

Managerial decision making, structure and agency:

A case study of Broken Hill Proprietary Company

Limited 1883 - 1915.



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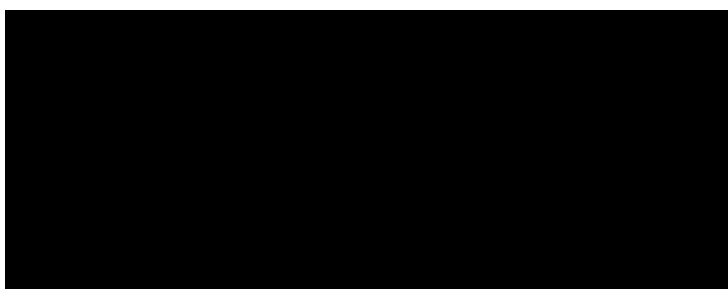
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**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of
New England.**

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**I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any
degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree of qualification.**

**I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used,
have been acknowledged in this thesis.**



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ABSTRACT

The thesis develops a theory of managerial decision making based on the work of two social theorists, Giddens and Lloyd. The use of such theorists makes explicit a particular relationship between structure and agency. Neither theorist privileges either structure or agency, seeking, rather, to establish how structure can influence agency, and how agency can influence structure. The theory that is developed examines notions of choice and purposive action and the extent to which social and physical structures can impact, and are impacted on and by, social actors. Such a theory also allows explicit treatment of time and space, two concepts often ignored in theorising managerial decision making. Once the theory has been developed, it is then tested by application to managerial decision making in Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited, from establishment in 1883, up until 1915, when the Newcastle Steelworks were opened. Specific operations of the Company that were examined were the core processes necessary to convert the raw material into a finished product. This included the mining and smelting of the ore, the transporting of the ore from Broken Hill to local and international markets. In considering these core processes attention was given to the historical context of technical developments in silver and lead mining and smelting, as well as the way in which such factors as the adoption by countries of the gold standard impacted upon the operations of the Company. Central to all these processes were the individuals who comprised the Company. The thesis explicitly considers the roles of the directors and senior managerial staff and the ways in which the choices of these individuals were shaped by the social and physical structures within which they were embedded. Relationships between and among directors, senior managers and the workforce at Broken Hill are also placed in structural context. Finally, there is a brief demonstration of how a theory of managerial decision making, which explicitly considers issues of structure and agency, and time and space, is superior to those theories which currently dominate theories of managerial decision making.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to R.S. Neale, who, if he taught me anything at all, it was the importance of theory in not only writing economic history, but also in any attempt to understand it.

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