept to run their country’s political economy (Boltho and Carlin 2012; Feldstein 2012; Ottolenghi 2012; Wyplosz 2005).

7.3.15 Why do many politicians appear concerned about having their performance judged in an open and transparent environment?

After most politicians accepting that having their individual political performance measured is an important part of the political process, why is it that many are concerned about participating in open and transparent environments? One participant replied that while she did not know the real answer, perhaps politicians see it as something that consumes more time during the day. Another stated that they did not understand this question. Two participants noted that they did not know why, while another stated that they were not aware of any politicians who were. However, there appears to be a perception that the likelihood
of things being distorted and used against a politician is the greatest concern of all to most politicians.

Given this concern, several participants were more forthcoming than others in their response to this question. One participant stated that while personally having no problems with transparency, there are times when it is not appropriate For instance, during times of commercial confidence or national security issues, politicians need to work in a closed atmosphere.

One participant highlighted the point that:

“If a business wants a bereft government on a project, it will share confidential information that should remain confidential. If Cabinet is planning to engage in a war, then it shouldn’t be having those meetings broadcast – the consequences would be counted in lives. The Tzar of Russia at one stage was getting better intelligence about troop dispositions during the Crimean War from The Times newspaper than his own intelligence services. Full transparency is a folly in the same way full discretion is.”

Another respondent stated that political power is hard to achieve, and that every politician prefers to be in government. The respondent suggested that operating in open and transparent environments would not produce the results that governments and oppositions desire. Furthermore, the respondent went on to suggest that being open and transparent is subjective, and that what looks good from an opposition perspective can be an annoyance when in government. As an example, the respondent highlighted that the new government in their state had an approach of open and accountable that was significantly different to what they argued for in opposition.

In conclusion, one participant stated that:

“Progressive politicians support transparency and openness, but there will always be limits. In particular, Cabinet [discussion and] processes need to be kept confidential.”
7.3.16 Should politicians’ performance be measured by the constituency?

In relation to this question, the majority of participants appeared to either agree or strongly agree, while several remained neutral or disagreed. The majority of participants replied that they considered they were already being measured by constituents on a daily basis, as they have to face re-elections every three to four years depending on the jurisdiction. One participant commented that regular performance reviews are a nice sentiment but difficult to quantify.

As discussed previously, performances are measured differently by the varied political constituencies, each with its own unique subjectiveness and inconsistencies. However, most participants agreed that elections seem to measure politicians’ performances to some degree, but also noted that it would be better if the elections focused on being the regional or local member rather than on the leader. As one respondent put it:

“We may not always like the decision, but the voters are always right.”

7.3.17 Do politicians have an obligation to all constituents, or only those who voted for them?

Participants were asked to give their opinion as to whether politicians had an obligation to all constituents or only those who voted them in. The majority of responses were short and sharp, specifying that the obligation includes all constituents. Several of the participants elaborated by stating that they did not know who had voted for them; therefore, the common approach are to simply respond to all constituents. The common refrain includes a belief that once elected, members of all jurisdictions (local, state and federal) have an obligation to represent and help all constituents.

However, several participants also stated that while they agree that politicians should represent all constituents, that obligation to the whole electorate does not mean you have to take on the causes of every single constituent. Finally, one politician commented that:

“It’s a balance. I was elected by the people who voted Labor, so I think they can reasonably expect certain actions from me on issues like equal opportunity, industrial relations, economic policy founded in job creation, etc. I cannot publicly represent
two competing views at the same time. We have an obligation to assist all constituents, but not to agree with them.”

7.3.18 Are constituents who voted for me more important than those who didn’t?

Continuing on from the previous question, the majority of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, and the comments made reflected those in the previous question. Overall, most participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the question. Comments include:

“I don't know who voted for me.”

“It's chicken and egg. If we share values, they will see more effort towards their causes. In any case, we have a secret ballot, so who knows who voted for me?”

“I am representing the people in parliament that voted for me to be their representative. However, that doesn't preclude me from assisting others who reside within my electorate.”

One participant felt a stronger loyalty to voting constituents because they were elected by Labor voters as a Labor Party candidate in a ballot where constituents overwhelmingly vote above the line for their team:

“Yes I feel a stronger obligation to them. That said, I will support any worthy cause or anyone in difficulty seeking my assistance.”

In contrast, taking a pragmatic stance, another participant stated that:

“I would be surprised if there is much agreement with this proposition. Those who did not vote for me are at least as important as those who didn’t and from a self-interested standpoint possibly more. They are the ones I need to vote for me next time.”
7.3.19 If an individual politician’s performance was made public to the electorate and voters in general on a regular basis, would it affect the way in which you would undertake your electoral duties?

While some participants believed publicizing the performance of an individual politician would affect how they undertake their political duties. Conversely, other participants replied that regular disclosure of their individual performance would not affect their current performance. Several stated that they already behave as if their performance is open to the public, and cited various methods to promote what they do to both constituents and other stakeholders on a regular basis. These methods include using Hansard, Facebook, Twitter, press releases, and interviews and face-to-face communications.

One participant, highlighting that given the nature of the politician’s work, including their position within the parliamentary and party system, long hours, and above-average travel, if such information was released it would affect their performance, answered:

“Most probably not, however; think about [the then Federal Opposition Leader] Tony Abbott, who by most measures is incredibly successful [as a politician], but how easy is it for a constituent to get in to see him?”

7.3.20 Would the individual perform better as a politician if their performance was subject to public monitoring?

Overall, the majority of participants disagreed with this question. However, a number of participants elected to remain neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing that their performance would be affected if it was subject to public scrutiny. Comments generally reflect those made in the previous question.

Several participants commented that the constant monitoring by the media already plays an important part in the way they presently perform. One noted that they are constantly the subject of public monitoring, while another remarked that:

“No. This would mean I am manipulative and superficial. Much of my work is done on an individual basis; people's individual concerns do not make the media but are
dealt with more privately. If I’m not motivated to work publicly and privately for the people I represent, I need to look for another job.”

Several other participants believed that there is already a degree of superficial public monitoring by the media, and that it would be regrettable to have MPs ignoring important issues in their electorate or parliament just to focus on:

“… getting their numbers up in Hansard, or meeting some mysterious quota for writing media releases.”

Overall, participants agreed that they are already being publicly scrutinized, which they believed is the nature of democracy. One participant commented that it is elitist and anti-democratic in the extreme to think that an independent measure of performance is better than the multi-faceted decision-making process taken by voters each election. In conclusion, one participant who appeared frustrated by the question and perhaps missed its point commented that:

“It is already! What more do you suggest; Webcam at home?”

7.4 Summary of Chapter 7

In relation to defining and identifying individual performance, the participants conceded that the main indicators of performance generally revolve around meeting personal and organizational goals and objectives; making a positive difference to constituents’ lives; and achieving positive outcomes for individuals, groups or things that are not in a position to achieve those outcomes for themselves. Defining performance also involves providing a stable political environment in which positive change can occur without causing social dislocation to society as a whole. However, participants noted that political measurements do not match the traditional roles of performance measurement in the business environment, which is geared more toward the notion of an input/output-based measurement system; in turn measured and then judged on the amount of tangible objects or services produced within resource, time and financial parameters.
Performance for the individual politician also includes the ability to anticipate and manage change for the benefit of the largest part of the community while being a team player within their political party. Standing up for what you believe in is seen as an important measure of performance, both as a local member and parliamentarian. Participants believed that political KPIs include being honest to your principles while also being accountable and honest to your constituents – an essential element for all politicians who wish to be respected. Furthermore, constituent, stakeholder and general public satisfaction feedback is an important method or outcome when attempting to measure an individual’s or party’s performance in general.

Participants further argued that political performance is largely subject to personal measurement, and at best is subjective in nature, guided by feedback from constituents, stakeholders and other politicians. Participants further noted that individual performance differs greatly, depending on whether the politician is in government or opposition. It was agreed that performance in opposition does not carry the same amount of responsibility and accountability that performance carries when the politician is a member in government.

In relation to questions concerning personal beliefs and values, participants overwhelmingly agreed that personal beliefs and values are important as a politician. Many comments made concerning how politicians negotiate the conflict between personal and party beliefs and values, especially where policies or actions being developed and initiated may not always be in the best interests of the public, were ambiguous and tended to include references and discussion around what could be termed ‘motherhood statements’.

While believing that personal beliefs and values are essential when developing policies or initiating action on behalf of the greater constituency, the majority of participants noted that it is helpful to have a varied life experience, and essential to have a thick skin as well as a patient and persistent disposition, which allows the politician to perform despite the constant attacks and negative image that often comes from both the media and constituency. Furthermore, a series of comments made throughout the surveys appear to highlight the constant state of ambiguity and ambivalence between politicians and media, which in turn feed the politicians’ perceptions of media bias.

When asked a series of questions designed to assist in answering why it is difficult for constituents to measure the performance of individual politicians, participants found it difficult to articulate a common response. The feedback was mixed, with some supporting
and others disagreeing with the assertion. In essence, both those participants that agreed and disagreed argued that many factors affecting the political environment have a differing impact on community and stakeholder perceptions. One group of participants argued that a general decrease in trust of all institutions and political bodies revolves around the perceived lack of political commitment in community values, a general decay in trust of politicians within the community, and growing community distrust in previously trusted political and business institutions. This point was further highlighted by the argument that this lack of confidence is due to a perceived lack of commitment by stakeholders and constituents to the way decisions are made by politicians and the parliament, as reinforced by the belief that politicians generally try to tell people what they want to hear.

Furthermore, when answering the question as to what makes the measurement of a politician’s performance difficult, a combination of factors was presented. A substantial number of responses indicated that a large number of politicians believe that constituents do not trust them. Another comment suggested that constant monitoring by the media, often inaccurate and biased, makes it difficult for outsiders with little direct political knowledge or political education to make any accurate assessment of what is actually happening.

Overall, most politicians surveyed stated that the current system of political elections every three of four years is the correct mechanism to ensure the voting public can express their satisfaction, or lack thereof, with an individual politician’s performance.
CHAPTER 8: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS OF PAST AND PRESENT POLITICIANS

8.1 Introduction

The survey results revealed that politicians recognize performance in others and in them in different ways. Politicians’ perceptions of performance are sometimes diametrically opposed to the way constituents and stakeholders view their performance. However, this may not be intentional, as there is no evidence in the survey data to indicate that politicians set out to deliberately create ambiguous or closed working environments. Rather, the political environment itself lends politicians the ability to make use of situations which tended to perpetuate and cloak individual actions in a veil of secrecy and ambiguity. Like most people, politicians take advantage of such situations, as it allows them room to manoeuvre in complex and competitive environments. However, this in turn creates another set of problems for politicians, who are obliged to meet the needs of the community and electorate while finding some level of congruency among the competing interests of other politicians, constituents and stakeholders alike.

Successful congruency is often limited, which only contributes further to greater mistrust and lack of satisfaction on the part of constituents and stakeholders, who feel let down by the political system and its agents. In turn, this further contributes to a perception held by the individual constituent or stakeholder that their personal beliefs, values and needs are being ignored by both the politician and political parties. As a result, this lack of alignment between the participants, and the inability for all actors in the political process to, in effect, gain satisfaction and read from the same ‘page’, results in additional layers of ambiguity, secrecy and conflict between the actors involved. These additional layers make it difficult for constituents and stakeholders to recognize how individual politicians define and judge individual political performance, and how politicians negotiate the conflict between personal and party beliefs and party values.

In Chapter 7, participants conceded that the main indicators of performance generally revolve around:

- meeting personal and organizational goals and objectives
• making a positive difference to constituents’ lives
• achieving positive outcomes for individuals or groups that are not in a position to achieve themselves.

Survey responses identified that these indicators do not match the traditional role of performance measurement in the business environment, which is geared toward the notion of an input/output-based measurement system.

Performance for the individual politician includes the ability to anticipate and manage change for the benefit of the larger community, while being a team player within their political party. Standing up for what you believe in is also seen as an important measure of performance, both as a local member and parliamentarian. Participants surveyed reported that political KPIs include being honest to your principles while at the same time being accountable and honest to your constituents. Further observations revealed that political performance is largely subjective in nature, guided by feedback from constituents, stakeholders and other politicians. In addition, performance differs greatly, depending on whether the politician is in government or opposition – performance in opposition does not carry the same amount of responsibility and accountability that being in government does.

Participants stated that the relationships between politicians and the media are generally based on ambiguity and ambivalence, due in part to both parties relying on each other. That is, politicians rely on the media to get their message out in a way that provides the politician with the greatest amount of credibility in the public eye. Conversely, the media need information and potential press coverage from the politician to generate public interest, often to the detriment of the politician. However, if the information required by the media is not positive, it is unlikely that the politician will provide it, and will instead take steps to keep it confidential through use of government policies and procedures. As a result, a never-ending circle of needs is created between the politician and media, often dictated by what is best for each respective party, but rarely meeting those needs.

Across a series of questions that asked individual politicians why it is difficult for constituents and stakeholders to measure the performance of individual politicians, participants found it difficult to articulate a common response, and comments made were mixed, with some supporting the question while others disagreed. In essence, the participants argued that many factors affect the political environment, which in turn impacts on community and stakeholder perceptions. It was further contended that the perceived general decrease in
trust of all institutions and political bodies by the community is due in part to a lack of political commitment to community values.

Furthermore, it was felt that this perceived loss of confidence in the political system is due to a lack of commitment by politicians, in the way decisions are made by politicians and the parliament, combined with long-held perceptions by constituents that politicians generally only tell people what they want to hear. Another reason given by participants for the distrust relates to the constant monitoring of politicians by the media. They argued that this constant reporting, often inaccurate and biased, generally presents a negative view of politicians and political institutions. However, the majority of politicians surveyed stated that the current system of political elections every three or four years is the correct mechanism to ensure the voting public can express their satisfaction, or lack thereof, with an individual politician’s and government’s performance.

In chapter 8 an analysis will be made of the material gained from semi-structured interviews conducted with present and former politicians from state, federal, Territory and local governments. The analysis will add to our understanding of the issues surrounding the measurement of an individual politician’s performance. However, it must be noted that during the interview/survey process it was found that questions 13 and 18 appeared to confuse those questioned as they were similar to questions previously asked. Therefore, those questions were omitted from the analysis of data collected.

8.2 How do individual politicians define their political performance?

Overall, the 10 former and present politicians interviewed found it difficult to come to a consensus as to what defines political performance; further reinforcing the ambiguous nature of measuring an individual politician’s performance. One point of agreement is using political performance as a tool to successfully bring about a better measurement of a politician’s performance to the satisfaction of all stakeholders, with one respondent stating that:

“Ultimately, political performance is defined by delivering results for the community.”

Other suggestions included performance being defined by the individual’s quest for and obtaining of power within the party structure. For some, performance is about what they can
do for their constituents and the community, even if their political actions are contrary to what the constituents and stakeholders expect or support. Other politicians addressed the question from a technician’s perspective. For them, performance centres on mastering technology and using it to target strategic and tactical political areas, and other areas of concern. Compromise is also a big indicator in defining performance for some of the interviewees. All agreed that nothing in politics can be seen in black or white. As a result of this statement, it can be argued that everyone has their own interpretation on the outcomes of the politician’s actions.

Another noteworthy part of performance in politics involves not only control of the party and government, but total control of the pre-selection process. One interviewee noted that:

“One of the reasons for political performance is not only control of the party, but for total control of the pre-selection process. Good people have stood, they’ve not been pre-selected … There’s sameness between them all. So they get a job with a politician, or with a political party, that builds up allegiances, builds up debts and obligations, and such people will never be independent; they will do what they’re told to do.”

According to the interviewee potential candidates start their political careers by usually being employed by a politician or political party building up allegiances and obligations to others in positions of authority within the organisation. This type of politician will never be independent and will always, within reason, do what they are told.

While some participants stated that beliefs and values generally have minor roles to play in politics, on a personal level, these same participants perceived those beliefs and values as the most important aspect as to why they became and remained politicians; even if having to live up to these beliefs and values proves difficult at times. Participants’ further proposed that all stakeholders in the political process define political performance according to their own personal set of beliefs and values. As a result, constituents seek out politicians who reflect their own set of personal beliefs and values. In a rare display of consensus, each participant agreed that positive political performance can be defined as obtaining power and control over those around you; obtaining and staying in government for as long as possible; and ensuring that the individual politician and party are re-elected at each election.
8.3 Is trust important for politicians?

In reply to this question, one former MP confirmed that he would not trust any politician unless they gave him a good reason to. Another stated that there is a dichotomy at large here:

“People often say, ‘oh my own member – he’s not a bad bloke’, but the very same people state that politicians in general are no damn good. You can’t trust any of them.”

Another former MP and local government councillor/former mayor noted that once you are in a position of authority, people need to be able to look to you personally or look to your government, or to your organization, as being consistent, dependable, reliable and honest.

The majority of participants strongly agreed that the issue of trust permeates all of society; they contended that you expect trust between your family, your husband and wife – people need to be able to rely on you. Participants noted that:

“… if you have a view which is contrary to the view of your constituents, or what you think your constituents want, you need to be prepared to argue it. And if your arguments are good, you can probably persuade your constituents that you’re right. And if they get to know you, they’ll trust you, if you’re worth trusting …”

“If you know what you believe in, what your values are, what your principles are; if you have strong values and principles and a moral compass if you like, it’s very easy to determine what your own analysis of things and what your views are on them.”

“Ultimately it is … about integrity; where you need that integrity to be able to have that element of trust with the community, as well as also with council and the administration as well, and that also comes back to my earlier point where at times there are decisions made that people may not necessarily agree with, but you need that integrity to be able to say ‘well this is why we’ve done what we’ve done’; and ultimately it’s that integrity where even if someone may disagree with a specific decision, they will at least understand that you do have that integrity, that trust and that accountability to be able justify those outcomes.”

8.4 Is political performance easy to define?

Participants in the main tended to agree that the definition of performance is difficult to put into simple words; for example:

“Performance is hard to define, but I know it when I see it.”

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However, it was commonly agreed that the most accurate definition of political performance is the successful delivery of results to constituents and stakeholders. Yet participants also commonly stated that the political definition of performance is ambiguous in itself, when generally it depends on what actions you are measuring and the results you are seeking. In effect, performance is whatever you want it to be:

“… it depends on what and how you're measuring it … If I measure it against what I define as success or what the organization defines as success, okay; so if it’s me, then obviously you’ve got a number of things you want to personally achieve. A broad statement there would be you want to leave a place better than you found it, in whatever area it may be.”

For some, defining political performance was difficult. Yet for others who viewed the environment from a technical or business outcomes-based performance perspective, it was easy. Recognizing the subjective nature of the question, one individual former politician argued that:

“Everyone defines political performance according to their own personal set of beliefs and values. Voters will seek out potential political representatives who reflect their own set of personal beliefs and values. In turn, the candidate is then elected and represents the constituents from that electorate in parliament.”

Another participant highlighted the ambiguous nature of measuring performance, commenting that:

“It's [performance] very hard to define. You've got to see what service a politician gives to his or her electorate … what they can contribute in parliament …”

The same participant further noted that defining political performance and thus being able to measure whether that performance has been successful, includes having total control of all aspects of the political processes in place. For this participant, the performance measurement process should include not only control of the party, but total control of the pre-selection process:
“…You can’t measure whether somebody becomes a minister or not, because in today’s world, prime ministers seem to want people to think the same way they do.”

A number of participants argued that being subjected to the power, control and strong will of a prime minister had fulfilled their individual needs and allowed them the room to operate in public and political environments without having to accept responsibility or accountability for actions undertaken in the Cabinet setting. For these politicians, a strong-willed prime minister equates to strong leadership and is essential to their perception of good political performance; even if this means supporting a leader who exercises their personal will or the will of factions within the party, and institutes policies that lack a broad level of constituent satisfaction and support. However, one participant disagreed with these views and stated that:

“A strong-willed prime minister who lacks the ability to seek and gain consensus amongst his ministers and backbench; who is narrow in political intellect; does not confer or seek other opinions; is selective in who he or she seeks advice and guidance from, is not strong and secure, and is not worthy of being a leader of the nation.”

For another participant, the previous opinion highlighted what he believed to be fundamentally wrong with contemporary Australian politics. They argued that this type of behaviour generally highlights the leader’s inability to adopt a wide perspective of the world around them, which in turn leads to poor analytical and leadership skills, and even poorer levels of performance in the job.

Several participants noted that such poor and weak leadership generally leads to the ‘demonization’ of other colleagues and peers who do not agree with them. This has the effect of displaying flaws in the leader’s character, highlighted by the disregard of the wishes and concerns of colleagues, constituents and stakeholders within the electorate and community at large even if evidence exists to the contrary that the policy or strategy being pursued by the leader is damaging to both the leader and community. Other participants stated that this type of prime minister represents a failure as a leader and political performer, and further demonstrates an inability to add value to the fabric of Australian society as a
whole. Members of different political parties and jurisdictions interviewed noted that this state of affairs is not confined to one political party alone. One respondent noted that:

“Of the four or five state and federal pre-selections or more in Victoria (Australia) in the last few years, every position has been filled by a ‘party apparatchik’ rather than the best candidate or those supported at a grassroots level.”

As previously discussed, individual performance for politicians generally involves building support both internally and externally, where the prospective candidate builds up allegiances, debts and obligations, but more importantly, recognition and a reputation for being a team player who will comply with the party power brokers, stakeholders and party management. However, these types of relationships between individuals generally encourage and create a particular type of performance more suited toward a particular faction or group within the organization, often in conflict with the best interests of the party or electorate. One participant noted that once having been selected to represent your party, there is an obligation for you not to ‘rock the boat’ and support your fellow colleagues, even if this means going against your own personal beliefs and values:

“… if I was trying to select people … I’d be looking at who’s capable of doing the job and won’t let you down or you know has got the best chances at that. We all make mistakes, we’re always going to have good days and bad days … people you can work with, people that will keep you informed, people that are capable of doing the job regardless of whether you like them or not. Yeah, well that’s right, I mean any side of politics and any political party is made up of, you know, it’s a collegiate system; sometimes you’re not beholden necessarily to … you know you work alongside your colleagues; they’re not necessarily your boss or subordinate, but there’s certain expectations there of how you work together as a group, as a party, for the betterment of government.”

The aforementioned behaviour often creates animosity and conflict between the respective groups. In politics, polarization is the divergence of political attitudes to ideological extremes; it also refers to the divergence from public opinion as a whole, or to divergence within a particular sub-set or group (i.e. party elites) (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; DiMaggio, Evans and Bryson 1996). When polarization occurs in predominately two-party systems, like Australia, moderate voices often lose power and influence (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008;
Baldassarri and Gelman 2008). Over time this in-fighting and lack of support for individual politicians and supporters both in and outside the party creates a division of distrust evident to both constituents and stakeholders alike. This division generally leads to: (1) wholesale change at elections by the general voting community; and/or (2) leadership spills within the parliamentary party as an attempt to display party and parliamentary unity to constituents and stakeholders. To counter this negative image, it is important for both individual politicians and the party to be seen as performing positively, by removing the conflict and regaining and/or increasing those lost levels of trust in the community (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Baldassarri and Gelman 2008). From a politician’s perspective, several participants noted that political performance is generally defined as successfully bringing about environmental change to the satisfaction of all stakeholders; the successful delivery of election promises and commitments, combined with good communication and proactive actions.

One participant defined performance by stating that it “depended on what you were measuring”. In turn, it could be argued that measuring performance in a political sense further contributes to the ambiguous environment in which the politician operates. For outsiders and politicians alike, the difficulty in defining and measuring political performance is made more difficult by the fact that there are often huge differences and conflicts between constituents’ needs, beliefs, values members of different political parties and jurisdictions interviewed and political views, including fellow political party members. As a result, given this general lack of congruency of beliefs, values and conflicting needs, it is understandable that the individual politician is going to find it difficult to define what is good or bad performance, as ‘one size’ does not fit all situations. Taking this response at the start of the paragraph into account, it is understandable that politicians find it hard to define what constitutes performance, and as a result, may unknowingly operate in an ambiguous environment where the issues of accountability and responsibility are blurred by the constantly changing political circumstances and individual constituent’s lack of inside political knowledge.

Based on respondents’ comments in general, it could be argued that operating in ambivalent environments creates opportunities for ambiguity. That is, this context may play a role in resolving ambiguity. Alesina and Cukierman (1987) found that politicians generally have two motives: (1) they wish to hold office as long as possible; and (2) wish to implement their preferred policies. Thus they face a trade-off between the policies which maximize their
choices of re-election and their most preferred policies (or the policies most preferred by the constituency which they represent). Furthermore, such incumbents have the incentive to choose procedures which make it more difficult for constituents and stakeholders to pinpoint their preferences with absolute precision. Thus, politicians may prefer to be ambiguous and hide, to a certain extent, their true preferences (Alesina and Cukierman 1987).

Billig et al. (1988) argued that just as with the politics and philosophies that shape the political environment (and being shaped by it), common sense also contains conflicting and opposing themes or values. For example,

“People should be merciful, and that justice should be dealt as well as being seen to have been dealt.”

Billig et al. (1988) further contended that individual and collective deliberations are frequently marked by the changing nuances and ‘interpretative repertoires’. As an example, Billig (1989) highlighted the proposition that ambivalence is a special case generated in situations where a speaker seeks both identification and contradiction with the audience.

Furthermore, the interviewed politicians noted that they need to be in a position that allows them the ability to step back and seek other opinions and feedback before making a decision, even if that feedback goes against their own personal beliefs and values. One respondent stated:

“How do you rate performance there? I guess your performance is not necessarily whether you’ve made the right or wrong decision. It’s I suppose what you have done in forming a view [that’s] fair, reasonable, open, listening, and representing people … That’s how I’d probably rate performance … You’ve done the best you can in terms of trying to listen, take in all submissions, consult with the community, be accountable for your decision-making, and you know at the end of the day, elected representatives are there to make decisions. You can’t continually consult or sit on the fence, or whatever. You know there comes a time when you have to move from [the] consultation phase to decision-making phase and I’ve … you know, certainly some of my experiences with elected representatives [have been] some have had trouble moving from that consultation to the decision-making [phase]. At the end of the day, you’re there to make decisions.”

For several respondents, political performance is not necessarily whether you have made the right or wrong decision; good performance is about the actions you have undertaken to arrive at that outcome. Respondents went on to say that the most important point is that the
outcome must be seen as fair and reasonable, regardless of any constituent or stakeholder argument that the decision’s outcome was right or wrong. When representing the interests of constituents and stakeholders, participants believed that the principles of openness, active listening and honesty are the most important characteristics of a politician’s performance. The issue of whether the outcome is right or wrong is always going to be subjective and open to argument between political parties, politicians, constituents and stakeholders with conflicting opinions and belief systems. For any individual politician, the measure of successful performance is to ensure they complete as many key goals or tasks on their personal ‘to-do’ list as possible. As one respondent stated:

“Individual politicians and political parties make a number of election commitments; some personal, some local election commitments, others state or federal wide ones; so the measure of performance in my mind, is to successfully deliver those for the benefit of the community as promised [within that three or four year electoral period].”

8.5 How do politicians measure performance in a political environment?

When attempting to define measuring performance in a political environment, participants appeared to be at odds with each other and even contradicted themselves. On one hand, a former senior politician rejected the idea of a formal performance regime, believing it would be too difficult to get consensus, as people’s beliefs and values are widely different. Yet conversely, the same participant noted that one formal method could involve measuring the individual politician’s ability to maintain a consistency in their approach to representing their constituents both as a local member and parliamentarian:

“I think it [measuring a politician’s performance] would be very difficult because people’s beliefs and values are different. Sometimes … you can test whether someone is genuine by consistency, are they ever prepared to stand against their party on a matter of conscience. You can’t measure a politician by the number of questions they ask, or by the length of their speeches, because very often, people ask questions because ministers ask them to ask questions, and write them out for them.”

A politician could be assessed as having performed if they have consistently exhibited altruistic principles in parliament and the media over time. A politician’s performance also
includes the ability to oppose their party’s stance on a matter of conscience. One participant noted former Liberal Federal Politician Petro Georgiou as an example of an individual principled politician who was frequently in disagreement on issues of immigration and citizenship with the prime minister and the Cabinet of the time.

One participant noted that another method of measuring performance involves monitoring the activity levels and attention that individual politicians pay to debates on various constituent and stakeholder concerns. In addition, issues of poor performance can be identified and evidenced by the fact that some politicians only attend or sit in parliament on an occasional basis. In a former politician’s opinion, some politicians hardly ever went into the parliamentary building, stating that:

“Well, they [the politicians] might be in Canberra. They might be in their offices, and their offices are large. As one new Member of Parliament said to me, his offices were bigger than his house.”

Citing architecture as a reason for some of Australia’s federal politicians’ lack of performance, this remark highlights the immense scale of Australia’s Parliament House in Canberra, allowing parliamentarians an opportunity to hide from outside political and non-political scrutiny. Unlike the original (temporary) Parliament House, which was considerably smaller and more intimate, the current House fails to create a sense of community and closer relations between all inhabitants. As a smaller structure, the former House enabled closer relationships to be developed between politicians, staff, public servants, media and visitors alike, which in turn was reflected in the quality and amount of information made available to constituents, stakeholders and the community alike. Weller (2010) argued that politicians, in their quest for increased secrecy and isolation from accountability and responsibility, have created further buffers in the larger Parliament House between themselves and the outside world. The participant further contended:

“Ministerial staff now provided the buffer between the ministers and the world outside to whatever degree they choose. The geography of the new Parliament House collected the ministers in their own wing, away from the House of Representatives and Senate colleagues.”
One participant opined that some (not all) politicians only went into the parliamentary chambers often enough to ensure they got their pay, or at question time when a particular debate interested them. Furthermore, a lot of politicians generally ignore parliamentary attendance for the rest of the sitting period. The same participant further argued that you cannot accurately measure a politician by the number of questions they ask, or by the length of their speeches, because individual politicians often ask questions as a result of having been probed to ask them (commonly referred to as a ‘Dorothy Dix question’). Furthermore, ministers will often write the questions they want their politicians to ask prior to the sitting; thereby creating a false impression to outsiders that the politician’s question and the minister’s response are examples of the respective politicians ‘performing on their constituents behalf’ as opposed to a ‘choreographic display or performance by both.

For constituents and stakeholders to effectively measure the performance of individual politicians, they need to have a full and unbiased view of all parliamentarians, particularly on important matters. In reality, given the secrecy in which politicians operate, the ability to observe is not possible or often done by constituents, the media and other stakeholders. Biased and destabilizing partisanship activity has long involved the selective use of media coverage of comments made on or off the record by members of opposition parties and even members of the politician’s own party, as a method to promote or destroy policies and activities that may or may not have a useful purpose in promoting the antagonist’s personal or factional agenda. One participant commented:

“You can’t measure a politician by the number of questions they ask, or by the length of their speeches, because very often, people ask questions because ministers ask them to ask questions, and write them out for them … I had people in my time wanting to televise the parliament, and I was starting to lose the debate in cabinet, so I reversed tack and said, ‘Right, we’ll televise parliament, but, on one condition, and this is absolutely not negotiable; there will be a wide-angle lens, the lens will show the whole parliament, it will show who is there, who is not there, who is asleep, who is paying attention, and will not just focus on the speaker. And in addition to that, all the microphones will be turned on all the time, so if people interject rudely or uncouthly, it will go over the air and people will know who it is and they will be able to see you doing it.’ They wouldn’t have a bar of it.”

Drawing on fundraising as one method of measuring an individual politician’s performance, politicians opposed to the practice of fundraising argued that having devoted time to fundraise effectively prohibits the politician from doing the job they were elected to do,
namely performing the duties of a local member and parliamentarian. Politicians, who agree with the practice of fundraising, stated that fundraising is an essential action for politicians, especially in non-Labor parties where they are not supported by party political bodies such as unions or associations of like-minded people that generate funds directly from a wide range of individual and institutional supporters. Ultimately, supporters of this practice argued that organizational leaders and senior politicians need to promote and measure the performance of fundraising by individual politicians and branches as a way to mould an efficient and effective financial political body capable of gaining and/or remaining in power.

Participants suggested that another method used to measure the performance of an MP involves measuring the state and strength of the party organization in the politician’s electorate. If the politician is the incumbent, then measuring their performance could be achieved by measuring levels of party membership in the electorate branches, the state of the finances kept by the respective state and federal electoral councils, and constituent and media comments including media coverage about the local member. However, another participant argued that if the party does not have an MP in place in that seat, then it is very difficult for the party branches and constituents to assess that particular candidate’s performance. From a political perspective, the participant argued that if it is a new MP, the party, party branches, constituents and stakeholders cannot assess or are unable to measure the performance of that MP in an immediate sense, because there is no baseline or history to benchmark against. Participants noted that it takes time, but ultimately the level of performance can be measured over the electorate cycle by assessing the outcomes produced by individual politicians in the electorate, and measuring them against the overall success or failure of the party within the entire political system. As one respondent put it:

“The first criterion [for assessing performance in the electorate] … is performance, based on their breadth of contact with their local constituency. The other thing that you can measure it by, that is the performance of an MP, you can measure it by the state of the organization in their electorate … If it’s a new MP, you can’t measure it right at the beginning because it takes a little bit of time, but you can measure it over an electorate cycle as to the effectiveness of what’s happening on the ground through the health of the party organization in that area. That’s at an electorate sense; in a parliamentary sense it’s easy to measure because you can look at ways in which those MPs, regardless of whether they are in government or not, contribute to the parliamentary process in terms of their involvement, their engagement, their effectiveness of prosecuting the case in the public domain …”
Another participant believed that performance can be measured via the successful delivery of their election promises and commitments, utilizing good communication skills and proactively talking to constituents and stakeholders face-to-face on a regular basis. However, the same participant highlighted that it all depends on what outcomes or results constituents and stakeholders are measuring. That is, individual politician needs to know what needs measuring and what does not. However, given the differences and conflict between various constituents’ needs, beliefs, values and political views, the participant argued that it is difficult to know how to define performance, and further, what constitutes good or bad performance. Operating in a conflicting environment creates opportunities for secrecy and ambiguity; therefore, in their opinion it is difficult to manage performance:

“The individual politician needs to be willing to step back and seek other opinions and feedback before making a decision, even if that means going against your personal beliefs and values … your performance and the outcome may not necessarily decide whether you’ve made the right or wrong decision … but [as] previously mentioned, the outcome will be based on what you have done in forming the view, and deciding what was fair by being reasonable, open and actively listening to other’s needs when representing people.”

8.6 Are beliefs and values important in politics?

Overall, this was an emotive and conflicting area, where one politician appeared to be somewhat blasé by saying that it is a really easy question to answer, while another took on a more cynical and world-weary perspective, arguing that beliefs and values play no part at all in politics. In-between views revealed that this question needs to be addressed according to the ambiguous term ‘it depends’, as there are unlimited factors in relation to beliefs and values that impact on the decisions made, whether in government or opposition.

One highly relevant point made by a current government member and another former councillor was that in theory politicians represent a cross-section of the community and make decisions on behalf of the entire community, including being accountable and accessible to the community, and ideally ensuring all points of view are represented. The problem for individual politicians in a decision-making role is that decisions made based on their own belief system may not necessarily be delivering the best for the community. Therefore, politicians need to be open-minded and willing to do things contrary to their personal beliefs.
or to the beliefs and interests of the party, if the right or correct decision is on behalf of constituents and the voting public as a whole.

One former politician initially became a local government councillor, to change the system he believed was inequitable based on his own set of beliefs and values. For this politician, being charged financially for infrastructure already funded out of the general taxation pool of funds (i.e. being ‘hit in the hip pocket’) proved to be a good incentive to change the system. The result of the councillor’s actions ultimately proved beneficial to all subsequent constituents and stakeholders in that electoral area:

“Yes, personal beliefs and values important. I’d got involved with council, going down to council chambers to try to get what I felt was some justice not just for myself but for other people in the Crescent, and got to know the system, and thought ‘well, you can do something … if there’s a machinery to do it, if people will take it up’.”

However, this opinion contrasted with the views of others interviewed, who believed that politics and politicians are about power and control – personal beliefs and values do not feature in the equation. As one respondent confirmed:

“Beliefs and values have very little roles [in politics]. Of course all politicians will deny that, absolutely.”

Furthermore, while personal beliefs and values are important for some, the party’s expectations and needs generally influence the individual politician’s thoughts and actions, and their desire to continue as a politician. In turn, this impacts on all or on those where personal beliefs and values aren’t as important. One participant believed that the party takes precedence when the individual is successful, and that it is the individual’s problem if they are not successful:

“When I first got in, one guy said to me – and this guy is an older member of parliament, he knew my father-in-law – he said, ‘Now remember this, you blokes, you’ve got ideas and you want things done, but’ he said, ‘remember you can’t be in parliament without being in parliament’.”
While some participants acknowledged the importance of personal beliefs and values, issues of pre-selection and then re-election are always at the forefront in the thinking of any politician. The expectations, needs and wants of constituents and stakeholders including branch members influence politicians’ thoughts and actions. But the issue of re-election commences from the moment individual politicians are elected to parliament, and for some, their biggest concerns become their own party members. For example:

“Beliefs and values are very essential. Sometimes it’s very hard, you don’t know because … for instance, there are certain [people in political party] branches that said, ‘we’ve got to be tougher, we’ve got to be tougher. You’ve got to get in and you’ve got to squeeze that … [parliamentary party leader’s name].’ We’re not even talking about the opposition; we’re talking about people in your own party. I was the member for … it was bigger then. I was the member for the assembly for this area, and a bloke called … was the upper house member and … was the other upper house member. There were two members of the upper house and one for the lower, and I remember the thing was, he said, ‘you buggers, the three of you, you’ve got to get tough with bloody [the leader of the government], he’s too soft and conciliatory’ … you’d always get this at a branch meeting, done in a friendly manner. They didn’t hit you over the head, but you knew. And that’s what made it difficult for some politicians – they wanted to do the right thing, but they knew they may lose pre-selection in their own branch if they didn’t … as a result, the [different factions in the party] got out of control.”

8.7 How do politicians negotiate the conflict between personal and party beliefs and values?

When asked if a politician should do whatever they think is right for constituents, even if in doing so it conflicts with party values and factions within the party, all participants agreed. However, participants included the rider that politicians need to be able to justify their decision to all stakeholders and most importantly their constituents. Participants’ believed that the worst thing a politician can do is assume that constituents and stakeholders are not able to see whether the results are good or bad, and treat voters as fools. One participant raised the point that in politics, at one time or another, there is often conflict in policy and conflict in personalities, which invariably creates conflict between what is good for a select group and the good of the greater community. Furthermore, given the general levels of complexity, conflict, secrecy and ambiguity, there is the potential for conflict of interest or personal corruption through bribery, coercion or personal gain over matters that involve community representation.
This was highlighted by one participant who gave the following example:

“The member for ... a long-standing member of parliament, must've been in parliament for 25-30 years ... ... He [Tom – not his real name] said, ‘We have [the company] which makes ... and ... it makes agricultural parts’. He said, ‘A lot of people are employed there, it's a big industry’ ... He wanted the absolute banning of [a certain technology by a competing company] which the whole world was taking up at that time. I was on the Public Works Committee. The people who invented [the technology] were not criminals, and most of the [technology] worked better underground ... because they were protected from the sun, and [government service providers] were going to use a lot of [the technology]. Later in the party room, there were about three or four of us, and Tom really got angry with us, he really got angry; and I said, ‘Look, you can't declare [the technology] makers criminals or anything like that. By all means we want to save [the company], but you can't have the government absolutely banning [the technology] in this state when there’s nothing wrong with it’. I said, ‘Well there’s one way to settle this, to help us settle this ... I’m going to ask the [department’s] senior engineers to come here.’ ... I said, ‘Be honest, if there is [a problem with the technology] tell us, so that we know’, and then if there’s something wrong with it, then we would do what [Tom] is saying about banning them. They [the engineers] agreed the new technology was the best for use in Victoria at the time. In some ways I got the feeling he [Tom] may have been compromised by relationships with his constituents and his party [branches] in ... The branches would've been, and the party electorate fundraisers would've probably been, given money by those big businesses up there, and there was a great danger of that stopping and no money to campaign with. In this case, the public good became far more important than, say, the party good ... We felt it had to, because if we'd banned it, we would've looked silly – the state – members of different political parties and jurisdictions interviewed to have banned something that was not produced by criminals or terrorists. These are business people who had invented this and it works. [The politician concerned] He said, ‘Look at me; I could lose my seat here’. [However, he didn’t].”

In this case, the party may have lost considerable funding from the stakeholder involved, and the MP may have lost his seat as a by-product of that withdrawal of funding (which did not eventuate). The participant reinforced the need for principles of honesty, integrity and transparency that constituents expect of their political representatives. This case is a clear example of where the public good was greater than that of the individual politician or party, even if that person was an influential ally. It also highlights the need for individual politicians to exercise their duties in a responsible manner for the good of the community as a whole, and the need for politicians to maintain the highest levels of integrity and ensure no words or actions are undertaken that could contribute to a real or perceived lack of trust, personal integrity and honesty by constituents and stakeholders alike.
In relation to performance, politicians need to be seen to be matching words with actions if they want to be respected. Participants further reinforced this by stating that even the slightest perception of impropriety could be fatal for the politician’s and party’s standing in the community.

However, circumstances faced by individual politicians and political parties are not often so clear-cut. As highlighted by another participant, the situation whereby the government of the day is often confronted by ongoing issues and policies brought in by previous governments generally continues to have an adverse impact on the electorate’s view of both politician and party. Legacy issues and policies for both main sides of politics in Australia are generally bound by legal implications when changes in government occur. Given the acknowledged differences in everybody’s value and belief systems, it is therefore understandable that supporters of the previous regime would be upset when the new parliamentary leader repeals or changes major aspects of the previous government’s achievements. In some cases this has led to the vilification of the parliamentary party leader and the political party concerned. Furthermore, regardless of what the politician feels or believes personally, it is incumbent upon that individual to remedy the situation as they see fit. One participant cited the following example:

“Okay, they might say, ‘Why are they doing that? [Public transport, trains, buses, trams, etc.] are more important than roads, you [need to] be looking more at [improving the public transport system].’ I suppose the majority of people … use the roads, but they most probably use them because they don’t trust public transport … So again, you as a politician and your beliefs, and I suppose really your ability to be able to look at a situation, sum up the situation … So all of these points form part of your personal situational assessment and analysis … and [so would] the circumstances of the day … the other side of politics were very critical of the Kennett days, but you know you’ve got to remind them of the circumstances Kennett was in [after previous governments] had virtually bankrupt[ed] the state, so it didn’t matter what the Kennett Government might have wanted to do when they got in, they were by forced or by choice … chose to focus on financial management. I think you can theorise a bit; again I guess you’ve got to go out and test that, but I would have to guess that if we had a clean, safe, reliable public transport system that ran regularly and, you know, had connection and people getting there, I would think that you would have stand a greater chance of trying to encourage or coerce people onto the train system.”

This participant’s comments highlight that unfavourable situations are often brought about by a previous government’s desire to provide levels of constituent and stakeholder
satisfaction – even though it may create a lasting financial burden once removed from the next government. This in turn creates new issues for the incoming government, whose performance will be graded on its responses and actions to rectify the burdens placed on the community by the previous government’s policies and actions.

As previously discussed, fundraising is another issue that impacts on the politician’s ability to perform which was raised by participants. For several former MPs, the fact that current MPs are expected to contribute to their own as well as other politicians’ election campaigns by raising funds is an abhorrent practice, as it creates an opportunity not only for corruption of the party system from an organizational perspective, but a very real chance that the politician may be personally corrupted. On the other hand, given the tight fiscal conditions faced by most aspiring candidates, one politician and former state party president believed that fundraising is incredibly important and is one activity that can be undertaken in a way that does not compromise the principles of the individual or party. The same participant argued that the party organization needs to set the same fundraising target for all candidates. Furthermore, in ‘strong same-party held seats’ which contain more affluent socioeconomic demographics, the fundraising target needs to be higher than for those in more struggling electorates.

However, not all participants shared the former state president’s point of view. They were willing to accept the practices of the party organizations when it comes to raising funds, even if it is contrary to their own sets of values and beliefs. One former MP reflected that during the dismissal of the Whitlam Labor Government in 1975 and subsequent election of the Fraser Liberal Government in 1976, not all candidates and MPs felt comfortable with the fundraising process unfolding before them. It appeared that given the quickly-moving circumstances of the time, insufficient financial governance processes for the handling of donations received from supporters were in place, and when the respondent had once opened a drawer, there were hundreds and hundreds of dollars in opened envelopes. When enquiring as to the sources of the money therein, the then MP was informed by party officials to shut the drawer and make no further enquiries. This response was due to party rules that MPs were not allowed to know where donations came from. A strong overriding feeling at that time was that this politician’s integrity could and would be called into question at any future parliamentary or Australian Electoral Commission inquiry relating to the sloppy administration of party electoral and election funds, if such an inquiry was instituted.
8.8 What do politicians think about the political educational level of constituents?

Despite the issues of ambivalence and ambiguity previously discussed concerning poor constituent knowledge and relationships with politicians and politics, one former MP believed that Australians generally make a pretty good judgment of those who represent them in parliament. The respondent claimed:

"Constituents know who is shallow and who has depth. While Australians can smell a ‘phony’, often they cannot articulate it."

Other participants argued that there is a lot of constituent apathy toward politics and politicians. Anecdotally, Australian society is seen by other societies as having a habit of ‘cutting down’ people who strive to improve their personal position or whom they view as being ‘above’ their station in life. Several participants highlighted that there is a lot of dialogue in politics about constituents being disengaged and unsophisticated. There is a perceived minority of Australian society that do not seek to improve their knowledge of local, state, federal or international political issues. Yet while there may be a perceived low level of political engagement, respondents contended that the engagement level in Australia is probably higher than in some countries. Regardless, there was general agreement that when political and economic circumstances collide and directly impact on the individual and their immediate dependants, those circumstances have the ability to refocus on the political events that are currently shaping or reshaping their environment.

One participant went on to say that if you are in politics, you have likely got a bit of a slanted or biased view of how informed constituents and stakeholders are. However, the participant ultimately agreed that certainly at the lower level, the council level, people are fairly apathetic when it comes to voting for their representatives. This is more difficult than at the federal or state level where the political parties make some attempt to convey what they believe in, making it easier for constituents to judge how they have performed. This allows constituents and stakeholders the ability to know what the parties stand for, what their values are, what their policies are, and who their leaders are, so they can make more of an informed decision when voting. The participant followed up by stating that communication is a central issue, and that at the local government level communication is difficult because candidates may be relatively unknown when standing for election.
Taking this further, the issue of the ‘invisible’ candidate is as equally important at both state and federal levels as it is for local government representatives. Participants reflected that for most constituents voting is a chore, and unless an issue is directly affecting them, few directly contact their representative personally. One participant noted that:

“Constituents only generally pick up the phone, write or email you, or personally come down to your office if they’ve got an issue that’s affecting them and they’ve got a need to come and see their local member.”

The participant went on to say that:

“For the rest, if they don’t need to see their local, state or federal councillor member, then they usually have nothing to do with them.”

Given that political based feedback from the community and other sources is an important element for all serving politicians, respondents made the point that one size does not always fit all constituents. Participants noted that this is often a frustrating experience when trying to reach out to the electorates and keep them informed of current political events. As one participant commented, this frustration is reinforced when conflicting feedback is received from various constituents with differing attitudes at the same time:

“People complained that local MPs often saturated the electorate with too much information or conversely, too little information was being sent to them.”

Given this comment, it is easy to see why political representatives feel that voters are not watching them. It is also easy to understand why politicians might think that the average constituent is lazy and apathetic when they generally lack the initiative to improve their political education unless, to use a recurring theme, it affects their hip pocket.

8.9 What are individual politician's thoughts on balancing the competing interests of social responsibility, stakeholders, pressure groups, lobbyists, and dependence on large business revenue and taxes to fund government activities?

When questioned about the issue of balancing competing interests of government social responsibility and the reliance on large business revenue and taxes to fund government
activities, all participants agreed that integrity is a politician’s greatest asset. For all participants, the question of losing one’s integrity or even a perception of having their integrity compromised was seen as an anathema to personal status, good policy and good government. One former MP was quick to highlight the point that it is essential that the party leadership institutes policy and enforces procedures that provide direction to all party politicians and members, in the correct methods of dealing with external factors that could potentially cause a loss of personal or party integrity.

Several participants gave examples of good leadership in this area. One former MP pointed out that former Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies created the Liberal Party in 1944, to ensure that those with money could not influence political policy. Based on previous experience with the United Australia Party, Menzies found that the ‘money people’ seeking influence thought they could control policy and candidates by providing ‘donations’ to the party. Another respondent explained as an example that when a property developer comes in and gives $50,000 to your campaign fund to help him get a rezoning plan done, your integrity is immediately compromised.

Another personal example given by one of the participants was when party MPs threatened to cross the floor as a result of the proposal to introduce poker machines in Victoria. The issue for those MPs was how to balance the competing views of all stakeholders including constituents, law enforcement departments, and industry and community lobbyists. On one side there were local, national and international organizations opposing the introduction (e.g. Returned Services League Victoria, United States Secret Service, United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Australian Police), and then the gaming industry headed by the owners of industries who, according to contemporary public and media documents, had alleged links to organized crime in Australia and the United States.

The participant recalled that the pressure exerted on government politicians intensified over time, to a point where members of the committee tasked by Cabinet with overseeing the gaming industry received threats of personal harm including to their families and friends. Furthermore, the former MP recalled that when committee members met with an industry member who argued that by introducing poker machines into Victoria, the State would be better off financially:

“We kept saying, a group of us, there was a group of about 9 or 10 of us, this is not worth it. I remember a bloke came into the party room, a bloke called [name]
from the casino, and he had a big model of the casino, all glass, in the party room, we let him in … very rarely does anyone come into the party room … because the Cabinet wanted it and [name] told us that, ‘This’ll [casino will] save you [time and having to raise taxes], the money will come in and so on’ …”

The participant further explained that as a way of increasing the pressure on parliament, every MP was invited to a function at the Windsor Hotel and given some chips to play roulette. The participant indicated that by creating this potential conflict of interest, the industry was attempting to create doubt in constituents’ minds by influencing perceptions about the honesty and integrity of MPs who attended the event. Furthermore, the issue of personal safety was increased, due to the anger within some elements of the community at the politicians’ attendance at the event. Another participant stated that:

“This was the one time when you wished you weren’t in politics because of the worries about your own safety. Politicians received threats and everything.”

Ultimately, the introduction of poker machines and casinos failed, and after that the Liberals lost office. The new Labor Government subsequently introduced them and licences were issued to industry groups. Referring to social responsibility, one participant stated that there were two ways of looking at the outcome:

“Issuing the licences ensured that business was responsible in the way it dealt with consumers and society. The reverse side was that if you were not providing a strong, healthy vibrant business community, the economy (and hence the community) would suffer.”

8.10 Do politicians have an obligation to all constituents or only to those who voted for them?

In relation to this question, all participants unanimously agreed that politicians have an obligation to serve all constituents in their respective electorates. One of the major factors influencing this position is that no politician can be absolutely certain about who voted for them. Therefore, once elected, the participants believed it is the individual politician’s duty as the local member and representative in parliament to represent all in the electorate without fear or favour.
8.11 Research has identified that citizens are increasingly stating in surveys that they lack confidence in and do not trust political institutions and elected representatives.

Overall, politicians interviewed reacted strongly to this statement. While the answers and examples given were different due to the diversified audience being interviewed, they contained similar themes revolving around issues of leadership or lack thereof, trust and distrust, responsibility, consistency, cynicism, and lack of confidence, just to name a few. It appears that it is irrelevant which party is represented or what position the participant holds in government or opposition, the general belief is that constituents and stakeholders have every right to feel that their representatives are not always performing in their best interests at both personal and community levels.

One participant strongly believed that when a party is elected on a platform, it is their responsibility to stay true to that platform (within reason); and if the party has to retract from that, it needs to have a good reason for doing so, telling constituents and the general public why it is adopting that change of policy. Unfortunately, as the respondent pointed out, this does not happen that often in contemporary Australian politics. The participant further stated that the public are justifiably cynical about politicians and political parties, especially given the state of federal politics in the early 1990s, where the former Labor Government made so many promises and then back-flipped so often that even party members had no idea what the party stood for or hoped to achieve. Furthermore, the participant also believed that citizens lost confidence in the political system at the time, due to the increasing displays of poor leadership by Federal Government ministers on important issues like the environment, health and education, and in particular the former Prime Minister(s). In the participant’s opinion, since former Prime Minister John Howard lost office in 2007:

“There hasn’t been a confidence in any government leader to the degree like the people felt in Howard. And even if people didn’t vote Liberal, most of them, not all but most of them, still felt like they knew him.”

Another participant believed that the loss of confidence in government and politicians is caused in part by the blurring of responsibilities between the different levels of government.
The same participant further believed that the distrust and cynicism has increased due to the inaccessibility of most politicians by their constituency:

“Very few state MPs or federal MPs will have their mobile number publicly available. In fact, I hazard to think of any to be honest, and you know a state or federal MP has an electoral office as well, so there’s I guess a screening process; you know, how strict that screening process is, is another matter, but there is ultimately a filtering process that goes on at an electoral office [thus incurring further secrecy and ambiguity]. So we do need to clarify those areas of responsibility. It comes back to communication … so the constituent would see that, [the politician] filling that part of the communication loop as well, and is happy to provide that clarity around who is responsible for what. But ultimately people want to see an outcome, and it’s that [ambiguity] blurring of responsibilities that diminishes that ability to provide an outcome. And I think that’s where these trust issues, where these low satisfaction levels, come from. Where people don’t necessarily see those outcomes because it’s all blurred who’s responsible for what.”

Another participant believed that when you are in a position of authority, people look to the government or to your organization, or to you as an individual politician, to be dependable, reliable and honest. The participant stated that constituents’ and stakeholders’ expectations of that position is one that they can trust, further noting that in general, that expectation permeates all the way down through society. For example:

“You expect trust between your family, your husband and wife, your children … trust with your employer. I mean, when trust starts to get broken down, that’s when things become dysfunctional … how do I rate trust? I rate as number one because I think you’ve got to present yourself, that you’re those things that people can rely on you, you’re consistent, you’re honest – they know what they’re going to get …”

Participants interviewed generally believed that the general distrust of politicians is due to most politicians going into the position with the good intentions of helping and improving the lot of those they were elected to represent; but in the end those same politicians become more interested in being in government than delivering good government. Participants believed that when individuals, parties and political organizations fall into that trap, it starts a downward spiral where people lose confidence and trust in individual politicians, resulting in the loss of government.
Another reason given by participants was linked to the probability that governments feel insecure, and in turn starts to worry about their own survival; not necessarily remembering why they were elected in the first place or getting distracted with doing other things. One example related to issues of law and order, where the incumbent government continued to deny that there was a community problem with gangs and alcohol-fuelled violence. The participant commented that:

“You know ... how long did the former premier say we didn’t have a law and order problem ... we didn’t have an alcohol-fuelled violence problem ... How many times did the former police commissioner say we didn’t have gangs and we didn’t have gang-related problems in Victoria? Half your battle is recognizing that you’ve got a problem ... People will start thinking ‘Are you for real, who does this person, think they are?’

Another factor contributing to this perceived lack of confidence of constituents in their representatives was summed up by a participant who stated that:

“There’s an old saying in journalism; don’t let the facts spoil a good story. And some politicians and journalists work that way, and what they want is sensation.”

This participant argued that a lot of the distrust between the citizenry and politicians is generated by the media. The participant went on to say that there is always a certain group of politicians in parliament who try to manipulate events to their own advantage, just as there are media journalists who want a story.

Another point of common agreement among participants was that most politicians are regarded by some constituents and stakeholders as self-serving, greedy and intent only on furthering their own position within the party and/or government. Furthermore, a lack of good political leadership appears to be evident to all participants who were interviewed. In relation to the issue of leadership, former parliamentary leaders interviewed stated that this was a vexed one:

“The question remained as to how do you bring everyone into the fold and manage to delicately worm your way throughout the potential minefield of differing beliefs and values, and points of view that existed within the organization charged with ruling over the daily lives of every constituent in the community, without alienating those very same constituents and stakeholders.”
The general consensus from participants was that honesty, truthfulness and consistency in thought and act are the only way to achieve being a long-serving and respected politician.

8.12 If an individual politician’s performance was made public to the electorate and voters on a regular basis, do you believe it would affect the way in which they would undertake their duties?

For the majority of politicians interviewed, if not all, the only real performance measure that matters to politicians and constituents is the election process. However, all participants pointed out that Australia is not going to have an election every 12 months just to judge the performance of politicians, and either reward or punish them for their actions or lack thereof. One participant perceived that there is no question that [politicians’] behaviours change according to pressure exerted by internal or external sources, especially if those pressures may cause the individual to lose their seat at the next election but once again it is probably the minority that change. His solution to this issue, based on personal experience, was that if you are going to make politicians accountable, then the political action needs to be focused on specific issues that constituents want to hold the politicians accountable for. For example, the economy, environment, issues of equity, free speech, asylum seekers, health costs, reducing the divide between the haves and have nots. The participant argued that actions taken by the Women’s Electoral Lobby in the late 1970s and early 1980s were remarkably effective in relation to women’s issues. The Women’s Electoral Lobby either interviewed or sent a questionnaire to all politicians to complete. Given that no politician wanted to be marked badly on women’s issues by the Women’s Electoral Lobby (which in turn made the responses available to the politician’s electorate and other interest groups), attitudes changed in line with the direction being pursued. Participants also generally believed that swinging voters are more prevalent than originally thought. Therefore, it stands to reason that individual politicians and parties try to appeal to the lowest common denominator to attract votes. Strategies and tactics are everything in politics.

Most participants agreed that trying to measure a politician’s performance from a normative perspective is incredibly difficult at the best of times. One participant argued that if you have a performance system that measures certain things, it will influence the way the politician
performs; sometimes for the worst, as they will concentrate on the issues being measured to the exclusion of other important issues. Furthermore, because the politician is going to be seen as performing well on those are that are being made public, politicians will likely concentrate on them in the hope that constituents will make a positive judgment on the politician at the next election. However, a negative result could be produced by such actions, in that constituents may not measure politicians on more important issues that require addressing that will have a far greater benefit to the community. As previously discussed, the prejudices and biases of constituents, and the agenda-setting influences of mainstream media outlets generally have a major impact on how politicians perceive what is important and what is not. Politicians therefore only concentrate on issues they perceive to be vote winners.

Participants also raised the issue of traditional performance measurement; whereby what is accomplished is all that will be measured and reported on. One participant stated that in his experience and in his opinion, forcing politicians to work in line with some sort of traditional business performance model system will not necessarily be a good thing for both the politician and constituents. While personally agreeing with regular performance reviews by constituents, which in turn would help to improve individual politician’s performances, the participant noted that this would prove difficult, as all participants, politicians, constituents and stakeholders are going to have different views on what that system should be.

### 8.13 Summary of Chapter 8

Why is it so difficult to measure an individual politician’s performance? In former chapters, it has been observed that political performance is largely subjective in nature, guided by feedback from constituents, stakeholders and other politicians. Overall, the former and present politicians surveyed and interviewed found it difficult to come to a consensus as to what defines political performance, further reinforcing the ambiguous nature of an individual politician’s performance. One participant stated that ultimately political performance is defined by delivering results for the community, while others addressed the question from a technician’s perspective. For others, compromise is a big indicator in defining performance. Each participant interviewed agreed that positive political performance can be defined as obtaining power and control over those around you; obtaining and staying in government for as long as possible; and ensuring that the individual politician and party are re-elected at
each election. Trust between a politician and constituent or stakeholder are therefore considered essential.

Participants tended to agree that the definition of performance is difficult to put into simple words as performance is hard to define, but that you know it when you see it. However, it was commonly agreed that the most accurate definition of political performance is the successful delivery of results to constituents and stakeholders. Participants commonly stated that the political definition of performance is ambiguous in itself because it generally depends on what actions you are measuring and what results you are looking for. In effect, such performance is whatever you want it to be. One participant highlighted that defining political performance, and thus being able to measure whether that performance has been successful, includes having total control of all aspects of the political processes in place. For this participant, the performance measurement process includes not only control of the party, but total control of the pre-selection process.

For outsiders and politicians alike, the difficulty in defining and measuring political performance is made more difficult by the fact that there are often huge differences and conflicts between constituents’ needs, beliefs, values and political views, including members within the same political party. For several participants, good political performance is not necessarily whether you have made the right or wrong decision; good political performance is about the actions you have undertaken to reach that outcome. The issue of whether the outcome is right or wrong will always be subjective and open to argument between political parties, politicians, constituents and stakeholders with conflicting opinions and belief systems. For many individual politicians, the measure of successful performance is to complete as many key goals or tasks on their personal to-do list as possible.

When attempting to measure performance in a political environment, participants appeared to be at odds with each other, and even contradicted themselves when discussing the question. On the one hand, a former senior politician rejected the idea of a formal performance regime, believing it would be too difficult to achieve a consensus as people’s beliefs and values are widely different. Yet conversely, the same participant noted that one formal method involved measuring the individual politician’s ability to maintain a consistency in their approach to representing their constituents both as a local member and parliamentarian.
Architecture was cited as a reason for some of Australia's federal politicians' lack of performance, using it to highlight that the immense scale of Australia's Parliament House in Canberra allows parliamentarians an opportunity to hide from outside political and non-political scrutiny. To enable constituents and stakeholders the ability to effectively measure the performance of individual politicians, they needed to have a full and unbiased view of all parliamentarians' actions when those politicians are working on important matters. Biased and destabilizing partisanship activity has often included the selective use of media coverage, involving comments made on or off the record by members of opposition parties and even the politician's own party, as a method to promote or destroy policies and activities that may or may not have a useful purpose in promoting the antagonist's personal or factional agenda.

Another participant believed that performance can be measured by the successful delivery of election promises and commitments, utilizing good communication skills to discuss election promise outcomes and proactively talking to constituents and stakeholders face-to-face on a regular basis. However, the participant also repeated what other respondents had already said, that it all depends on what you are measuring. The individual politician needs to know what needs to be measured and what does not. Given the differences and conflicts between various constituents' needs, beliefs, values and political views, the participant argued that it is difficult to know how to define performance, and further what constitutes good or bad performance.

While personal beliefs and values are important for some respondents, the party's expectations, needs and wants also influence their thoughts and actions, and their desire to continue as a politician. Even though the importance of personal beliefs and values was acknowledged, issues of pre-selection and then re-election are perceived as always at the forefront of any politician's thinking. In addition, the expectations, needs and wants of constituents and stakeholders including branch members further influence politicians' thoughts and actions. The issue of re-election commences from the moment the individual politician is elected to parliament, and it appears to the participants talking about politicians in general, that for some, their biggest concerns are their own party members.

When asked if a politician should do whatever they think is right for constituents, even if it conflicts with party values and factions, all respondents agreed. However, participants made a note of the rider that politicians need to be able to justify such decisions to all stakeholders.
and most importantly their constituents. Participants reinforced the need for principles of honesty, integrity and transparency, which constituents expect of their political representatives. Participants further reinforced this by stating that even the slightest perception of impropriety could be fatal for the politician’s and party’s standing in the community.

Despite the issues of ambivalence and ambiguity previously discussed poor constituent knowledge and relationships with politicians and politics one former MP noted that Australians generally make a good judgement of those who represent them in Parliament. The participant claimed that constituents know who is shallow and who has depth. Participants reflected that for most constituents voting is a chore, and that unless an issue is directly affecting them, few constituents directly contact their representative. Participants reinforced the point that the existing electoral system does not always fit all constituents.

When questioned about the issue of balancing competing interests of government social responsibility and the reliance on large business revenue and taxes to fund government activities, all participants agreed that integrity is a politician’s greatest asset. For all participants, the question of losing one’s integrity or even a perception of having their integrity compromised was seen as an anathema to personal status, good policy and good government.

Do politicians have an obligation to all constituents or only to those who voted for them? In relation to this question, all participants were unanimous and agreed that politicians have an obligation to serve all constituents in their respective electorates.

Previous research has identified that citizens are increasingly indicating in surveys that they lack confidence in and do not trust political institutions and elected representatives. It does not seem to matter what party is represented or what position the politician holds in government or opposition, the general response is that constituents and stakeholders have every right to voice that their representatives are not performing in their best interests. The general consensus from respondents was that being honest, truthful and consistent in thought and act is the only way to achieve being a long-serving and respected politician.

For the majority of participants, if not all, the only real performance measure that politicians and constituents use is the election process. For one participant, there is no question that politicians’ behaviours change according to the pressures of the moment, but this is a
minority view. His solution to this issue, based on personal experience, is that if you are going to make politicians accountable, then the political action needs to be focused on specific issues that constituents want to hold politicians accountable for.

Participants in the main agreed that trying to measure a politician’s performance from a normative perspective is incredibly difficult at the best of times. One participant argued that if you have a performance system that measures certain areas, it would influence the way the politician performs. Participants also raised the issue of traditional performance measurement, whereby what has been accomplished was is measured and reported on. One participant stated that in his experience, forcing politicians to work in line with some sort of traditional business performance system is not necessarily a good thing for both the politician and constituents. While personally agreeing with regular performance reviews by constituents, which in turn would help to improve the individual politician’s performance, the participant contended that this would prove difficult, as all participants, politicians, constituents and stakeholders are going to have different views on what that system should be and what it should look like.
CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

9.1 Introduction

In chapters 2 and 3, the concept of ‘public value’ has been used to acknowledge the tensions that have and still exist in the administration of the public and political sectors, as well as the recurrent public debate that has defined and redefined the term ‘public interest’ (Veeneman, Dicke and De Bruijn 2009; Bozeman 2007; De Bruijn and Dicke 2006). It has also been argued that the concepts of contemporary BPM and management, and later NPM, that have been used in both public and private sectors since the late 1980s have had a profound influence on the prevailing cultures found in the public sector and TSOs. Furthermore, as a method of improving political governance in public sector organizations, politicians have been keen to create an aura and culture of transparency and accountability through performance measurement and management to ensure that public servants delivers greater productivity in the way public services are produced and delivered to the community.

Discussion in chapter 4 raised the issue that given the political interest in ensuring improved public service performance, and highlighted the point that politicians are given significant responsibility and trust to achieve positive outcomes for the community when selected to represent constituent and stakeholder interests in the political arena. Chapter 4 also argued (De Grazia 1958; Fisher and Ury 1981; Jessinghaus 1999; Buchanan and Badham 1999; Meyer 2002) that politicians and political parties should be subjected to the same levels of scrutiny of transparency and performance that they demand from business, the public service and normative organizations, rather than hiding behind environments rich in complexity, conflict, secrecy and ambiguity.

This argument has been actively pursued for many years in Australia (Longstaff 1996; Sawer 1998; Goot 2002), but to date has not yet resulted in an understanding of how politicians view performance from their own personal perspective. As previously discussed, respondents to two separate surveys and face-to-face interviews conceded that the main indicators of an individual Australian politician’s performance generally revolve around:

- meeting personal and organizational goals and objectives
- making a positive difference to constituents’ lives
- achieving positive outcomes for individuals or groups that are not in a position to achieve them.
While some activities politicians perform may be measurable using traditional performance measurement techniques such as Kaplan and Norton's (1992, 1996) Balanced Score Card. However, in Chapter 5, the principles highlighted in the contextual framework argued that many of them do not match these usual business environment practices, which are geared toward the notion of an input/output-based measurement system. Rather, some of the objectives mentioned by interviewees contain considerable elements of non-tangible outcomes that have generally been difficult to measure politicians using traditional BPM and management techniques. In this chapter, using the results of the surveys and interviews and the importance of political behaviour and its impact on performance management systems to argue why we should measure the performance of individual politicians.

9.2 Defining political behaviour and its impact on performance management systems

As previously discussed, Mitchell (1958) defined an individual politician as ‘a person who campaigned for an elective public office and when elected, undertook numerous public duties including participating in the formulation of public policies, mobilization of support for those policies, and in the administration of those policies once duly enacted’. De Grazia (1958) noted that profiles developed during his research suggested relations between economic, social and political practices, and how they influence individual and group political behaviour. In the 1958 Political Research Organization and Design (which was later renamed The American Behavioral Scientist) editorial article discussing what constitutes political behaviour, the editor pondered whether political behaviour is a type, or set of types, of subject matter: party discipline, social stratification, political roles and responsibilities, decision-making, policy science, informal organization, attitude clusters, or human relations management.

De Grazia (1957) argued that it is easier to define ‘what political behaviour is not’. Given De Grazia's difficulty in describing this, Buchanan and Badham’s (1999) definition of political behaviour as ‘the practical domain of power in action, enacted through the use of techniques of influence and other more or less extreme tactics’, appears to be a reasonable description of what constitutes political behaviour. Furthermore, Mintzberg (Block 1983) suggested that
politics encompasses modern organizational systems, referring to “system(s) captured by conflict” (Block 1983). Yet another definition of politics characterizes political behaviour as inherently competitive and focused on satisfying self-interests (Fisher and Ury 1981). These and other definitions generally portray political behaviour as essentially malevolent, conflict-laden, self-aggrandizing and unhealthy. This attitude is best summed up by the suggestion that political behaviour is primarily designed to benefit an individual or group at the organization’s expense, in the case of an individual, or one group over another regardless of whether it is organizational or personal in nature. This idea suggests that political behaviour is entirely self-serving, predicated on getting the individual or group ahead in spite of the possible side-effects to the organization or individual as a whole.

However, from an individual politician’s performance measurement perspective, De Grazia (1957) in line with the Chicago School of Behavioralism Theory (1957) represented a sharp break from previous political science theories. De Grazia (1957) claimed it could explain political behaviour from an unbiased, neutral point of view (Guy 2000). Yet Mitchell (1958) argued that while political scientists have learnt much from politicians, the reverse is not often the case. He stated that lawyers, economists and professionals are considered more useful to politicians than traditional political scientists. But what are the indicators that assure interested parties that a politician is performing at the desired level? Furthermore, what are the outcomes of individual political activity that alienate and cause misalignment with certain sectors of the constituency and stakeholders in the political process? Regardless of the causes of voter de-alignment, there are certain consequences of constituency de-alignment that constitute voter non-commitment or non-alignment with government or opposition policies, which impact on both voter and party behaviour (Guy 2000). Correspondingly, the behaviour of political parties can also change in response to this voting behaviour in an attempt to accommodate the changing voter directions.

In the context of constituent de-alignment, it makes pragmatic sense for political parties to ambiguously target policies at swinging voters inhabiting the middle-ground. However, this may have unsettling effects on principled individual politicians that joined a particular party for specific reasons, or an independent politician who is influenced by their personal beliefs and values. Furthermore, it has been noted that poll-guided and even poll-driven policy is considered a strategic tool in the achievement of a politician’s principles and ideals (Guy 2000). In fact, principled politics often requires a party to pursue expedient policy at the right
times. Goot (2002) proposed that generally the trade-off between principle and pragmatism and its relationship to the constituent’s view of the politician’s performance can be analyzed in a dynamic electoral model where the voters are not fully informed about the policy preferences of the individual politician.

Longstaff (1996) suspected most politicians utilize covert forms of evasion and equivocation when discussing such issues with constituents. Both Longstaff’s (1996) and Alesina and Cukierman’s (1990) research found that voters generally observe the consequences of the policy actions taken by the particular individual politician or political party in office, but not the politician’s actual actions. Furthermore, it showed that incumbents generally follow a policy that is intermediate between the other party’s ideal policy and their own ideal policies.

While no position statement or performance agreement formally exists for politicians, a key aspect of performance for an MP is keeping constituents informed of developments in government or party policy, and the implications of government decisions and activity. Policies are generally developed with the intent of retaining internal party support, as well as broad electoral support for the government (Stewart and Ward 1996). Bridgman and Davis (2000) suggested that while the political domain draws upon parliamentarians, their advisors, party political bodies and lobbyists, it also draws upon the wider public sector such as government agencies, interdepartmental committees and consultative bodies; creating difficulties in defining solid performance outcomes due to the differing requirements of stakeholders involved. In relation to the performance of politicians, former Australian Senator Black (1992) argued that if politicians and parties are honest and separate the roles of policymaker and constituency representative, the public will have a better quality of government.

Sawer (1998) noted that even though modern Australian political parties and levels of stable party identification are high by world standards, political parties are still largely the gatekeepers to parliament, and party or factional loyalty is usually the price of political success. However, regardless of this political stability, Goot (2001) stated that politics, politicians and the political parties have never really been highly praised or respected by the Australian public; with reports of widespread distrust going back a long way (Pember-Reeves 1902).
In line with Goot (2001), Rickard (2007) asserted that political parties have often been criticised for being unprincipled, or for being inconsistent in their public stated beliefs and values, or expedient in their policies, or for serving their own political interests. While political parties are nothing more than organizations, it can be argued that the underlying reason for a political party, as with any organization, is to gain or maintain power. Just like companies, corporations and associations, political parties exist to further the goals and interests of their memberships and stakeholders. Policies are the vehicles through which political parties (and in some cases, independent politicians) seek to realize their fundamental political goals and interests (Hedley 2001, 1998). Furthermore, the realization of the party’s values form the party’s raison d’être, and policy is the key instrument by which these are realized. A political policy can be justified in terms of a party’s principles when the policy’s content directly reflects or exemplifies those principles (Norris 2005; O’Reilly 2001).

Rickard (2005, 2002), and Marmor, Okma and Latham (2002) argued that policy content can be either consistent or inconsistent with a party’s underlying values, to varying degrees. That is, a policy often reflects a number of party values, with these values differing in importance and centrality. In the end, how well the policy position reflects the values of a party is a matter of balancing the positive and the negative priorities, which in turn affect the policy’s integration and government performance (Rickard 2007).

So how does the party’s ability to balance values and policy affect the individual politician? While there has been much research on voter and political behaviour, thus allowing constituents the ability to recognize and measure an individual politician’s performance, there has been little research that directly asks individual politicians De Grazia (1957) to describe how performance is defined from their political perspective, including:

- How do individual politicians define their individual performance?
- How do politicians negotiate their conflict between personal and party beliefs and values?

### 9.3 Why measure the performance of individual politicians?

As discussed, the purpose of BPM systems is to capture and disseminate the strategic information that matters most to the organization and its employees in the form of strategic processes and outcome measurements, which are then graded appropriately in the form of performance measurement incentives and motivations. As mentioned previously, while
there has been extensive research into party political and voter performance and behaviours, there appears to be a gap in academic knowledge (De Grazia 1957). Searches of literature and other related topics reveal that there has been minimal research to answer: Why is it so difficult for constituents and stakeholders to measure an individual Australian politician’s performance?

9.4 Addressing the knowledge gap

Previous research undertaken has identified the differences in measurement and management between business and non-business performance environments. The rest of this section will discuss the results of these findings in both surveys and face-to-face interviews undertaken. Furthermore, this author will address the concerns encountered in the normative environment inhabited by politicians, including the difficulties when attempting to measure the often ambiguous and conflicting outcomes that appear as a result of political actions and politicians’ performances in general.

As mentioned earlier, little research has previously been undertaken that involves directly asking current and former Australian politicians how they define and what constitutes individual performance from a political perspective. To address this gap in academic knowledge, this author has drawn upon existing academic material in related topics, and addressed three resultant questions via surveys and interviewing of current and former individual Australian politicians:

1. How do individual Australian politicians define and judge political performance?
2. How do individual Australian politicians negotiate the conflict between personal beliefs and values and those of their party?
3. Why is it difficult for anyone to measure the performance of individual Australian politicians?

9.5 Why is it difficult to measure the performance of politicians?

This question has been answered from the perspective of politicians. This is a unique perspective because performance theory assumes that activities can be measured even in normative organizations. Performance theory also assumes that principals, employees and
stakeholders have the ability to understand the results of performance measurement. As a consequence, rational systems have been developed and implemented to assess performance in many different types of organizations. However, the political context is significantly different from other contexts. The findings reported in this thesis have highlighted a number of issues that conflict with contemporary understanding and theories of performance measurement systems in business, public or third sector organizations. As shown by the framework in chapter 5, the data collected supports the 5 individual points identified in the framework, i.e., Point 1 Internal and external variables, including all stakeholders and constituents in the political process. Point 2 relates to the individual politician and includes their set of internal beliefs and values, and how these match or differ from those of peers, constituents, stakeholders and the political organization. Point 3 relates to the environment of ambiguity, complexity and conflicting sets of priorities, which arise as the result of actions undertaken for and on behalf of constituents and stakeholders. Point 4 relates to the ability of the individual politician to maintain power and control over their internal and external environments and Point 5 which relates to the ability of the individual politician to produce performance outcomes on behalf of constituents and stakeholders.

9.6 Responses from individual politicians

9.6.1 Introduction

Participants indicated that performance for the individual politician includes the ability to anticipate and manage change for the benefit of the larger community while being a team player within their political party. Standing up for what you believe in is also seen as an important measure of performance, both as a local member and parliamentarian. Participants contended that political performance indicators include being honest to your principles while also being accountable and honest to your constituents. They further argued that political performance is largely subjective in nature, guided by feedback from constituents, stakeholders and other politicians. Most importantly, participants agreed that performance differs greatly, depending on whether the politician is in government or opposition; that is, performance in opposition does not carry the same amount of responsibility and accountability that being in government does.
Participants also argued that major impacts on performance are the influences found in relationships between politicians and the media, which are generally based on ambiguity and ambivalence due in part to both parties relying on each other. Politicians often rely on the media to convey their message in a way that provides the politician with the greatest amount of credibility in the public eye. Yet conversely, the media also requires information from the politician that can be used to generate public interest and sell newspapers, often to the detriment of the politician. In all likelihood, it can be argued that if the information required by the media is not positive, it is highly unlikely that the politician will provide that information; instead taking steps to keep that information confidential through the use of government policies and procedures. As a result, a never-ending circle of need is created between the politician and media, often dictated by what is best for each respective party, but rarely meeting those needs.

As previously mentioned, when asked why it is difficult for constituents to measure the performance of individual politicians, participants found it difficult to articulate a common response. The participants perceived that many factors affect the political environment, which in turn impact on community and stakeholder perceptions. Participants further argued that the perceived general decrease in trust of all institutions and political bodies by the community is partly due to an apparent lack of political commitment in community values by politicians in general.

Furthermore, participants felt that this perceived loss of confidence in the political system is mainly due to a lack of commitment by politicians in the way decisions are made by politicians and the parliament. This is combined with long-held perceptions by constituents that politicians generally only tell people what they want to hear. In a display of consensus, participants agreed that the public’s general distrust of politicians is mainly influenced by the constant monitoring of politicians by the media. In turn, they argued that the constant reporting, often inaccurate and biased, is generally used to present a negative view of politicians and political institutions. However, regardless of this, the majority also stated that the current system of political elections every three or four years is the correct mechanism to ensure the voting public can express their satisfaction, or lack thereof, with an individual politician’s and government’s performance.
9.6.2 How do individual Australian politicians define and judge individual political performance?

Responses from the interviews and electronic surveys of individual current and former politicians revealed that the participants generally found it difficult to come to general agreement as to what defines personal or individual political performance. Participants generally conceded that it is difficult to define or even explain what constitutes individual political performance in simple terms. They argued that difficulties in measuring individual politicians’ performances arose due to the fact that political performance is subjective in nature and extends past the traditional business view of measuring inputs and outputs used in the production of a specific and tangible product or services. Participants further contended that beliefs and values form the basic intangible building blocks of individual political performance. For most, political performance is viewed as a tool of change, a tool of power and control, a tool used to improve the lot of constituents and stakeholders, not only within the constituency, but also outside Australia’s domestic borders.

For most participants, political performance is the combination of strategies and tactics used to produce an outcome that cannot be measured in a traditional sense using business measurement tools. Rather, political performance is measured by personally understanding and experiencing the differing levels of constituent or stakeholder satisfaction. However, these perceptions are always open to interpretation and differences in individual and group opinions, often within their own party and electorate. Participants noted that factors such as differences in opinion, complexity in situations between representative and constituents, confusion in actions and words, conflict both in legal and political terms, political outcomes that do not suit the constituent’s requirements, and finally a sense of vagueness and ambiguity in the political environment have become increasingly prevalent when dealing with individuals and groups.

For participants, the main indicators of successful individual performance involve meeting personal and organizational goals and objectives. Participants further agreed that the definition of political performance should always be based on the principles of making a difference to constituents’ lives, and achieving positive outcomes for individuals or groups that are not in a position to achieve those outcomes for themselves. Performance also involves providing a stable political environment in which positive change can occur without causing social dislocation to society as a whole.
9.6.3 Potential indicators of political performance

Politicians surveyed and interviewed believed that political performance measurement does not often match the traditional role of performance measurement in the business sector, which is geared toward the established notion of an input/output-based measurement system. Participants argued that the main contributor to performance measurement for individual politicians is trust. Participants also believed that trust between the politician and a constituent is the most important bond that can be shared. Trust is the overarching personal value that allows politicians the ability to act on the constituent’s behalf in all matters political. However, one participant stated that he would not trust any politician, as self-interest and dependence on the party system is essential if the individual politician wants party support when facing re-election.

Participants noted that another political performance indicator is being honest to your principles. A potential outcome is the individual politician’s ability to anticipate and manage change for the benefit of the larger community while being a team player within the individual’s political party.

Furthermore, participants stated that constituent, stakeholder and public satisfaction feedback in general is an important determinant when attempting to define and measure an individual’s or party’s performance. While agreeing that political performance is largely subjective in nature, guided by feedback from constituents, stakeholders and other politicians, it was further noted that performance differs greatly, depending on whether the politician is in government or opposition. It was agreed that performance in opposition does not carry the same amount of responsibility and accountability that it does when the politician is a member of the government. Therefore, opposition MPs are generally able to challenge and interrogate government MPs more rigorously; safe in the knowledge that accountability and responsibility for producing results that address constituent and stakeholder concerns is nigh impossible unless government MPs also agree and support the opposition’s contentions. As a result, non-government MPs are often in the position of using the media to influence the opinions of voters, to appear that the opposition MPs are ‘performing’ in the interests of constituents and stakeholders alike.
9.6.4 Media and poor voter political knowledge as major influences on measuring political performance

Participants stated that personal beliefs and values are essential when developing policies or initiating action on behalf of the greater constituency, participants also believed that it is worth having a varied life experience. More importantly a thick skin is also necessary, as well as a patient and persistent disposition. This allows the politician to perform despite the constant attacks on and negative image that comes from both the constituency and media. However, participants argued that one of the major difficulties when measuring or attempting to measure their individual performance is the issue of constituents’ and stakeholders’ poor political knowledge. Participants argued that constituents and stakeholders are largely ignorant of what an individual politician actually does on a day-to-day basis.

Participants further argued that outsiders generally seek information regarding politicians’ performance from the media that are trying to source sensational stories for their respective media outlets, as a way of increasing sales and gaining political influence in the public audience. So strong was this belief in the nexus between media influence and voter behaviour that participants were convinced that a lot of the mistrust that constituents feel toward politicians is influenced and generated by the constant media surveillance. Irrespective, participants argued that there are many factors affecting the political environment which has differing impacts on community and stakeholder perceptions.

9.6.5 Issues with results based KPIs for politicians

Participants highlighted that sometimes results of political action to address constituent concerns has an opposite effect often not anticipated by the constituent. Participants argued that political performance is defined by delivering results for the community. It is about listening to the community’s key concerns and then delivering results to address those concerns, with constituents wanting some sort of certainty. However, the other aspect of performance is that politicians may not always deliver the expected result that a constituent wants. In outcomes where they don’t achieve the desired result, participants believed that individual politicians need to explain to constituents or stakeholders why that decision or that action was undertaken.
9.7 How do individual politicians negotiate the conflict between personal beliefs and values and those of their party?

9.7.1 Trust, performance outcomes and constituent/stakeholder support

While acknowledging that political performance is partly based on beliefs, values and obtaining favourable outcomes for constituents and stakeholders alike, several participants argued that beliefs and values play no part in politics. Yet those same participants strongly contended that trust plays the most important part when it comes to defining performance. However, not all politicians fully agreed with their peers on this, noting that their views on trust, honesty and the ability to sell moral and political failures to abide by constituents wishes was the only way of doing business. These participants stated that their experiences as politicians had allowed them a certain extent of empathy with constituents’ desires for better, more trusted and more dedicated politicians in parliament.

In addressing the issue concerning trust and performance, some participants acknowledged that there has been a growing decrease in trust in all institutions and political bodies due to a perceived lack of political commitment to community values, a general decay in trust of politicians within the community, and growing community distrust in previously trusted political and business institutions. This argument was further reinforced by highlighting that this lack of constituent and stakeholder confidence is due to a perceived lack of commitment in the way decisions are implemented by politicians and the parliament, unless it has a financial advantage for the revenue base. Furthermore, participants acknowledged and accepted the often-held belief by constituents and stakeholders that politicians tell people only what they want to hear while appearing at the same time to maintain the status quo.

Bowler, Donovan and Karp’s (2006) research supported this view and found that there appears to be a difference between attitudes toward social change that politicians discuss and reveal in the media and the actual change itself. When looking at politicians’ attitudes about proposals to change the structure and purpose of electoral institutions, Bowler, Donovan and Karp (2006) found significant effects of personal electoral self-interest, post-materialist values, and ideology entrenched in politicians and political behaviour. Furthermore, Bowler, Donovan and Karp (2006) found that the effect of self-interest is partly a confirmation of a received wisdom that is not often put to the direct test in the political
environment. This confirmation, however, was tempered by acknowledgement that self-interest is not the entire explanation of how politicians view electoral institutions or constituents. While self-interest is a major determinant of attitudes, other factors also play a role. Bowler, Donovan and Karp (2006) argued that values and ideology play an important but not quite as predictable role in structuring a politician’s response to institutions and the electoral environment.

9.7.2 Performance outcomes, ambiguity and the political environment

Commenting on Bowler, Donovan and Karp (2006) assertion, participants quickly pointed out that while political performance is about what politicians’ can do for their constituents and the community as a whole, often the result is not what some constituents and stakeholders expect or support. Participants agreed that political performance is neither black nor white; rather, the political environment is ambiguous and grey in nature. This ambiguity ensures performance is most often undertaken in grey areas, and most probably contains a level of self-interest resulting from the individual and group human interactions and reactions of all participants in the event taking place. To illustrate this point, participants asserted that every action or reaction is generally the result of compromise based on negotiations that involve ‘giving and taking’ important matters of concern to each party involved.

It was at this point that participants argued that it is difficult for constituents and stakeholders to accurately assess a politician’s performance, because there are often huge differences and conflicts between each constituent’s needs, beliefs, values and political views, even within the same political party. This contributes to high levels of confusion and frustration, inconsistency and lack of satisfaction by constituents and stakeholders, because there are few tangible measures by which the politician’s actions and outcomes can be accurately measured.
9.7.3 How do individual politicians negotiate the conflict between personal beliefs and values and those of their party, yet continue to perform?

For those politicians surveyed and interviewed, personal beliefs and values are the cornerstones as to why they entered politics in the first place. However, few politicians appear to actively display those beliefs and values publicly, even when it is in their best interests to do so. Is it that individual politicians are more concerned that doing so may conflict with the norms and mores entrenched within their own party? Is it because they would lose support from the party organization and party membership in branches that disagree with their dissention?

History has evidenced that from a political perspective, there is a clear link between values and performance. This link was evidenced by the many thousands of mourners of all classes in British society who attended and lined the streets at the funeral of the former Conservative Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel in 1850 (Hurd 2007). Thousands of ordinary people lined the route, even though many in his own Conservative Party thought he was a traitor for going against entrenched Tory (Conservative Party) values and beliefs. One could argue that the circumstances of the time were influential in guiding the responses of the actors involved; that is, the battle between business profit and humanitarian needs, self-interest, or even a lack of social responsibility by some in the ruling classes. Nonetheless, what cannot be disputed is that Peel obeyed his conscience and the values by which he lived, and more importantly rejected what he perceived to be a major lack of humanity on the part of his party colleagues, and acted in the best interests of those who were subjected to poverty and famine rather than self-interest for his own position as Prime Minister or his Conservative Party colleagues of the time.

Using this scenario as a basis when questioning participants as to how they negotiated the conflict between personal beliefs and values and those of their party, it became apparent that most participants felt uneasy about addressing the question from the party perspective and shifted their response to a more neutral position as a way of avoiding a potentially embarrassing answer. However, when addressing the question in relation to constituents, participants appeared more forthright. It appeared that some had strong views when it came to dealing with constituents’ private issues and concerns in parliament, with one arguing that:
“Values such as truthfulness, transparency are essential if one wants to be genuinely respected as a politician with integrity.”

For other participants it was defining and knowing what the limits of the environment in which they work are. Other participants drew attention to the term ‘whatever’ and stated that the individual politician needs to be reasonably informed by ethical considerations of the actions undertaken and a reasonable regard for due process. In contrast with the previous sentence, another stated that:

“Constituents are not always fully aware of the limitations that face them when seeking assistance from their local member of parliament or were often guided by a false sense of self-interest.”

As previously discussed by one participant, individual personal performance for many politicians generally involves building support both internally and externally, where the prospective candidate builds up allegiances, debts and obligations, but more importantly gains the recognition and a reputation for being a team player who will do as they are told by the party power brokers, stakeholders and management. The participant argued that this behaviour therefore encourages and creates a particular type of performance suited towards a particular faction or group within the organization which is or is not in the best interests of the party. However, another participant noted that once having been selected to represent your party, there is an obligation not to rock the boat and support your fellow colleagues, even if this means going against your own personal beliefs and values.

Several participants went on to say that low levels of satisfaction between politicians and political factions tends to lead to in-fighting among them; thus creating animosity and conflict between the respective groups. Over time this in-fighting and lack of support for individual politicians and supporters both in and outside the party creates a division that leads to wholesale change at elections by the general voting community, and/or leadership spills within the internal parliamentary party environment, as evidenced in the 2013 Australian Federal election.
Most participants, however, recognized the potential for conflict. From the comments made, it appears that the question of how individual politicians negotiate the conflict between personal beliefs and values and those of their party is a vexed one requiring further in-depth research. However, the fact that politicians appear to be more reserved in addressing questions that directly affect their relationship with the party suggests that the power and control exerted by the party over the individual remains solid, even when the participant is assured that they are protected by anonymity. This reluctance for participants to candidly answer the question in turn adds to the growing picture of why it is so hard for constituents and stakeholders – outsiders in effect – to measure the performance of individual politicians.

9.8 Why is it difficult to measure the performance of individual politicians?

9.8.1 Lack of constituent and stakeholder political knowledge

When it came to answering the question as to what makes the measurement of politicians’ performances difficult, combinations of factors were presented by the respondents. Overwhelmingly, participants believed that constituents do not trust politicians. In line with this, participants argued that constant monitoring by the media, often inaccurate and biased, makes it difficult for outsiders, whether it is constituents or stakeholders with little direct political knowledge or inside political information, to make any accurate assessment of what is actually happening. Taking this into account, this raises the following questions:

1. Is the constituent’s lack of political knowledge caused by the biased, inaccurate or ineffectual reporting by the media?
2. Is it more the lack of or poor communication between politician and other participants in the political process?
3. Could this conflict with, and lack of trust by constituents and stakeholders be the result of poor political education in Australian schools, for example?

From information provided by participants and previous academic studies, it is evident that the previously mentioned states of confusion and ambiguity that exist in the Australian political landscape are important factors in understanding why it is difficult to measure the performance of individual Australian politicians. Although not generally deliberate, it appears
that the combination of ambiguity and confusion in the politician’s working environment is taken advantage of by politicians of all political colours and creeds. This combination of ambiguity and confusion in the politician’s working environment has resulted in people becoming confused as to the actual responsibilities of each level of government in the community. On several occasions, participants noted that in general, most constituents and stakeholders appear to be unaware of how the political process works in Australia.

9.8.2 Individual politician’s performance and communication skills

It would appear that in most cases politicians are well-educated and possess good people and communication skills. Treating this as the norm, one must assume that politicians prefer to work in an environment based on conflict, complexity and ambiguity, one in which Bowler, Donovan and Karp (2006) believed contains significant effects of personal electoral self-interest, materialist values, a dominant ideology, and low levels of communication between constituents, stakeholders and the politician. Ruesch and Bateson (1951) contended that intrapersonal communication is the dialogue that forms a “foundation for all past, present and future discourse”. Intrapersonal communication is a language used or thought of as internal to the communicator.

For politicians, intrapersonal communication is the active internal involvement of the individual in symbolic processing of messages. The individual politician becomes both their own sender and receiver of information and communications, and an important route of personal feedback to the individual politician in an ongoing internal process (Ruesch and Bateson 1951). It is useful to envision intrapersonal communication occurring in the mind of the individual politician in a model which contains a sender, receiver and feedback loop. While Ruesch and Bateson (1951) noted that successful communication is generally defined as being between two or more individuals, interpersonal communication is also defined as having participants (politician and constituent) that are interdependent on one another, and have a shared history which for example, constituents and stakeholders use to assess the politician’s performance and the politician uses to create and craft a certain image for the public. Thus two-way communication channels are the medium chosen to convey the message from sender to receiver. In this study, participants include both politicians and constituents or stakeholders who are the communicators, who are both senders and receivers.
Channels of communication are categorized into two main categories: direct and indirect. Communication channels are the mode of communicating the messages; they are under direct control of the sender and include verbal and non-verbal channels (Fenno 1986; Ruesch and Bateson 1951). Verbal communication channels are those that use words in some manner, such as written or spoken communication. Non-verbal communication channels are those that do not require words but include certain overt facial expressions or controllable body movements in various contextual environments (e.g. body language such as that made by humans during certain face-to-face interactions, or police controlling traffic and people movement), colour (e.g. red for embarrassment or danger, and green means jealousy or ‘go’) and sound (e.g. chortles of derision, laughter or sirens, alarms etc.). Indirect channels are those channels that are usually recognized subliminally or subconsciously by the receiver, and not under direct control of the sender. This includes body language, which reflects the inner emotions and motivations rather than the actual delivered message. It also includes vague terms such as ‘gut feeling’, ‘hunches’ or ‘premonitions’ (Fenno 1986).

9.8.3 Politicians’ performance and the political party

It was argued in this study that measuring a politician’s performance can be difficult given that everyone’s belief and value systems are individually unique. However, ambiguity and the lack of transparency are also likely to be the strongest influence, as they provide politicians with the ability to operate in areas where political and personal denial of certain facts (i.e. varying degrees of accountability and responsibility resulting from varying and changing circumstances) apply. Furthermore, when combined with complexity, it could be argued that this complex mixture of ingredients provides an environment where actions (or the lack thereof) can be undertaken in uncertain political environments where public transparency is in short supply.

However, this lack of transparency further provides the opportunity for greater organizational influence and control over the actions of the individual politician. Political organizations, like all other types of organizations, are products of social actions with a distinct culture; in the case of political parties, one which Schein (in Robey and Sales1994) typified as having a strong culture that stresses the commitment of members to the common cause of gaining power and controlling the political process. In turn, this distinct culture has been created and designed to further the beliefs, values and aspirations of particular groups of people within
the community. In the case of political organizations or political parties, the objectives are to gain control of the government and exert power on behalf of constituents with similar sets of values, beliefs and aspirations, through the process of elections at local, state and federal levels within the electorate.

The most identifiable face of the political organization is the individual politician. As previously discussed, performance for the individual politician is generally guided by the ideology of the party and personal beliefs, such as a strong belief of the individual’s choice in a more social type of representation. Participants also noted that personal values including trust, honesty, truthfulness, a sense of responsibility for their actions, and a strong personal belief system are just as important. Other skills include but are not limited to the ability to consult, negotiate and compromise on issues that affect constituents and stakeholders alike. However, the end result is often not to the liking of all constituents and stakeholders, even within the same political party, due to the varying values and beliefs systems each individual holds.

So what is it about the political system that influences, oversights and directs the actions of the individual politician? As mentioned, there is the party and parliament, each with its own respective rules and processes designed to exhibit expediency, effectiveness, efficiency and electoral change within the political process. How does this system influence and exert control over the individual politician? What is the purpose of the party and what does it want to achieve? Simply put, the objective of the political party is to jointly manage the resources and assets, both tangible and intangible, of like-minded people for the purposes of gaining power and control of the political process in a particular political jurisdiction for a set period of time.

How well that political party performs in exercising that power and control in government over the electorate and constituency determines whether they are re-elected to govern on behalf of the electorate for another term. For the individual politician tasked with being the agent for the organization in the electorate, the job involves being the representative face of the party, including representing constituent and stakeholder interests, undertaking fundraising activities to raised funds used in campaigning, advocating for constituents in parliament and also in the electorate, issues development and implementation, developing and implanting policy, producing political outcomes, and ultimately winning pre-selections within the party and public elections.
9.8.4 Agency theory and the individual politician

Egorov (2009) argued that two common arguments in favour of democratic electoral systems provide an effective method of aggregating the dispersed and heterogeneous information and interests of citizens. Democratic elections make politicians accountable to voters. Pettersson-Lidbom (2006) tested the choices of Swedish local government politicians who faced the threat of re-election, where the politician was the agent and voters were the principals. That is, Pettersson-Lidbom’s (2006) political agency research dealt with the appointment of politicians through democratic elections, and examined to what extent elections resolve the conflict of interest between the citizens and their elected representatives. He further tested whether Swedish local governments that were re-elected performed better than those that were replaced, and whether re-elected governments performed better than newly elected ones. Pettersson-Lidbom’s (2006) political agency research found strong evidence for political agency effects and its impacts on individual politicians.

Pettersson-Lidbom (2006) argued that in the first-generation models of political agency theory (e.g. Barro 1973; Ferejohn 1986), the assumption is that voters view all politicians as identical and employ a cut-off voting rule; that is, they retain the politician if their performance exceeds a certain threshold, or replace them if this threshold is not reached. Second-generation models (e.g., Banks and Sundaram 1998; Coate and Morris 1995; Fearon 1999; Rogoff 1990), politicians are explicitly modelled to be of different types (e.g. MPs have different motivations or competences for being politicians). Second generation models showed that equilibrium exists where voters use the cut-off voting rule; that is, they vote for the incumbent politician if, and only if, they believe they are a better candidate than the challenger, separating the politicians according to performance levels, with better politicians performing at higher levels than their challengers. The role of elections not only creates incentives, but selects politicians with desirable personal characteristics.

In order to achieve clear-cut predictions regarding an incumbent’s performance, it was found in this study, that understanding how elections function is the key to understanding agency problems in politics. Pettersson-Lidbom’s (2006) paper presented empirical evidence that
elections actually induce politicians to give voters what they want, which is consistent with predictions from political agency models. The results also confirmed the need for the individual politician to display high levels of communication skills when engaging with constituents and stakeholders.

9.8.5 Politicians’ performance and the influence of communication skills

A politician with superior communication skills can do more than get re-elected; they have the power to change the world (McGurk 2007). Green (2007) argued that political careers have been made (and unmade) through good (or bad) communication. Given that the world as we know it is governed by ‘instant’ communication via the World Wide Web and digital communication processes such as radio, television and print media, it is of no surprise that participants in this study nominated the media as having one of the largest, if not largest, influences on their performance. Participants further stated that political performance is only partly about finding the right policies for the time – just as important is the need to persuade colleagues, supporters and the people that your policies are right. Political performance is about setting a vision before the public and asking them to share it; thus creating a bond of common purpose. Participants argued that constituents and stakeholders only accept hardship and sacrifices if they know what the ultimate prize is going to be – this requires skilled communications.

Participants further stated that politics is largely about getting elected and making a meaningful contribution to public life; although it is also about interaction with others. The overriding message given by participants in this study is that a politician will not succeed unless they make themselves understood. If they do not know how to pay attention to what others think, and do not care about the dialogue that underlies the community, then their political career will be a short one.

Participants also believed that communication in the broadest sense is both formal and informal one-on-one discussions, including before mass audiences. Communications include writing, speeches, and discussions with small groups of fellow ‘travellers’ or in front of larger, not-always-friendly crowds. Communication also includes the formal setting of the House or Senate floor, or even sitting in an informal setting over a cup of tea or glass of
wine. Therefore, it is of no surprise that politicians often have to spend time choosing their words; although they often have to speak off the cuff, weighing the importance of their words even as they say them. Some people are born with this adlib ability, but for a lot of politician’s it is a skill learnt with practice, which is invaluable to them. When accepting an invitation to speak, the MP often will not know what the environment is going to be; not just in terms of the venue, which could be anything from shopping centre to someone’s living room. However, the reason for the communication often becomes irrelevant when other more urgent issues become the only topic the audience are interested in discussing.

Participants also noted that a crucial part of good political communications is the ability to listen to constituents, to members of an audience, and to political opponents. The importance of paying attention to the first two is obvious – politicians need to be able to address the concerns of the audience and be ready to learn from them. Any public policy debate of consequence has good points on both sides, and learning to welcome multiple perspectives is vital. Politics involves discussions among many interested parties – including lawmakers, lobbyists, policy analysts, journalists and constituents. Being a good politician means being a good conversationalist; not just simply scoring a few rhetorical points and then going back to the office. The political system depends on compromise, negotiation, contact and good outcomes; not just ‘drawing lines in the sand’ and demonizing opponents. More importantly, it depends on individual politicians doing the right thing by constituents, just like Sir Robert Peel and his ongoing battle between conscience and self-interest.

9.9 Why is it difficult to measure the performance of individual politicians?

In answering this question, participants argued that a combination of factors is present. They contended that one of the strongest factors is their personal belief that constituents do not trust politicians. To highlight this point, participants noted that constant monitoring by the media, often inaccurate and biased, makes it difficult for outsiders – be it constituents or stakeholders with minimal direct political knowledge or inside political information – to make any accurate assessment of what is actually happening.

Participants suggested that difficulties in measuring the performance of individual politicians may be affected by the following three points:
1. The constituent’s lack of political knowledge caused by the biased, inaccurate or ineffectual reporting by the media.

2. The lack of or poor communication between the politician and other participants in the political process.

3. The lack of formal political education in Australian schools.

It is evident in previous literature that states of confusion and ambiguity that exist in the Australian political landscape are important factors in understanding why it is difficult to measure the performance of individual Australian politicians. Although not deliberate, such ambiguity and confusion have been taken advantage of by politicians of all colours and creeds, resulting in people becoming confused as to the actual responsibilities of each level of government. On several occasions, participants noted that most people appear to be unaware of how the political process works at the different levels in Australia.

Drawing on reasons given in question one from the aforementioned list, a participant conveyed their perspective that measuring a politician’s performance is difficult due to the fact that everyone’s beliefs and values are unique to the individual. However, of all the different environmental factors that impact on the performance of individual politicians, ambiguity is likely to be the strongest, as it provides the politician with the ability to operate in areas where political and personal denial of certain facts (i.e. varying degrees of accountability and responsibility resulting from varying and changing circumstances) can be undertaken in uncertain and doubtful environments, subject to those very same varying and changing circumstances where public transparency is not an issue and the influence and control exerted by the organization over the actions of the individual politician are all pervading. In particular, political organizations, those that Schein (in Robey and Sales 1994) typified as a strong culture which stresses the commitment of members to the common cause of gaining power and controlling the political process, are created and designed to further the beliefs, values and aspirations of particular groups of people within the community. In the case of political organizations or political parties, the objectives are to gain control of the government and exert power on behalf of constituents with similar sets of values, beliefs and aspirations, through the process of elections at local, state and federal levels. The ‘face’ of the political organization is the individual politician.

As previously discussed, performance for the individual politician is guided by the ideology of the party and personal beliefs, such as a strong belief of the individual’s choice for a more
social type of representation, and values including trust, honesty, truthfulness, a sense of responsibility for their actions, and a strong personal belief system. Important skills include the ability to consult, negotiate and compromise on issues that affect constituents and stakeholders alike. However, it must be remembered that the end result may not always be to the liking of all constituents and stakeholders, even within the same political party, due to the varying values and beliefs systems each individual holds when relating to systems.

What are the important factors in political systems that influence, oversights and direct the actions of the individual politician? As mentioned, there are the party and parliament, each with their own respective rules and processes designed to exhibit expediency, effectiveness, efficiency and electoral change within the political process. How does this system influence and exert control over the individual politician? What is the purpose of the party and what does it want to achieve? Simply put, the main objective of the political party is to jointly manage the resources and assets, both tangible and intangible, of like-minded people for the purposes of gaining power and control of the political process in a particular political jurisdiction for a set period of time. As a result of how well that political party performs in exercising that power and control in government over the electorate and constituency will determine whether they are re-elected to govern on behalf of the electorate for another term.

For the individual politician tasked with being the agent for the organization in the electorate, the task involves being the representative of the party, including constituents and stakeholders, undertaking fundraising activities to raise funds used in campaigning, advocating for constituents in parliament and the electorate, developing issues and implementation, developing and implanting policy, producing outcomes, and ultimately winning pre-selection within the party and public elections.

An important part of the political performance process identified by participants in determining whether an individual politician or party is successful involves having individual political control of the party and government. However, one participant considered that it is more important to have total control of the pre-selection process, as this allows greater organizational and parliamentary control over who is selected, and ensures greater loyalty and obedience by the candidate to the demands of the party organization and parliamentary party leader. This was confirmed by another participant who noted that of the previous four or five pre-selections conducted in Victoria since the late 1970’s, early 1980’s every position has been filled by a party apparatchik. The same participant went on to say that there
appears to be sameness of process and organizational control between all political parties, whether it is Labor, Liberal or Greens. That is, potential candidates get a job with a politician or with a political party, and that builds up allegiances, debts incurred and owed, and obligations, and they always, within reason, do what they are told to do.

Furthermore, all politicians interviewed agreed that being in government and having ultimate power over the political process appears to be the pinnacle by which political performance is judged. However, some long-serving politicians seemed to take a more jaundiced view of the relationship between personal beliefs and values, and their impact on the politician’s performance. While they stated that beliefs and values do not play major roles in the decision-making in politics, the same participants contradicted this by later specifying that beliefs and values are the most important aspect as to why they became and remained politicians for considerable periods of time.

This contradiction is worth exploring – Pettersson-Lidbom’s (2006) political agency research on one hand stating that beliefs and values have no role to play (or a very limited role to play) in the making of political decisions, and on the other to state that these very same beliefs and values are so important that they influence you to stand for parliament and continue to represent the electorate. So what does the politician actually believe, and what are they trying to say? In making statements of this contradictory nature, is it that participants are confused as to what role beliefs and values really play, or are they corresponding with Bowler, Donovan and Karp’s (2006) research findings that found there is a difference between answers to questions by politicians in their academic surveys, and the actual outcomes displayed in public. Given that politicians and political parties pride themselves on representing the individual ideologies that make up the views of the community, then surely beliefs and values must have a definitive impact in supporting decisions that affect the electorate.

In reality, these decisions are Pettersson-Lidbom’s (2006) political agency research the outcomes that are used by constituents and stakeholders to judge that politician’s or political party’s performance. However, as identified by the participants, constituent and stakeholder dissatisfaction with those results is brought about by their widely differing beliefs and values systems; combined with the lack of inside knowledge as to how and why those political decisions are made. It is this contention that makes it difficult for constituents and stakeholders to accurately assess the politician’s performance. This distrust between
constituent and politician is brought about by the constituent’s or stakeholder’s lack of knowledge and the ambiguous political environment in which politicians operate. It is further compounded by the conflict that arises due to differing needs, beliefs and values, and the ideological political views of both constituents and stakeholders, often within the same political party. In turn, this directly contributes to the high levels of frustration and dissatisfaction by constituents and stakeholders, because they have very few tangible measures by which the politician’s actions and outcomes can be accurately measured, and no immediate way of taking action to remove the source of their anger and frustration, except every three or four years at election time.

In conclusion, it can be accepted that everyone, be it politician, constituent or stakeholder, defines political performance according to their own personal set of beliefs and values. Therefore, constituents will seek out potential political representatives who reflect their own set of personal beliefs and values. As a result, the candidate is elected and represents those constituents and the rest of the electorate in parliament. From the politician’s perspective, respondents agreed that positive political performance can be defined as having power and control over those around you, staying in government for as long as possible, and ensuring that the individual politician and party is re-elected.
CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

10.1 The contribution of this thesis

The purpose for undertaking the qualitative research reported in this thesis was to understand the factors influencing the performance of individual Australian politicians and constituent and stakeholder perceptions of politicians’ performance. Furthermore, the author argues that this thesis goes some way towards opening up a new field of investigation into performance measurement of the political individual that until today has remained largely overlooked, by both students and academics alike who have tended to examine performance from a systemic perspective rather than the human interaction that creates and shapes the system in the first place. The thesis contributes to the literature of performance measurement and management and to a greater understanding of the factors that influence performance in a non-business context. Finally, the author argues that this thesis adds further knowledge that will assist practitioners understand the actions that politicians consider when determining public policy, which in itself is a further field of study that has traditionally neglected to link belief and value processes that political practitioners bring to this important area of public interest. Therefore, the findings reported in this thesis will contribute the public administration literature.

As acknowledged in chapter 1 the complexity of this subject has meant that efforts have been concentrated on three research questions:

1. How do politicians define performance?
2. How do politicians negotiate difference between their own values and beliefs and those of their party?
3. Why is it difficult for constituents and stakeholders to measure the performance of individual Australian politicians?

By undertaking this research, the author argues that it is important for all constituents, regardless of whether they are a direct or indirect participant in the Australian political process to understand why it is important for them to be able to measure the performance of their own representative in Parliament and the political processes that have a major impact on their daily life. After all, the actions undertaken by politicians of all political
persuasions have a direct impact on both the short and long term desires and aspirations of each individual in the community.

10.2 Motivations for this thesis

As previously discussed in Chapter 1, evidence suggests that everyday people, whether they are a voter, constituent or stakeholder in the Australian political process, have expressed varying degrees of apathy, disgust, distrust or a pure dislike for politicians both individually and collectively (Harris 2013; Lucas 2010; Transparency International 2013; Coorey 2012). Voters’ complaints have ranged from an inability to determine how politicians make decisions (Hall 2013), a lack of political transparency (Assange 2013), the lack of ability to measure a politician’s performance (Rais 2013), to the politician’s lack of accountability to the voting public (Froomkin 2013).

As previously pointed out, Australian politicians have been quick to embrace international and home-grown principles and methods that ensure Australian workers are subject to increasing productivity targets and gains while reducing the natural, human and financial resources available to complete the tasks at hand (OECD 2013; UNEP/CSIRO 2013; Mohr et al. 2012). This has been especially true for the various state, territory and commonwealth public sectors (Bassett et al. 2010) and TSOs (Enhancing Australia's Productivity Growth, Annual Report 2007-08). Previous and current governments at all levels have adopted various models of performance management theories and tools, often based on the principles of the Balanced Score Card (Kaplan and Norton 1996) and similar models (Policy 2009; Neely, Adams and Kennerley 2002), to ensure productivity gains are made. Performance measurement and management models abound and are used to ensure workers are regularly monitored to ensure optimum performance is maintained with the minimal use of resources or support (OMB Circular A–11 2013).

As previously discussed, it can be argued that voters elect their representatives in parliament to manage and lead the community on important issues that affect communities and nations as a whole. However, this raises the question as to why politicians cannot be similarly measured for their ability to manage the respective state and federal parliaments and governments, and subsequent economies. Furthermore, why is it that voters cannot measure the performance of politicians in the same manner that stakeholders measure the performance of managers and leaders in the private sector? After all, it has been suggested that politicians paid for by taxpayer funds are nothing but representatives, delegates or
agents elected to represent the interests of their employers (Free Dictionary 2013; Spingola 2005) – the Australian community.

Participants (and politicians more generally) argue that their individual performance is ultimately measured at the ballot box every three or four years, depending on which parliament they belong to (Detrick and Goldfarb 2012). However, evidence suggests that this explanation has lost its impact on the rest of the workforce, which is now demanding increased accountability (Froomkin 2013) and transparency (Assange 2013) from its elected representatives in the electorate and parliament (Rhode and Packel 2009). It has become increasingly obvious that constituents and stakeholders do not trust their political representatives, because it is difficult both in cost and time for voters, constituents and stakeholders outside the political system to monitor and assess how well or badly an individual politician is performing (Rais 2013; Bartels 2008; Ter Bogt 2002; Jessinghaus 1999.

10.2.1 Impacts for constituents

As previously discussed in chapter 2, Brignall and Modell (2000) argued that the more organizational management and stakeholders (in this case political parties and stakeholders with vested interests; i.e., self-interest in ensuring certain political outcomes such as gaining or remaining in political power) try to affect political change by exercising choice, the less change they might actually produce, since their choices may be negated by the individual politician (Meyer and Jepperson 2000) whose needs include the need to ensure that they position themselves for successful re-election in the future. Therefore, it can be argued that the relative force of the pressures exerted by various politically motivated stakeholders is more likely to influence the balance between different performance dimensions (Meyer and Jepperson 2000). From this, it can be argued that the information often collected by individual politician’s is mostly used to target and garner stakeholder support which maybe limited and biased to favour a particular course of action (Brunsson 1990). In turn, this limited and/or biased information may lead to some imbalance between various performance dimensions observed by constituents, thus making it difficult for the constituent to accurately determine how effectively the politician is performing. Likewise, the political party, like the individual politician faces the problem that it also needs to ally itself with the targeted stakeholders due to the organization’s dependence on them (Modell 2003) if it is to be re-
elected at a future date. In doing so, self interest in gaining power based on short term policy making at the expense of providing long term strategic solutions will often prevail.

Therefore, in dealing with the conflicts inherent in such politically based trade-offs, the political parties and individual politicians will adopt seemingly ambiguous, irrational or ‘hypocritical’ strategies (Brunsson 1990) when providing customized information and courses of action for different stakeholder groups.

10.3 Definitions of terms used in this thesis

The term ‘politician’ is wide-ranging. In this thesis it has been used to define a person who is or has been professionally and actively involved in politics, especially party politics, or one who holds or has held a political office (Free Dictionary 2013). The following synonyms have also been used to describe a politician, or legislator for Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory: Member of Parliament, MP, legislator, representative, minister, policy maker, lawmaker; senator, elected official, councillor, assemblyman, or assemblywoman (The Free Dictionary 2013). Furthermore, the term ‘constituent’ is generally defined as a person who authorizes another to act as agent or principal. For the purposes of this thesis, a constituent is a member of a constituency and forms an essential part of the electorate as a voting member. However, a constituent may not reside or work in an area affected by a decision made by the local member, yet by that act, the constituent may be affected in other ways. For the purposes of this thesis, persons fitting anyone of the previous descriptor’s fall within the stakeholder classification. Again the term ‘stakeholder’ can be wide and varied.

10.4 Method of research used in this thesis

10.4.1 Considerations

The research examined the impacts of various factors including internal and external agendas, both personal and organizational. These included:

- views of politicians through the use of surveys and face-to-face interviews
- environment and context in which they operate
complexity of issues, including potential or actual outcomes, based on often scant information within strict timeframes

impact of communication, both internally and externally, and the role it plays in the performance of individual politicians, especially given the almost instantaneous media available in the 21st century.

Furthermore, this thesis explored issues of control and power exercised by politicians, to determine how politicians undertake their often conflicting duties, while also maintaining credibility and trust with constituents who may not always agree with the behaviours’ exhibited by individual politicians who are continually working under the imposition of re-election.

10.4.2 Research methodology

A qualitative research method was specifically selected as the most appropriate means to investigate factors influencing the performance measurement of Australian politicians for several reasons:

1. The exploratory nature of this research lends itself to qualitative methods as a way of gaining a big picture understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for measuring the performance of individual Australian politicians;
2. It provides insights into the problems and issues associated with measuring the performance of individual story politicians;
3. This research method can uncover the prevailing attitude and opinions of Australian politicians to the measurement of their performance;
4. The qualitative research method generates questions for later qualitative research.
10.4.3 Limitations faced

10.4.3.1 Thesis subject and nature of research
Given the subject of the research undertaken, it was always going to be a problem in presenting a comprehensive and balanced summation of some 120 years of research in the fields of organizational and individual performance measurement and management in the private, public and third sector organizations.

10.4.3.2 The research participants
As discussed in earlier chapters, individual politicians are generally reluctant to openly, publicly or privately discuss outcomes-based performance issues with political outsiders. This reluctance may be brought about by the individual politician’s desire not to present self-interested parties, including constituents, stakeholders, media, colleagues and/or opposition parties, with information that could be used to destabilize their personal position within the political world and broader community.

10.4.3.3 Impacts of participants’ behaviour on this thesis
Given the exploratory nature of this research and the contentious subject of questioning politicians about their performance and how it is measured, agreement was reached early on between this author, research supervisors and other interested academics that the potential for a low response rate in relation to this research was likely. However, it was also agreed that the nature of questions being asked (subject to Institutional Ethics approval) would provide a basis for closing the gap in current academic knowledge, and further provide an avenue for ongoing research into other unanswered questions that relate to measuring individual politician performance in both general and more specific senses.

In attempting to overcome this potential limitation, the following process was adhered to:

1. Two surveys were electronically mailed to all politicians at state and federal levels, as listed in the respective parliamentary or legislator guide.

2. An invitation was sent to a number of current and former politicians to participate in a digitally recorded, one-on-one interview.
To gain approval for this project, the researcher produced a number of institutionally-approved questions sourced from academic literature and practitioners in the field of performance management and politics (refer Annex 1), which were used in the electronic survey of all politicians listed on Australian parliamentary registers, including independent state and federal MPs, Liberal and National Party members, Labor and Australian Greens Party members, as well as minority state and federal parties represented in parliament and territory legislatures and the Senate.

The first survey process only received low response rates, which were explained by the fact that the Commonwealth Government was in the process of trying to pass controversial and difficult legislation, and that sitting times were going well into the night and early mornings. A further survey of the same politicians was therefore undertaken: (1) to allow any politician who was unable to participate the first time the opportunity to do so; and (2) to identify any schisms in the initial survey. Data obtained from the electronic surveys was then used to develop further in-depth questions, which were presented to individual participants who accepted an invitation to undertake a personal one-on-one recorded interview with this author. Again, the invitation to participate in face-to-face interviews was offered to all current politicians registered on all Australian parliamentary registers including independent state and federal MPs, Liberal and National Party members, Labor and Australian Greens Party members, as well as minority state and federal parties represented in parliament and the territory legislatures and the Senate. However, the ability to interview some was limited by time, travel and work commitments for both this author and potential participants.

Overall, it was felt that the low response rate was influenced by the nature of the research being undertaken. This was understandable, based on previous findings that annual and biannual performance interviews conducted with the members of the general workforce are reputed to cause substantial levels of stress and anxiety for all who participate (Carter and Delahaye 2005; Guillet, Hermand and Mullet 2002). There was no reason to suspect that Australian politicians would be any different.

10.5 Exploratory study conclusions

Evidence gained through the use of surveys and face-to-face interviews supports the literature reviewed, and in particular the views of Clark (2013) and Bartels (2008) who
suggested that individual politicians are generally not subjected to the same scrutiny as those they lead and manage. Evidence gained further suggests that politicians genuinely believe that they are different, in that they work within the constraints of an environment rich in complexity, secrecy and ambiguity (Bartels 2008). It also indicates that politicians are more likely to put their own self-interest above the survival of their colleagues and individual party when it comes down to ensuring their longevity in the political arena (Campbell 2013). Furthermore, results of this thesis found that politicians believe that it would be impossible to measure their performance in the same manner that others in the workforce are subjected to, as it is impossible to allocate arbitrary figures to a lot of the work they undertake. In one case, it was argued that in doing so, it would restrict the ability of the politician to undertake their duties, as they would be forced to concentrate on matters less important, but important enough to require them to meet the arbitrary performance measures imposed by such a process.

As expected, the surveyed politicians believed that their individual performance is ultimately measured at the ballot box once every three or four years (Deitrick and Goldfarb 2012). Therefore, the use of ‘some’ arbitrary set of performance measures would be misleading and of no real use. However, this author suggests that this explanation is losing its impact on the rest of the community which is now demanding increased accountability (Froomkin 2013) and transparency (Assange 2013) from its elected representatives in the electorate and parliament (Rhode and Packel 2009). It has become increasingly obvious is that constituents and stakeholders do not trust their political representatives (an important point recognized and highlighted by all participants in this study), because it is difficult both in cost and time for voters, constituents and stakeholders outside the political system to monitor and assess how well or badly an individual politician is performing (Rais 2013; Bartels 2008; Ter Bogt 2002; Jessinghaus 1999); thus making it difficult for them to measure the performance of individual Australian politicians.

10.5.1 Why is it difficult for constituents and stakeholders to measure the performance of an individual Australian politician?

An important part of the political performance process identified in this study when determining whether an individual politician or party is successful involves having individual
political control of the party and government. In support of this assertion, one participant argued that it is more important to have total control of the pre-selection process, as this allows greater organizational and parliamentary control over who is selected, and therefore ensures greater loyalty and obedience by the candidate to the demands of the party organization and parliamentary party leader. Furthermore, all participants interviewed agreed that being in government and having ultimate power over the political process is the pinnacle by which political performance or success is judged.

Some long-serving politicians appeared to take a more jaundiced view of the relationship between personal beliefs and values and their impact on the politician’s performance. While they stated that beliefs and values do not play major roles in decision-making in politics, the same participants later contradicted this by noting that beliefs and values are the most important aspect as to why they became and remained politicians for considerable periods of time. This contradiction is important – on one hand stating beliefs and values have no role to play (or a very limited role) in making political decisions, and then stating that these very same beliefs and values are so important that they influence the politician to stand for parliament and continue to represent the electorate. So what does the participant actually believe, and what are they trying to say?

In making contradictory statements of this nature, is it that participants are confused as to what value beliefs and values really play, or are they corresponding with the results of Bowler, Donovan and Karp’s (2006) research, in that there appears to be a difference between the answers to questions given by politicians in their academic surveys and the actual outcomes in reality. Given that politicians and political parties pride themselves on representing the individual ideologies that make up the views of the community, then surely beliefs and values must have a definitive impact in supporting decisions that affect the electorate.

In reality, the decisions that are made are in effect the outcomes that are used by constituents and stakeholders to judge that politician’s or political party’s performance. However, as identified by the participants, constituent and stakeholder dissatisfaction with those results is caused by the widely differing beliefs and values systems of constituents and stakeholders; combined with the lack of inside knowledge as to how and why those political decisions were made. This very point highlights the argument and reasons as to why constituents and stakeholders find it difficult to accurately assess the politician’s
performance. This distrust between constituent and politician is brought about by a constituent’s or stakeholder’s lack of knowledge and the ambiguous political environment in which politicians operates. It is further compounded by conflict that arises due to the differing needs, beliefs and values, and ideological political views of both constituents and stakeholders, often within the same political party. In turn, this directly contributes to the high levels of frustration and dissatisfaction by constituents and stakeholders, because they have very few tangible measures by which the politician’s actions and outcomes can be accurately measured, as well as no immediate way of taking action to remove the source of their anger and frustration except every three or four years at election time.

Finally, this research has shown that everyone, be it politician, constituent or stakeholder, generally defines political performance according to their own personal set of beliefs and values. Therefore, constituents traditionally seek out potential political representatives who reflect their own set of personal beliefs and values. As a result, the candidate is elected and represents those constituents and the rest of the electorate in parliament. From the politician’s perspective, participants agreed that positive political performance is defined as having power and control over those around you, holding government for as long as possible, and ensuring that the individual politician and party is re-elected at each election.

Difficulties for constituents and stakeholders when attempting to measure the performance of individual Australian politicians are enhanced by the fact that while in theory constituents are the individual politician’s employer, constituents are too diffuse or widespread; they have very little day-to-day control over politicians. This is further aggravated by poor inside political knowledge and political agency, where politicians are the principals in any relationship between the individual politician and constituents and stakeholders. This has generally resulted in constituents and stakeholders not having the power to demand performance measurement from individual Australian politicians, relying merely on ability to exercise their right to remove or retain the politician at the next election.

10.5.2 Key points determining why it is difficult for constituents and stakeholders to measure the performance of individual Australian politicians

Political performance is generally more complex than other types of performance, in that as constituents and stakeholders move away from and/or are further away from the actual
political performance outcome, they are less capable of analyzing the political performance due to a lack of knowledge as to what is happening in the world of the individual politician or party. In reality, constituents and stakeholders generally have a limited understanding of the issues and/or difficulty in collecting the relevant information required for analysis. The results of the surveys and interviews revealed that:

1. The politicians are the principals in any relationship between the individual politician and constituents and stakeholders. Constituents do not have the power to demand performance measurement.

2. Rational/calculative performance measurement systems are only valid in limited circumstances. As performance becomes more complex, rational/calculative systems became less capable of measurement. Whereas ‘functional performance’ (e.g. number of constituents phoned by the politician, the number of times the politician spoke in the House, or the number of times the politician appeared in the media) is relatively easy to measure. However, this sort of activity is not the most important aspect of political performance; therefore, traditional measurement systems cannot accurately measure politicians’ performances.

3. Political cartel systems encourage ‘successful politicians’ to support the current system, and reduce the difference between successful politicians. Therefore, there is little difference to measure.

4. Political performance is more complex than other types of performance in that, as constituents and stakeholders move away from and/or are further away from political performance, they are less capable of analyzing the individual politician’s political performance.

5. Constituents and stakeholders have limited understanding of the issues and/or difficulty in collecting the relevant information required for analysis.

6. Unlike business, the public sector or TSOs, there has been no agreed system to measure political performance.

7. Politicians use conflict, complexity and ambiguity to make performance measurement difficult.

8. Even where there are definable activities, behaviours and a definable measurement system, the rational/calculative approach has difficulty accurately measuring the individual’s or entity’s performance.
9. Normative values and beliefs have an impact on the performance of both the party and individual politicians. Sometimes these beliefs and values have an adverse effect on the actions of individual politicians when they fail to act in accordance with the beliefs, values and policies of the party. A prime example of this disconnect between personal and party-related values and beliefs is highlighted by the actions of Sir Robert Peel who campaigned for the removal of the infamous Corn Laws – a move not supported by his own Tory Government in 1861 (Hurd 2007). It can be argued that these relationships are not the same as the regular employer/employee (master/servant) relationship, as individual politicians have the ability to be mobile in their allegiances (e.g. switch to another party or strike out as an independent if some disagreement arises during their tenure with a particular party, such as the actions of the member for Frankston in 2013 who changed from being a member of the ruling Liberal Party to the cross-benches as an independent).

10. While in theory the constituents are the individual politician’s employer, constituents are too diffuse or widespread; they have very little day-to-day control over politicians and the way they undertake their duties.

Overall, this research has found that the above factors combined will continue to provide political outcomes and information that constituents and stakeholders will find difficult to measure the performance of individual Australian politicians. In undertaking this research, a number of issues that require further examination were identified as having the potential to further close any gaps in the academic knowledge that exists.

10.6 Recommendations for closing the academic knowledge gap

10.6.1 Recommendation 1

Evidence collected reveals that one size performance measurement methods do not fit all situations. Given the predominance of ambiguity and information asymmetry, it may be possible to develop a different model of research to measure the performance of individual politicians’ aside from the basic input and activity measures currently adopted in the field of business management.


10.6.2 Recommendation 2

One problem encountered when undertaking this thesis involved the difficulty in getting politicians to respond to both surveys and interviews. As previously discussed, even though complete anonymity, confidentiality of discussions and the assurance that the interviewer would adopt an apolitical approach was assured, some of the potential participants replied that they were either too busy or unable to dedicate the time required to respond to either the survey or interview. Discussions undertaken with Swinburne University Business and Enterprise faculty members revealed that the source of concern appeared to relate to the nature of questions that the former and present politicians were expected to answer. In one case, another researcher had undertaken an investigation in a different area with the same groups of politicians and had received a far higher response rate. After discussion, it was concluded that the confronting nature of the questions being asked by this researcher appeared to have had a negative impact on the response rate. However, in both survey and interview processes it appeared that self-interest was a major determinant in the overall response rate. It is therefore recommended that more preparatory work be undertaken to develop deeper researcher/politician relationships concerning any future research in this area. However, in doing so, the researcher must acknowledge that issues of ethics, research bias and potential conflicts of interest may emerge.

10.6.3 Recommendation 3

Another issue requiring further research concerns the cartelization of Australian political parties, and its impact on the ability of constituents and stakeholders to measure the performance of individual politicians and indeed the performance of the political party itself. Cause and effect is essential to cartel theory, and cartelization is associated with particular characteristics of parties. The needs of the party in public office often dominate the purpose and structure of the organization at the expense of the ideological, instrumental or participatory functions for which the party may have been founded. The steady reduction of party membership brings about changes to party structures and collusion at the system level. In turn, parties lose touch with society and become ever-more dependent on the state to operate for the reasons they were formed. The emphasis on adversarial systems also raises questions about the essence of the cartel thesis. Evidence suggests that parties around the world are responding to similar trends in globalization and de-politicization. Some are in a position to collude, while others are not. In particular, the nature of parties in
Australia continues to evolve in directions that cartel theory forecasts (e.g. experiments with candidate pre-selection undertaken by each of the main parties). Some of the features of cartelization in Australia could have evolved differently if the major parties had been in a position to engage in more collusion. However, the fact that state subventions and rent-seeking, in particular, have emerged in a competitive environment shows that the Australian parties are responding to similar pressures and incentives to those parties in other countries.

10.6.4 Recommendation 4

Issues raised by the participants, particularly the strong negative reaction of the subjects to the role played by the media and the apparent denial by the subjects of the need to measure performance, present fruitful areas for further research.
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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM (PICF)

Participant Information and Consent Form (Politician Survey)
Swinburne University of Technology
An investigation into the performance measurement of Australian politicians

Researchers

Primary Supervisor: Dr Ron Kluvers, Senior Lecturer in Accountancy
Co-supervisor: Professor Louise Kloot, Associate Dean of Research
Student Investigator: Shane Milroy, PhD Student

Introduction

You are invited to take part in this research project. This is because you are a current politician elected to represent the community in Parliament. This investigation seeks to gain knowledge regarding how individual Australian politicians identify and define performance in their profession. The investigation also seeks to identify the importance of your personal values in the political decision-making process.

Participation in this survey is purely voluntary and no conditions will be placed on you if you choose to participate. If you don’t wish to take part, you don’t have to.

Should you elect to participate, you are also entitled to withdraw from the study at any time with no further explanation. However, if you do decide to withdraw, information already collected during the research process will be removed from the project and destroyed.

If you do want to take part in the investigation, please complete the survey. By completing this survey, you are telling us that you:

- understand what you have read;
- consented to take part in the investigation; and
- consent to the use of your observations, opinions and information as described.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this investigation is to fill a gap in knowledge and enhance academic research regarding:

how politicians define performance in their profession;
investigate and identify indicators of performance relating to individual politicians;
add to existing knowledge in measuring the performance of an individual politician through academic research, rather than the use of anecdotal or hearsay evidence which cannot be supported.
identify how important are personal values to the individual politician and how they influence performance of the individual politician; and
identify why politicians may be forced to compromise personal values for the greater good of the community, party and constituents.
Why is this research being undertaken?

This research project is being undertaken as part of a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree by Shane Milroy at Swinburne University. The results of this investigation will be used by the researcher to obtain his degree. This research is investigator initiated and the project is self-funded.

The investigation aims to survey current serving members of Parliament at both the State Territory and Federal levels. To ensure the integrity of this investigation, any personal information about you which is gathered in the course of, and as the result of you participating in this project, will be de-identified and retained solely for the purpose of this investigation. Your details, although known to the researchers, will be secured in a locked security cabinet and will not be given to any unauthorised person; or identified in any publication or academic paper without your express written consent.

Please note that your email address was obtained via your Parliament's website.

What does my participation in this research involve?

You are requested to complete the survey from a personal perspective. This should take you no longer than 30 minutes to complete. Please note that it is important that you answer all questions from your own personal perspective and not from a “political” or “party” perspective.

What will happen to my answers that I give?

The analysis, interpretation, discussion and outcomes of your answers will be used to produce a thesis. The material may also be used in the preparation of other peer reviewed articles and publications.

All data, including survey results, computer files, notes, documents, and other correspondence will be encrypted and stored electronically. Access to data and information will be stored in password protected files. Access to the computer’s operation in general is already password protected and can only be accessed by the student researcher. Identifiable data will be stored separately from thesis data collected in a locked security cabinet at a secure location. Access is restricted solely to the student researcher. The student researcher’s computer system utilises regularly updated spy and spam software, which is automatically activated upon entry and at regular intervals during operation. Access is restricted solely to the student researcher.

Following the completion of the study, all material relevant to participants will be kept for five years. All electronic files will be transferred to a portable storage facility and stored in the student researcher’s security cabinet. All relevant electronic files contained on the computer will be deleted once the transfer of data has been completed. After the required period of time, all hard copies of data will be shredded.

What are the possible benefits?

The purpose of the investigation is to identify potential indicators which may provide you with benchmarks to judge the effectiveness of your performance within your constituency. Secondly, this research will be used to address the gap in knowledge that exists when attempting to measure performance in a normative environment.

What are the possible risks?

Risks of participation in this investigation are minimal. To assist with maintaining the anonymity no identifying material will be published in either the thesis or any subsequent academic publication. All data and information you give will be aggregated to ensure you cannot be identified.

Do I have to take part in this research project?
No. Given the purely voluntary nature of the research study, and the fact that it is your personal opinion being sought, not the views of a political party or organisation, you are free to participate or refuse to complete the survey.

**What will happen when my participation in this research project ends?**

Once you have completed and returned the survey, further participation is not required.

**How will I be informed of the results of this research project?**

When you have completed the survey, please include a note requesting a plain English copy of the report’s findings once the analysis and interpretation of data collected is completed.

**How can I access my information?**

In accordance with relevant Victorian and/or Australian privacy and other relevant laws, you have the right to access the information collected and stored by the researchers about you. You also have the right to review and request that any inaccuracies be corrected. Please contact one of the researchers named at the end of this document if you would like to access your information.

**Is this research project authorised?**

The ethical aspects of this research project have been approved by the Swinburne University Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) in line with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

This research will be carried out according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia. This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

**Who can I contact?**

The person you may need to contact will depend on the nature of your query. Therefore, please note the following:

For further information

If you want any further information concerning this project or if you have any problems which may be related to your involvement in this project, or any questions about being a research participant in general, you can contact any of the following people:

**Name:** Dr Ron Kluvers  
**Role:** Principle Investigator  
**Tel:** (03) 9214 8435  
**Email:** rluvers@groupwise.swin.edu.au

**Name:** Professor Louise Kloot  
**Role:** Associate Investigator  
**Email:** lkloot@groupwise.swin.edu.au

**Name:** Shane Milroy  
**Role:** Student Investigator

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An investigation into the performance measurement of Australian politicians

Section A

Demographic Information

Gender

- Female
- Male

Age Group

Please indicate the age group you belong to

- 18 – 30
- 31 – 50
- 51 – 70
- 71 and above

Parliamentary Membership

Please indicate which house you are a member of

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<th>Upper House</th>
<th>Lower House</th>
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<td>Territory</td>
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How many years have you been in the legislature?

- Less than 1 year
- Between 1 and 4 years
- Between 5 and 10 years
- Between 11 and 15 years
- More than 15 years
Section B

Politicians and Performance

With each question or statement below there is space provided for you make a comment. Also please indicate your response to the statement by circling a number 1 to 5 where 1 means that you strongly agree, 2 indicates that you agree, 3 shows that you are uncertain, 4 means that you disagree and 5 shows that you strongly disagree.

1. Are personal beliefs and values important to you as a politician?

Comment:

Please rank the following beliefs and values in order of importance to you as a politician

<table>
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<th>No.</th>
<th>Individual beliefs and values</th>
<th>Importance</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Inventiveness</td>
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<td>Tenacity</td>
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<td>Achievement</td>
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<td>Honesty</td>
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<td>Integrity</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Team player</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Protection of the less able and capable within the community</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Equal opportunity for all within the community</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Tolerance of diversity</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Freedom of choice</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Truthfulness</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Ability to make good decisions</td>
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2. As a current or former politician, how do you define political performance?

Comment:

Political performance is easy to define.
3. What influences do your personal beliefs and values have on your ability to perform as a politician?

Comment:

My personal beliefs and values affect my ability to perform as a politician.

No. 1 is Strong agreement  No. 5 is strong disagreement

4. In attempting to do the right thing by constituents, a politician should do whatever he or she thinks is right?

Comment:

Politicians need to be independent when acting in the interest of the constituency.

No. 1 is Strong agreement  No. 5 is strong disagreement

5. Research has identified that citizens are increasingly stating in surveys that they lack confidence in and do not trust political institutions and politicians. In your opinion, why is that so?

Comment:

Politicians are not trusted by the citizenry.

No. 1 is Strong agreement  No. 5 is strong disagreement

6. What are your thoughts about political education levels of constituents?

Comment:

Constituents are well educated about politics.
7. What are your thoughts on research that constituents expect public servants, like judicial and law enforcement officers, to have higher levels of integrity than politicians?

Comments:

Politicians should be expected to have high levels of integrity.

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<th>No. 1 is Strong agreement</th>
<th>No. 5 is strong disagreement</th>
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Comment:

8. Do you believe that it is sometimes necessary, not to be completely honest when dealing with constituents?

Comments:

Politicians should always be honest when dealing with constituents.

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Comment:

9. If the performance measurement of individual politicians is an important part of the political process, why do you think many politicians are concerned about participating in open and transparent environments?

Comments:

Politicians should be performance measured by the constituency.

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Comment:

10. How do you balance the competing interests of social responsibility and dependence on large business revenue and taxes to fund government business?

Comment:
Large business revenue and taxes are more important than the government’s social responsibility.

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Comment:

11. In your opinion, do politicians have an obligation to all constituents, or only those who voted for you?

Comments:

Constituents who voted for me are more important than those who didn’t.

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Comment:

12. In your opinion, if an individual politician’s performance was made public to the electorate & voters on a regular basis; do you believe it would affect the way in which you would undertake your electoral duties?

Comment:

I would perform better as a politician if my performance was subject to public monitoring.

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<thead>
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<th>No. 1 is Strong agreement</th>
<th>No. 5 is strong disagreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment:
Appendix 2 Interviews

Discussion points

What is or was your position in politics?

Federal  □  MHR  □  Senate  □
State  □  MLA  □  MLC  □
Local Government Councillor  □  Local Council Mayor  □

1. Are personal beliefs and values important to you as a politician or councillor?

Please rank the following beliefs and values in order of importance to you as a politician.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Individual beliefs and values</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Inventiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tenacity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ambition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please rank the following beliefs and values in order of importance to you as a politician or councillor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. 1 is most important</th>
<th>No. 10 is least important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

SUHREC authorisation number: 2009/272
Participant Code Number:
Date of interview:
Table 2: Party beliefs and values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Party beliefs and values</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Team player</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Protection of the less able and capable within the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Equal opportunity for all within the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tolerance of diversity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Freedom of choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Truthfulness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. As a current or former politician, or councillor, how do you define political performance?

3. What influences do your personal beliefs and values have on your ability to perform as a politician or councillor?

4. In attempting to do the right thing by constituents, a politician or councillor should do whatever he or she thinks is right?

5. Research has identified that citizens are increasingly stating in surveys that they lack confidence in and do not trust political institutions and elected representatives. In your opinion, why is that so?

6. What are your thoughts about political education levels of constituents?

7. What are your thoughts on research that constituents expect public servants, like judicial and law enforcement officers, to have higher levels of integrity than politicians or councillors?

8. Do you believe that it is sometimes necessary, not to be completely honest when dealing with constituents?

9. If the performance measurement of individual politicians or councillors is an important part of the political process, why do you think many politicians or councillors are concerned about participating in open and transparent displays and accountable environments?

10. How do you balance the competing interests of social responsibility and dependence on large business revenue and taxes to fund government business?

11. In your opinion, do politicians or councillors have an obligation to all constituents, or only those who voted for you?

12. In your opinion, if an individual politician’s or councillor’s performance was made public to the electorate & voters on a regular basis; do you believe it would affect the way in which you would undertake your electoral/council duties?
Appendix 3: Ethics Clearance

To: Dr Ron Kluvers, FBE/Mr Shane Milroy

Dear Ron and Shane

**SUHREC Project 2009/272 An investigation into the performance measurement of Australian politicians**

Dr Ron Kluvers FBE Mr Shane Milroy
Approved Duration: 25/05/2010 To 31/01/2011 [Adjusted]

I refer to the ethical review of the above resubmitted project protocol undertaken on behalf of Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) by SUHREC Subcommittee (SHESC4) at a meeting held on 26 February 2010. Your response to the review, as e-mailed on 20 April 2010 was put to a nominated SHESC4 delegate for consideration. Your further e-mails of 13 and 20 May clarifying some remaining items appear in line with the approval conditions set.

I am pleased to advise that, as submitted to date, the project has approval to proceed in line with standard on-going ethics clearance conditions here outlined.

- All human research activity undertaken under Swinburne auspices must conform to Swinburne and external regulatory standards, including the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and with respect to secure data use, retention and disposal.

- The named Swinburne Chief Investigator/Supervisor remains responsible for any personnel appointed to or associated with the project being made aware of ethics clearance conditions, including research and consent procedures or instruments approved. Any change in chief investigator/ supervisor requires timely notification and SUHREC endorsement.

- The above project has been approved as submitted for ethical review by or on behalf of SUHREC. Amendments to approved procedures or instruments ordinarily require prior ethical appraisal/ clearance. SUHREC must be notified immediately or as soon as possible thereafter of (a) any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants and any redress measures; (b) proposed changes in protocols; and (c) unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

- At a minimum, an annual report on the progress of the project is required as well as at the conclusion (or abandonment) of the project.

- A duly authorised external or internal audit of the project may be undertaken at any time.

Please contact me if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance. The SUHREC project number should be quoted in communication. Chief Investigators/Supervisors and Student Researchers should retain a copy of this e-mail as part of project record-keeping.

Best wishes for the project.

Yours sincerely

Kaye Goldenberg
Secretary, SHESC4

Kaye Goldenberg
Administrative Officer (Research Ethics), Swinburne Research (H68)
Swinburne University of Technology
To: Dr Ron Kluvers, FBE/Mr Shane Milroy

Dear Ron and Shane

**SUHREC Project 2009/272 An investigation into the performance measurement of Australian politicians**
Dr Ron Kluvers FBE Mr Shane Milroy
Approved Duration: 25/05/2010 To 31/01/2011 [Adjusted]
Project modification: March 2011

I refer to your email of 3 March 2011 in which you requested a modification to the protocol by a change in the methodology. The request was put to a delegate of the relevant SUHREC Subcommittee (SHESC4) for consideration.

I am pleased to advise that, as submitted to date, the modified project/protocol may continue in line with standard ethics clearance conditions previously communicated and reprinted below.

Please contact me if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance, citing the SUHREC project number. Copies of clearance emails should be retained as part of project record-keeping.

As before, best wishes for the project.

Regards

Kaye Goldenberg
Secretary, SHESC4

***************************************************************************
Kaye Goldenberg
Administrative Officer (Research Ethics)
Swinburne Research (H68)
Swinburne University of Technology
P O Box 218
HAWTHORN VIC 3122
Tel +61 3 9214 8468
To: Dr Ron Kluvers, FBE/Mr Shane Milroy

Dear Ron and Shane

SUHREC Project 2009/272 An investigation into the performance measurement of Australian politicians

Dr Ron Kluvers FBE Mr Shane Milroy
Approved Duration: 25/05/2010 To 31/01/2011 [Adjusted]
Project modification: March 2011
Project Extension to: 30/12/2011

Thank you for your progress report for the above project received on 29 March 2011 which included a request for an extension of duration.

There being no change to the protocol as revised and approved to date, I am authorised to issue an extension of ethics clearance in line with standard on-going ethics clearance conditions previously communicated and reprinted below.

Please contact the Research Ethics Office if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance, citing the SUHREC project number. Copies of clearance e-mails should be retained as part of project record-keeping.

Best wishes for the continuing project.

Yours sincerely,

Kaye Goldenberg

for Keith Wilkins
Research Ethics Officer

**************************
Kaye Goldenberg
Administrative Officer (Research Ethics)
Swinburne Research (H68)
Swinburne University of Technology
P O Box 218
HAWTHORN VIC 3122
Tel +61 3 9214 8468
Fax +61 3 9214 5267
To: Dr Ron Kluvers/Mr Shane Milroy, FBE

Dear Ron and Shane

**SUHREC Project 2009/272 An investigation into the performance measurement of Australian politicians**

Dr Ron Kluvers, FBE; Mr Shane Milroy

Approved Duration of Human Research Activity: 25/05/2010 To 30/12/2011

I confirm receipt of the final report on 22 November 2012 on the human research activity conducted for the above project in line with ethics clearance conditions issued.

Best wishes for your higher degree submission.

Yours sincerely

Keith

-----------------------------------------------
Keith Wilkins
Secretary, SUHREC & Research Ethics Officer
Swinburne Research (H68)
Swinburne University of Technology
P O Box 218
HAWTHORN VIC 3122
Tel +61 3 9214 5218
Fax +61 3 9214 5267
To: Dr Ron Kluvers, FBE/Mr Shane Milroy

Dear Ron and Shane

**SUHREC Project 2009/272 An investigation into the performance measurement of Australian politicians**
Dr Ron Kluvers FBE Mr Shane Milroy
Approved Duration: 25/05/2010 To 31/01/2011 [Adjusted]
[Extended to: 30/06/2011]

I refer to your e-mail of 27 May 2010 requesting an extension of ethics clearance to 30 June 2011 for the above project.

There being no change to the protocol as revised and approved to date, I am authorised to issue an extension of ethics clearance in line with standard on-going ethics clearance conditions previously communicated and reprinted below.

Please contact the Research Ethics Office if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance, citing the SUHREC project number. Copies of clearance e-mails should be retained as part of project record-keeping.

Best wishes for the continuing project.

Yours sincerely,

Kaye Goldenberg

for Keith Wilkins
Research Ethics Officer
*******************************************
Kaye Goldenberg
Administrative Officer (Research Ethics)
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Swinburne University of Technology
P O Box 218
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