

Wildlife Advocates: **A Case Study of the Wildlife** **Preservation Society of** **Queensland**

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Queensland, Australia - June, 2005

“For Earth is Spirit”

Judith Wright

Acknowledgements

I would like to greatly thank the support of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland during my internship. In particular, thank you Des Boyland for your patience, knowledge, advice and sharing your experience. Thanks Ewa, Ana, and all the friendly volunteers that work at WPSQ. And, thank you James Whelan for being an authentic testimony, exceptional guide and passionate advocate.

Introduction

This paper analyses the nature of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (WPSQ) as an environmental advocacy group. Initially, an overview of the formation of the organisation and its components is provided. Then, strategies, tactics and approaches will be analysed through the description of two campaigns where WPSQ has had a leading role. Finally, results from interviews, made to non-members of the organisation, will be discussed. It is important to note that the information presented in this case study resulted from the authors involvement with the Society through an internship. Books, magazines, pamphlets, newsletters and personal communications were mainly the sources of the information.

Background

Australia is identified as a mega-diverse country. It is home to more than one million species, many of which are found nowhere else in the world. Changes to the landscape and native habitat as a result of human activity have put many of these unique species at risk. Over the last two hundred years many species of plants and animals have become extinct. In our time, one of the main threats to wildlife in Australia is the clearing of habitat, much of which is carried out on private or leasehold terrestrial and aquatic sites. As a consequence, there is an urgent need for protective measures of plants and animals whose survival is at risk is evident.

In the struggle of the 1960s and 1970s to protect the Great Barrier Reef from mining and oil drilling, a new organisation within Queensland was appearing. President Judith Wright (poet) and co-founders David Fleay (naturalist), Brian Clouston (publisher) and Kathleen MacArthur (artist) formed the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (WPSQ) in 1963 with the aim of preserving the flora and fauna of Australia.

The President's figure, as one of Australia's leading poets, her strength as a writer and negotiator was of immense importance for the dissemination of the Society and the success of their efforts. She was so well known that was able to put the cause of conservation very effectively into the public. Campaigners fought a difficult battle against national and international industries. In the end, and by joining forces with other conservation groups, success came into sight by the declaration of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. WPSQ was then seen as a rejuvenator of the interest in wildlife conservation throughout Queensland. This group formed one of the first modern conservation groups to adopt an advocacy position towards the environment in Queensland and recognised the integral role of environmental education in an effective conservation movement (Bowen, 1994).

Since 1962, the Society has been spreading all over the State holding nowadays 20 branches with designated member representatives and approximately 1100 members. The aims of the Society are to:

- Preserve the flora and fauna of Australia by all lawful means
- Educate the community in an understanding of the principles of conservation and preservation of the natural environment.
- Discourage by all legal means, the possible destruction, exploitation and unnecessary development of any part of the natural environment.
- Encourage rational land use and proper land planning of existing and future development, and the use of the natural environment and its management.

As part of their educating mission WPSQ launched the publication of the *Wildlife Australia Magazine* in 1963. This magazine has mainly focused on wildlife and conservation topics. Throughout the years, this magazine has evolved on the type of articles it publishes and the

audience it targets. The first issues seemed to be merely focused on conservation articles targeted to readers with primarily scientific interests. In addition, some articles were political in nature, attacking the Government for lack of action and involvement to protect Queensland's wildlife (Jarrott, 1966). The latest editions of the magazine show a broadening array of articles that are written in "easy to understand" language accessible for any reader interested in Nature. Their educational focus is more evident and it includes a section for children, photography and websites related to Conservation topics, as well. An important feature of this magazine is the 'fixed' income source it represents to the Society, which members consider vital for the development of their campaigns and programmes.

With regards to the internal communication processes within the members, a newsletter is one of their most important channels for: informing about current issues, progress of their campaigns or any other notice that has to do with the organisational structure of the Society. In addition, WPSQ maintains a website [www.wildlife.org.au] with information about the organisation, their aims, issues and commitments towards the preservation of wildlife. Information about Queensland's endemic wildlife and Wildlife Australia Magazine is offered as well. This could be thought as a type of merely computerised activism where activists use internet's infrastructure to communicate and connect people (Wray, 1998). Their central device of action is e-mail, mainly used for the creation and maintenance of solidarity networks. In addition, this website is also used to call for action. A "Green Diary" is updated with the events where WPSQ will participate and information about their tactics for specific issues is exposed thus, encouraging members and non-members to become involved. This level of e-activism could be thought as an upgrade in the 'passive' nature of computerized activism. On the whole, the communication processes that WPSQ maintains internally have shown to be quite effective for the outcomes of their campaigns. Evidence of this, is further presented.

In Action

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland is involved in campaigns that cover issues mainly related with the preservation of wildlife and/or their habitat. These issues range from reduction in vegetation clearing, preserving and restoring endangered mahogany glider and bilby habitats, to arresting the decline of dugong populations. They also participate in campaigning against dam proposals and sand and oil shale mining projects and in promoting the environmental importance of national and marine parks.

As mentioned before, participation in the Great Barrier Reef Campaign has been one of the most important achievements since the beginnings of the Society. Two other campaigns have been decisive to shape WPSQ's activism in the recent years. The first was the development of a Vegetation Management Plan for the State and the second was the Banning of the Duck and Quail Hunting in Queensland – which persists to date. The strategies and actions WPSQ has taken during this processes are similar in some aspects but dissimilar in others, and the extent up to which of these have been successful will be analysed next.

Vegetation Management Plan Campaign

Vegetation is the basis of any ecosystem. It offers diverse habitat, food and shelter for native fauna and helps improve air and water quality, prevent water runoff and soil erosion. In the early 1990s WPSQ considered that guidelines for Vegetation Management in Queensland did not have a high profile among landowners, government and development industries. The

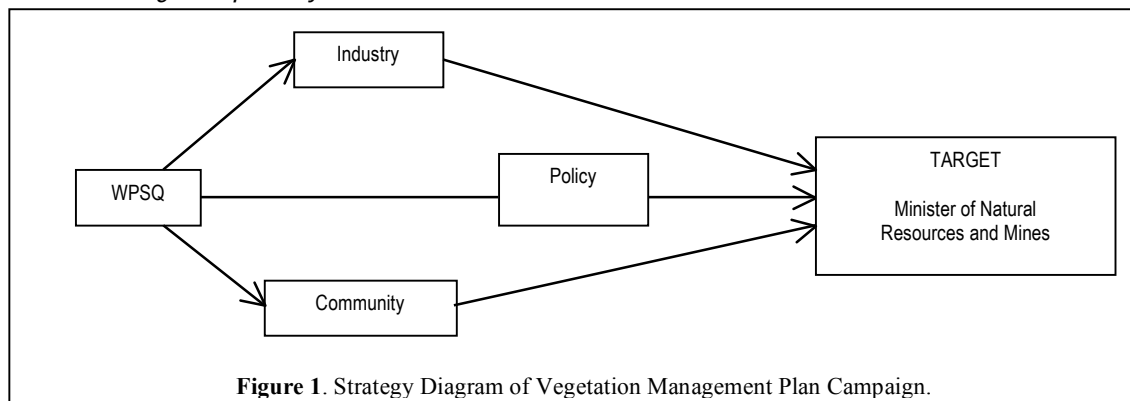
existing legislation, at that time, was considered to be poor since it protected wildlife but at the same time it supported economic development by approving the consumption and use of lands. Subsequently, WPSQ decided to campaign towards the development and application of effective legislation to manage vegetation.

The decision maker (Target) for this campaign was the Minister of Natural Resources and Mines. WPSQ devised a strategy that focused on lobbying the government through submissions, draft policies and position papers. Thus, an important aspect of this campaign was the proximity they maintained with the people that influenced the decision-makers. As Des Boyland, WPSQ Policies and Campaigns Manager, said *...the position we took was to rather be at the table for discussing an issue*. This clearly pinpoints a reformer role through politics of engagement that the Society sustained in this campaign.

One of their first moves was to organize a meeting where specialists of different fields (as agriculture and farming) and representatives of communities were called. During this, the issue was exposed and explained and the objectives of WPSQ were presented. Their conclusion was to develop a policy that would propose a vegetation management plan that favoured both, farmers and wildlife.

On the following years, the strategy used to achieve their goal was targeted to the government but always by gaining support from the community (figure 1). Despite the fact that their efforts were not really successful, they continued struggling.

Representatives were sent to lobby government advisers and decision-makers in face to face meetings. The key factor for the success of these meetings was how well informed the representatives were on the campaign's outcomes. In addition WPSQ hired consultants for training members to have lobby and negotiation skills. As stated by one of the Coordinators of the Department of Natural Resources and Mines:... *"I was impressed that WPSQ made an attempt to maintain good communication across the regional and state network of WPSQ representatives involved with the process. I understand this included teleconferencing and occasional regional/state meetings. Representatives would also distribute updates/reports which showed an effort on being transparency."*



Guidelines and statements of change to the current policies were proposed to the government through written submissions. The community was kept informed about the progress of the campaign through their newsletter and website and WPSQ gained supporters across the State.

Another important tactic was that they allied with other environmental advocacy groups and industry groups – in particular with AgForce which is an organisation that represents Queensland's rural producers. The latter turned out to be quite interesting for the process

since both groups talked about their interests in developing a vegetation management plan and came to an agreement without compromising each other organisation's values.

Internally, this alliance and the outcome of other tactics were eliciting a variety of positions within WPSQ. Some members said that the process was well managed and that the position of WPSQ was to keep a discreet distance with the decision makers and Industry. Instead, other members argued that WPSQ was giving away issues that they were initially fighting for. Consequently, WPSQ developed an internal survey to ask their members about the process and WPSQ's director visited each one of the branches. In addition, the director arranged meetings with the members to inform about the situation, the process development and achievements, and to hear members' petitions. This enabled WPSQ to include all members in the campaign and give them the possibility to have their say. This internal process led to two outcomes. In first place, in spite of the effort to get all members to agree, unfortunately, some key figures left the organisation. Secondly, the participation of the community encouraged the formation of the Regional Vegetation Management Plans.

These plans emerged as an integral part of the State Government's framework for managing vegetation in Queensland. They were not considered to satisfy the Society's most desirable standards, but they were a step in the right direction (Boyland, 2002). The subsequent planning process provided opportunities for landholders and other interested parties to come together and endeavour to develop shared practical outcomes of how vegetation would be managed in their region. About 350 community members were involved in developing the 24 plans that covered the State.

Finally, in conjunction with their allies, WPSQ developed policies and guidelines that incorporated biodiversity protection and conservation which were included in the 'Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2004' (Hammond, 2004).

Duck and Quail Hunting Banning Campaign

Banning of recreational duck and quail shooting in Australia is an issue that has gained supporters all across the Country in recent years. These birds are permitted to be shot each year in wetlands of Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, Queensland and some rice fields of NSW when hunting seasons are declared by the Government. In particular, Queensland policies state that the activity of duck and quail hunting is considered as a fair acceptable and "recreational" activity. But because of the inaccurate practices of hunters, the inappropriate means of usage of shotguns and the great demands and concern of people for banning the activity, the issue has now an animal welfare focus.

In Queensland, shooting occurs in private lands and there are six species of duck, and two species of quail that can legally be hunt each year. The duck species are: plumed whistling duck (*Dendrocygna eytoni*), wandering whistling duck (*Dendrocygna arcuata*), maned duck (*Chenonetta jubata*), grey teal (*Anas gibberifrons*), hardhead (*Aythya australis*) and pacific black duck (*Anas superciliosa*). The quail species are: stubble quail (*Coturnix pectorales*) and brown quail (*Coturnix ypsilophorus*) (Animal Liberation Queensland).

More than the shooting of these animals, there are indirect consequences that have become also important. In the first place, many protected species are illegally shot during the season. In addition, spent shots from lead pellets that are ingested by birds and other wildlife are causing lead poisoning. Hunters may need six to eight pellets from a shot to kill one duck and many times these pellets end in other species or do not kill the duck and leave them injured

(Boyland, 2004). Furthermore, contamination of wetlands and soil is occurring due to residues of lead pellets.

Animal welfare and conservation groups oppose to this practice. What they argue is that it is extremely difficult to understand how the practice of disturbing and flushing out flocks of duck and quail for the sole purpose of killing them can be considered sporting.

Therefore, WPSQ decided to develop a campaign which aimed to end these practices in Queensland. For this campaign they had two targets: The Minister for the Environment and The Director General of the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The initial approach WPSQ took was to lobby the government about changing the approved use of lead shot of the pellets used for hunting, because of contamination of the environment. In 2002, it was advised that lead shots would be banned. This ban came into force the following year becoming their first success.

Another issue that WPSQ faces for this campaign is the authorisation of Damage Mitigation Permits. These may be issued, under the relevant legislations through the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), if a landholder can establish wildlife (in this case ducks and/or quails) is causing or may cause significant economic loss.

In Queensland when there has been no duck season declared there has been little increase in the number of requests for damage mitigation permits. A similar experience occurred in Western Australia. However, in New South Wales the demand for damage mitigation permits has increased significantly which is considered to be a reflection of the different types of crops grown in the various states.

During 2002 there were significant changes of the executives of WPSQ and Birds Queensland. This allowed the negotiation of an alliance in 2003 with this and other groups, such as Animal Liberation Queensland, The Queensland Conservation Council and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). They joined forces to continue lobbying the Government but now, the demand was to cease the hunting. As a result of successful representations to government decision-makers, there was no hunting season declared in 2003. This second achievement gave weight and empowerment to the campaigning groups and the issue gain media attention.

Unfortunately this success had a backlash in 2004, when a hunting season was declared. The Government was advised by EPA staff and the hunting organisations that although bird population numbers were relatively low there were good rains being experienced and an average breeding season could be expected. The alliance of ENGOs pointed out that the rains were an aberration and that weather forecasts predicted continued draught. Unfortunately, the alliance was correct and there were no sufficient rains, therefore the population of ducks and quails decreased.

This moved WPSQ and its allies to think of a strategy so that no season was declared for 2005. Besides continuing to lobby with government and EPA, this time tactics were focused on gaining public attention and supporters by handling the issue as animal cruelty. A shift in tactics was then seen within the conservative style used before. To have media coverage, a protest was held in Brisbane's Botanic Gardens. A blockade with stunts and placards was performed in front of the EPA's building. Letters were written to editors of magazines. Media Releases and brief notices were published in local papers – as the *Courier Mail*. Complaint calls were made through radio stations. Stickers and pre-printed postcards were being distributed to the public. Internally WPSQ kept its members well informed through the

newsletter and web site (accessible to all public). All this was made so that wildlife supporters throughout Queensland could urge the decision makers to place a permanent ban on the recreational shooting of ducks and quails. These tactics could be considered to fit more in the change agent and rebel role according to Moyer (1990). WPSQ's change agent role is evident in the empowerment of people through education and involvement of the society in the change process, and putting issues on political agenda. On the flip, a glimpse of a rebel role was seen characterised by Moyer (1990) as using protests to 'say No' to positive values and using non violent direct action.

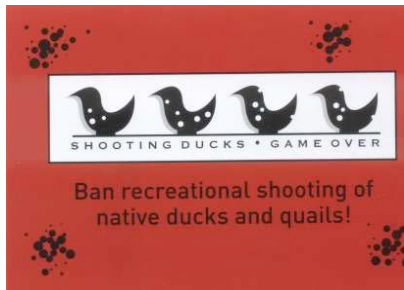


Figure 2. Sample of pre-printed postcards distributed.

Persistent lobbying and communication of the facts to government by members of the public and the environmental alliance resulted in the Queensland Environment Minister Desley Boyle announcing the suspension of the 2005 duck and quail hunting season (Foley, 2005). In announcing there would be no season, Minister Desley Boyle referred to the State's drought conditions, the dramatic fall in duck numbers since 1984, the lack of surface water in dams and the dry long-term weather forecast (see Appendix).

However, a permanent Queensland ban on all future hunting remains to be achieved and WPSQ has the purpose to continue on pressuring the Queensland Government to declare it. Again, a change in strategy is being devised since the



Figure 3. Protest at the EPA.

Gooses not cooked

WORD about the traps that last year's campaign against duck and quail shooting was not wasted, with the issue attracting a surprising number of supporters among Labor's MLA ranks.

Figure 4. Notice published in the Courier Mail. 29/01/2005

Management Plan for the Duck and Quail hunting seasons is under revision. This is the opportunity that WPSQ was looking for to influence decision makers to change this management plan. Intense lobbying has been done through face to face meetings and submissions. The position of the environmental alliance group is to ban duck and quail hunting completely. And, the position of the duck hunters adopted for 2005 is that they would be willing to reduce only to 2 species (instead of

6) and also reduce the number of killed ducks they are allowed to kill; in contrast, the position of quail hunters is no negotiation and they want their hunting season (Boyland, pers. comm.). The process is still in progress until the revision of the Management Plan and its outcome are released.

Analysis

a) Tactics

Once WPSQ's objectives, aims and actions have been described and its most representative campaigns have been explained, it is important to consider which tactics have resulted to be more effective and under what circumstances. In addition, how WPSQ is perceived by key figures outside the environmental organisation will be explored.

In order to analyse the tactics within their strategies, it is a priority to have a clear definition of both terms. A *strategy* is the design of what approach will the campaign follow combined with an analysis of power relationships; alternatively, *tactics* are the individual steps in carrying out a strategy so as to put pressure on the Targets (Bobo *et al*, 2001). According to the tactics used for each campaign, the following table represents the tactics used in common and the ones used only for one of the campaigns.

| Tactic | VMP* | Duck and Quail |
|--|------|----------------|
| Written submissions to Government | ✓ | ✓ |
| Send representatives to lobby targets | ✓ | |
| Meetings with council representatives | ✓ | |
| Postcards | | ✓ |
| Face to face lobbying with government representatives | ✓ | ✓ |
| Lobby of advisers to Premiers | ✓ | |
| WPSQ web page | ✓ | ✓ |
| E-petitions | | ✓ |
| Placards | | ✓ |
| Written letters to Government | ✓ | ✓ |
| Hire consultants for training members | ✓ | |
| Formed alliances with other conservation organisations | ✓ | ✓ |
| Stickers | | ✓ |
| WPSQ newsletter | ✓ | ✓ |
| Stunts | | ✓ |
| Protests | | ✓ |
| Notices in newspapers | | ✓ |
| Meetings with WPSQ members | ✓ | |
| Phone calls to radio stations | | ✓ |
| Meetings with community members | ✓ | |
| Letters to editors of magazines | | ✓ |

* VMP = Vegetation Management Plan Campaign.

b) WPSQ outcomes in the perspective of non-members.

Next, information from three interviews is presented with the purpose of analysing how WPSQ is perceived as an environmental organisation and its effectiveness. The interviewees are not members of WPSQ but are (and were) involved with them in some part of their campaigning processes. They will be kept anonymous and represent agents from the

Environmental Protection Agency, and the Queensland Government Department of Natural Resources and Mines.

| | Interviewee 1 | Interviewee 2 | Interviewee 3 |
|--|--|--|--|
| 1. How do you perceive WPSQ in terms of an ENGO? | Pro-active. It is a grassroots organisation, with no political focus. | A medium profile key state and regional stakeholder for the environment. | I have long worked with them and they are a reasonable organisation that looks for practical outcomes and are willing to work with solutions, they are open to negotiation and are one of the key environmental groups around the State. |
| 2. What adjective would you use to describe WPSQ's activism? | Genuine – they are committed to care for wildlife. | Participative, balanced, considerate of triple bottom line outcomes from environmental policy and implementation. | Moderate – they have clear objectives towards the protection of wildlife and they are recently teaming correctly and targeting better their outcomes. |
| 3. Do you think WPSQ's strategies are effective in terms of achieving their goals? | Their capacity of lobbying is not as good, probably because they do not have a strong image to get to high politicians. They are good at representing local councils or communities. | Yes - I can only comment on the process I was involved with. Compared to QCC and other regional conservation rep's approach in the same process which was aggressively adversarial/political and not seen to be reasonable or operating in good faith by other stakeholders. In fact - this later group were perceived as not adhering to the process protocols and deliberately undermining what were perceived to be very reasonable and practical "envt'l gains" by being aggressively adversarial. | Yes – because they influence legislation No – because of lack of resources |
| 4. From your perspective, what sort of tactics does WPSQ use? | They are good at engaging local people, which is reflected in the high membership they have. They give strength to small local projects. At a grass roots level, they are very good. | Research and data provision to promote discussion and wider awareness/understanding of WPSQ positions. Group participation according to protocols. Discussion/moderation and consensus across other stakeholders. Environmental stakeholder meetings to discuss issues and arrive at a combined "position". Use of networks and communication to "stay in touch with issues" and attempt to influence decision makers. | Face to face meetings; participation in committees with government agencies; write letters to ministers; make submissions; include a holistic approach to their campaigns; team together; use media; better use of internet; protests. |
| 5. Were WPSQ representatives well informed about the subject of the campaign? | Yes, extremely well informed. They hold good communication processes. | Yes - I was impressed that WPSQ made an attempt to maintain good communication across the regional and state network of WPSQ reps involved with the process - I understand this included teleconferencing and occasional regional/state meetings. Reps would also distribute updates/reports which showed an effort on being transparency. | They held good communication processes. The structure of communication within their members and representatives was quite interesting. |
| 6. What benefits did WPSQ bring to the process? | It is the only conservation group that really represents the interests of the environment, therefore encouraging positive environmental awareness. | Practicality, reasonable ESD environmental advocacy. | Getting great numbers of community members becoming active. Got attention of the Government. Have been following up the issue and re-adjusting strategies to every outcome. |
| 7. From your perspective, could WPSQ have used other tactics to be more effective in achieving their outcomes? | One of their main problems was that the issue was run by high political agenda. So, I suggest having "a voice" in a higher political level. | No - most reps have maintained a strong degree of credibility and trust with other members/stakeholders at both state and regional levels - which is very important. In fact you could say it is everything ongoing relevance of WPSQ and future roles in envt'l policy approaches and implementation. More than what can be said of some other envt'l advocates. | They could use media more effectively, have broader public sentiment. They are not good enough in getting into Parliament agenda. Besides targeting only the EPA they could target other agencies that also have influence on decisions. |

Discussion

Three main ideas can be distinguished from the interviews:

1. Tactics are mainly focused on lobbying the government.
2. WPSQ maintains Effective communication processes with its members.
3. WPSQ is perceived as a moderate, balanced, considerate organisation.

Relating this first idea with the tactics chart, the most important “in common” tactic was lobbying with the Government (by meetings, written submissions and letters) when campaigning. This is due to the fact that WPSQ considers important to have good communication channels with them. This could be thought of a potential to ‘compromise’ values and principles from the organisation in order to achieve a goal therefore reflecting an anthropocentric view (Dryzek, 1997). But, from what could be seen during the internship period, members were always careful when elaborating their arguments in order to be the most coherent and transparent as possible.

Secondly, internal communication is an evident priority for WPSQ, since the Society has representatives all across the State, their internal communication processes demand to be quite effective in order to work as ONE body and to avoid information leakages or hierarchies. Therefore, their newsletter has been quite effective for these means. But, with respect to their website, it would be interesting to devise a research methodology that allows the Society to know the extent to which their website encourages people to participate? How do members and non-members find the design? How do members and non-members find the contents of the website?, etc.

In regards to how WPSQ is perceived as a moderate and balanced organisation, this is definitely due to the tactics they use, since this is what is visible to others (targets and community).

An evident tactic used in both campaigns is the formation of alliances with other organisations. This could be thought as one of the strongest components they have had in order to put pressure to the targets and gain support from the community in general, as also stated in the answers above.

Now, when looking at the tactics used for each campaign it is apparent that each of the campaigns had quite different approaches. On one hand, the Vegetation Management Plan had more to do with developing policies, consulting members of the community that represented agricultural organisations, and proposing those policies and guidelines to the Government. An interesting tactic was hiring a consultant to train WPSQ staff. Although it might be time consuming, training representatives for effective lobbying was another key factor in the outcome of this campaign.

In contrast, the approach taken for the Duck and Quail campaign seems quite different. Here, they used public action in order to be felt by the community and gain support. Media was widely used (TV, newspapers, magazines, radio) therefore reaching an extensive audience. Besides, by using postcards, e-petitions and letters, WPSQ encouraged the community to participate and share with them the influence to protect these animals. Although, both approaches were mostly different, this reflects the capacity of WPSQ to adjust to situations.

The environmental ideology that WPSQ reflects could be related to Dryzek’s (1997) Democratic Pragmatism Discourse. In this, public policy making as the resultant of advocacy

forces is the key point of action, which is greatly related to what WPSQ has developed throughout its campaigns. In addition, it is seen how rationalism, pragmatism and objectivity are evident characteristics that lead their actions and strategies.

Conclusion

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland is an environmental organisation committed to protecting Queensland's wildlife. Established since 1962 the Society has been involved in the struggle for a series of environmental issues concerning Australia's flora and fauna.

The strategies and approaches that WPSQ uses to campaign clearly tend to identify them with a reformer role. Although, many may think that this role can not bring a paradigm shift, it has opened many doors to the Society in the Government where politicians and agents are willing to listen to their arguments, sit down and negotiate. However, an emphasis in trying to have presence at high political levels could greatly enhance their outcomes (as stated by the interviewees).

Perseverance and transparency are some of WPSQ's attributes to accomplish their goals. It seems they have in mind that no achievement happens straight away. Therefore, having gradual gains keeps their issues on the political agenda and enhances their presence within politicians and community members, as seen in the Duck and Quail campaign. In addition, communication is one of the most important aspects for an organisation to function as a whole. It is evident how WPSQ does a great effort to maintain a thorough communication within members. This allows for a greater participation of people that do not necessarily reside where the issues emerged from.

It could be said then, that the dedication of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland has successfully brought benefits to the protection of wildlife as reflected on its outcomes and image they have among non-members.

Personally, I would never say that one organisation is better than another. Each has its nature, values and principles of action. Regardless to the roles each organisation plays, it is important to point out that anything is valid as long as it adjusts to the circumstances and demands of what wants to be achieved. Therefore, whatever that can be done in order to protect the environment is a tremendous and admirable effort against the immense apathy monster that dominates our society. Thus, WPSQ is an example of an organisation committed to the protection of some of the world's most valuable endemic flora and fauna. More conflicts will come, in some they will succeed in some they may not, but the importance relies on leaving a trace in this world that will benefit and protect those with no 'human' voice.

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Appendix

- Media Release of no hunting season for 2005.



Hon. Desley Boyle MP



**Queensland
Government**

Minister for Environment
Minister for Local Government
and Planning
Minister for Women

No duck and quail hunting season for 2005

As Queensland faced its third consecutive year of drought, State Parliament was told today that there would be no duck and quail recreational hunting season in 2005.

Environment Minister Desley Boyle told Parliament that sustained below average rainfall had seen duck and quail numbers dramatically fall, making a season unsustainable.

Ms Boyle said a recent waterbird population survey had revealed numbers at their lowest level since surveying began in 1984; down from one million to just 200,000.

Ms Boyle said: "I know recreational hunting of ducks and quails is a topic about which there are strongly and passionately held views – both for and against.

"However, in the end a decision was made based on science and fact – aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of these native species.

"The annual survey showed just 20 birds in the key breeding ground of Macquarie Marshes in New South Wales.

"This location averaged 30,000 birds in the 1980's," Ms Boyle said.

Ms Boyle said approval for a duck and quail hunting season was based each year on an assessment of ecological sustainability.

"In providing advice, the Duck and Quail Management Advisory Committee have looked at such things as rainfall records, long term weather forecasts, surface water in dams and wetlands, and population data," she said.

Ms Boyle said since 1995 the hunting of duck and quail in Queensland has been controlled by the *Nature Conservation (Duck and Quail) Conservation Plan and Management Program 1995 – 2005*.

There was no duck or quail hunting season in 2003, and no quail hunting season in 1995.

Ducks and quails are listed as 'common' under the Nature Conservation Act 1992. Last year there were 376 recreational harvesting licences issued.

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