# Chapter 5

# DIFFERING IDEAS AND INTERPRETATIVE REPERTOIRES

*Interpretative repertoires are part and parcel of any community's common sense, providing a basis for shared social understanding. They can be usefully thought of as books on the shelves of a public library, permanently available for borrowing. (Edley 2001:198)*

## *Introduction*

This chapter provides a summary of the views expressed by council members and identifies major areas of disagreement, as council members attempt to marry potentially contradictory concepts surrounding 'governance' and 'university'. Taken as a cluster, the responses provide pointers to the interpretive space of 'what can be said' about university governance and the ways in which multiple interpretive schema are managed by council members in discourse. Although participants were drawn from the councils of both older and newer universities, the few significant differences in responses by institution relate less to the age and standing of the institution than to the extent of its regional and community involvement.

From the interviews, four main interpretative repertoires used by council members are identified:

- The business repertoire;
- The community stakeholder repertoire;
- The university community repertoire; and
- The repertoire of professionalisation.

Each of these repertoires is explained later in this chapter and described in depth in subsequent chapters.

### *Descriptions of council*

A significant number of interviewees, when asked to describe a university council, respond simply with an alternative label: 'the governing body' or 'the governing board' or in quasi-legal and formalised language, 'the body politic and corporate'. Others indicate surprise at the question, suggesting the extent to which a governing body just 'is', or is ultimately non-translatable. There are few references to 'trusteeship' (AVCC 2003b) and none to terms such as 'board of regents'.

The majority of responses express some form of overseeing, review or scrutinising roles, using metaphors of control as the 'watch eye on the university' (105, staff), as in these interview extracts:

> It's the senior authority subject to the Act, over the internal forces, policeman and it's the group that's got ultimate responsibility at the institutional level for what happens in the institution. (103, external)

> The university council is a supreme ruling governing body of the university and it has, under the Act, the ultimate responsibility for running the university. (303, student)

While the language of external scrutiny is similar to the way the office of an auditor might be described, there is a keen interest in positioning council as a source of 'ultimate control' and of being at the apex, expressed by adjectival emphasis such as the 'supreme ruling' governing body, 'overall' governing body, 'senior' authority, or even a 'peak' body. For elected staff and student members, the concept of a 'final arbiter' is important whereas for other internal members who are also senior managers, the sense may be more of council as a 'final sign-off'.

Notwithstanding these efforts to position university councils as virtuous and vigorous controllers, a sense of doubt, of uncertainty over the effectiveness of councils, runs through the text of many interviews with council members. Even among those who express themselves as generally satisfied and who are reluctant to voice criticisms, the performance of council is qualified through the language used. This sense of doubt is located variously as a product of the wrong representative structure, the wrong people, the lack of debate in council, of council's relative lack of power vis à vis the executive. In talking about effectiveness, almost half the council members interviewed use or

mention the words 'rubber stamp' almost as a defining metaphor, as in this council member's comment: 'Council does make real decisions, I suppose, but a lot of the stuff is just rubberstamping of executive decisions. There's not a lot of strong debate' (507, staff).

As well, the formal language of control is decentred by reference to theoretical rather than actual powers: 'Well, it's a body which, in theory, has all the control and power and everything else, but in reality has very little, in respect of universities' (302, external).

The formal and legal responsibilities of governance are also decentred in another way by some council members, through the use of a personal, intimate and social frame that talks of stakeholders, diverse communities and the disparateness of the people who make up councils.

### *Managing the concept of council as 'corporate board'*

Five respondents emphasise the extent to which councils are, or should be, just like company boards. As one member comments: 'I have a very strong view that the council is the governing body of the university and is essentially like a board of directors' (509, external).

More commonly, council members reject the idea that university councils can simply be equated with corporate boards. This rejection is achieved through the introduction of other important points of reference. Some external members, as well as staff and students, employ the collegial ideal as an organising concept to describe council in terms of the university's mission (Daley, Netting & Angulo 1996) for upholding academic tradition and standards.

Other interviewees choose analogies that emphasise the representative and highly diverse nature of council membership, pointing to its explicitly stakeholder composition. Another common construction is of council as a link between the inner world of the university and the larger society of which it is a part.

The public sector is a further important concept, and many council members talk as if governments are the owners of universities. A number of their accounts are similar to those found in emerging models of public sector governance, which recognise the presence of complex multiple objectives and stakeholders (Horrigan 2001; Barrett 2003a).

For many council members, these additional reference points are used to posit different models of governance, where a distinction is drawn between some form of 'corporate' model of governance and either a genuinely 'collegial' or a more participatory model. Although support for a more extremely idealised collegiate model is expressed by only a few staff and student members of council, a parliamentary model of governance is a fairly common construct (Foley 2002).

Those who express support for a corporate model are likely to 'blame' staff and students for clinging to outmoded collegial or parliamentary models, while those who endorse participatory models point to the narrowness and internal contradictions of a corporate model.

The majority of council members, however, attempt to marry corporate and participatory or collegial models of governance, through the use of dialectical pairings: 'it is and it isn't like a corporate board' (406, Chancellor). Another technique is to suggest multiple identities. Around a quarter of interviewees use a discursive strategy of 'reconciliation by addition', identifying university governing bodies as like corporate boards but with something extra, as these two council members demonstrate:

> My simple view is that it really is the board of directors, but there are a few twists, non-commercial twists, that are associated with being on a university council. (114, external)

> It's a cross between Parliament and a board of directors... or between local government and a board of directors. (115, student)

Other council members however recognise that these models jostle uncomfortably against each other, producing 'a lot of creative tension, or potential for creative tension, or just tension' (101, external).

The distinction between university councils and corporate boards is paralleled in the extent to which council members use or qualify the idea of a university as a business. Although the idea of universities as businesses and the need for 'business-like' management of resources is naturalised in many council members' discourses, some academic staff find the idea transgressive. Talking about the Vice-Chancellor of his institution, one staff member of council says:

> His argument is that he's not so much the manager of a scholarly collegial community, but the CEO of a business, a multimillion dollar business, and it's that kind of language that shocks me. (501, staff)

Within the limits imposed by their knowledge of various board types and in the context of a private interview, council members provide a wide range of opinions and arguments about models for university governing bodies. However, their awareness of the presence of competing models means there is little that is settled or naturalised in their narratives.

### *Size of council, remuneration of council members and intrinsic rewards*

To supplement their accounts of similarities and differences to corporate boards, many council members volunteer some comment on the size of university councils. Not unexpectedly, council members' views on an appropriate size of university councils broadly match their support for either corporate or more participatory governance models.

Reductions in the size of councils are presented as something imposed by the State Government, not a product of the wishes of the university. Most council members, external and internal, appear to accept the status quo, but a small number state that councils would work better if the numbers were smaller, suggesting an optimum size of somewhere between 10 and 20 people. For others, however, each reduction in the size of councils undermines the collegial and participatory principles that characterise a university.

The desirability of remuneration for members of university governing bodies has been raised from time to time in various reviews (Hoare 1995). The majority of

interviewees reject, as inappropriate or 'off limits', remuneration for members of university councils. Some responses are qualified by offering arguments both for and against remuneration, or noting that a lack of remuneration implies compromise in that 'there's only a certain amount that you can expect' (503, staff) in return. Two council members suggest that Chancellors should be paid, 'so that that role could be beefed up a bit more' (203, external) and one notes that councils should be allowed to 'buy-in' additional professional expertise.

Only a handful of council members actively support remuneration of members and of these, most are from one university where the Vice-Chancellor had raised the issue. A couple of student members find the idea attractive. In dismissing remuneration, interviewees refer to council membership as a form of voluntary community service, or, in a striking example of intertextuality from public sector business enterprises, a 'community service obligation'.

The need for remuneration is further disclaimed by external members through the use of discourses stressing altruistic contribution to endeavours that are inherently worthwhile. The logic used is both 'transcendent' and 'civic' (Boltanski & Thévenot 1991) expressed through concepts of higher education as an undertaking that is intrinsically valuable or part of a greater community good.

For internal senior managers of the university who are members of council, their participation is 'part of the job', not expected to have wider personal meaning. Apart from Vice-Chancellors, several senior managers state that the best aspect is the opportunity to gain a different perspective, an insight into the workings of the university as a whole or a sense of the 'total picture'.

### *Council roles*

Most council members use 'standard governance prescriptions' from the literature on boards (e.g. Kerr & Gade 1989; Holland, Chait & Taylor 1989a; Widmer & Houchin 2000; SA 2003) in talking about the roles of council. They present university governance as more or less unproblematically combining a mix of functions that

includes strategic planning, monitoring, financial accountability and appointment of key staff.

The language is formal, professionalised and relatively bounded. In general, staff and students offer a broader and less naturalised conception of the council's role than many external members, although most staff members refer to the 'standard' language. Some council members note that elements within the council's package of functional roles require different orientations and approaches, between planning for 'performance' and monitoring for 'conformance' (ANAO 2003).

Interviewees do not mention risk management and the development of strategies to reduce risk as important council roles, consistent with research indicating that some not-for-profit boards have yet to tackle the issues (Gill 2001). Unfavourable publicity is presented as something for the Chancellor to manage after the event, while financial risks associated with overseas expansion, for example, are mentioned as topics of concern only by academic staff members. At the time of my interviews, the literature on university boards had not paid attention to risk management, so the absence of any discussion is perhaps not surprising. More startling is the fact that only a couple of council members mention a role for council in the oversight of commercial entities and university companies, suggesting that most council members, at the time, were not aware of the issues or inclined to leave such matters to council Finance Committees.

Over half my interview participants state, as a mantra almost, that council's role is 'not to manage', meaning 'not to interfere in management'. Council members use this glib formulation to demonstrate their awareness - if not always their acceptance - of a boundary beyond which council members can be accused of transgression.

Accompanying these formal descriptions of council roles, some council members discuss council roles in terms of linking the university to the community or providing accountability to government or to stakeholders. Accounts in this vein may displace council's role to that of a 'sounding board' or 'policy advisory body'. Not surprisingly, links to the local community are more often emphasised in universities with a strong regional focus.

Of all the roles of council, the one most likely to be mentioned as most important is strategic planning. Council members want to be partners in strategic planning for their university, possibly because this provides them with a role that is demonstrably 'about' something, an identifiable task. This finding agrees with that of Bargh, Scott and Smith (1996), although involvement in strategic planning can range from active input and foresight analysis to merely providing a final seal of approval. There is much less agreement over whether the council should be more or less pro-active in the development of the university strategic plan, many council members accepting that the council provides endorsement of an end product rather than any active shaping of a plan. This latter finding reflects recent work on board roles in the corporate sector (Stiles & Taylor 2001).

Echoing the idea of the 'watchdog' expressed in some descriptions of council, another role that is stressed is oversight of the executive, as this council member notes:

> Probably to keep the CEO honest. I feel that's a very important role. I feel that CEOs have the right to manage, but the CEO, at least technically, [he] is still hired by the council to do that job and so I suppose that one of our main guiding roles is to make sure that he has somebody that he has to answer to. (202, staff)

A small number of council members interpret council's role as making the university a 'better' form of organisation, one that respects its employees and has a wider social mission. Several internal members and a couple of external members offer the view that the most important roles of council centre on ensuring a climate of learning and creativity, through functions they describe as defending academic freedom, keeping the core learning role of the institution in mind, helping staff and students perform well and allowing staff views to be heard.

The presence of these secondary roles, combined with a primary 'business' management role, is strikingly similar to the accounts presented by McCaig (1965), suggesting that some roles of Australian university council members have not changed greatly over time.

Council members are, for the most part, tentative in identifying changes to council roles. Some have no basis for comparison, others indicate that the responsibilities

remain essentially the same, while still others present changes as the outworkings of wider changes in the external environment. Those members who focus on changes rather than similarities point mostly to an increase in executive power, or the rise of managerialism (Deem 1998), although references are also made to increasing emphasis on legal and fiduciary responsibilities of councils.

The influence of managerialism is not always presented as negative for university governance, however, as councils themselves are part of a hierarchical chain of accountability. As one council member comments, 'I think councils are probably seeing a sharper role for their oversight of the management function of the university' (408, staff).

Formally, significant numbers of council members describe their role as the same as every other member. Those who sit on council committees may also mention a specific professional expertise they bring to university governance.

In addition, external members use a personal discourse based on the concept of 'making a contribution' to the development of the university (cf. Harman 1975), or to the local community. Some may present themselves as taking on additional roles, as 'sounding boards' for the Vice-Chancellor or for staff, consistent with Widmer's (1993) research on the multiple roles played by board members. In new universities, some council members were active at the 'foundation' stage and exhibit a typical commitment to support the fledgling institution (Wood 1992). Internal members also use a personal discourse, emphasising their need to ensure that external members are 'well informed' of the 'real' situation.

For regional members of council, bringing the perspective of their region, without being seen to be a single-issue member, is important. In noting that they bring an individual perspective, council members are quick to claim they are not representing a constituency but rather offering particular skills and interests.

However, for many the stakeholder repertoire and the distinction between individual and representative roles (Smith 2002) continues to present an ideological dilemma. Elected members of council find it almost impossible not to describe themselves and

others as 'reps' of staff or students but, again, they are emphatic that they are not captives of the groups who elected them.

### *Relationship to Academic Board (or Academic Senate)*

Overall, council members state that there are no major disagreements over the respective roles and responsibilities of council and of the Academic Board, sometimes called an Academic Senate, or between council and the Board of Studies in the TAFE Divisions of multi-sectoral universities. They note that the role of the Academic Board is often described in university enabling legislation and that a 'fundamental convention is that academic matters essentially devolve to an Academic Board or Senate' (408, staff).

For the most part, council members are happy to regard the Academic Board as 'a set of experts that know what they're on about' (203, external) and to take its advice unquestioningly, without entering into debates over primacy. The Academic Board is cautiously identified as a group that, while 'extremely conscious of its authority' (405, external), sees itself 'and properly and rightly so, as having the central role of the university in [its] hands' (410, external).

Underlying the formal distinctions, however, there is an ongoing battle to define 'relevance' in regard to the Board's role. One Chair of an Academic Board states that the Board has to broaden its agenda to remain 'a player' in significant decisions about university life (301, staff), while one Vice-Chancellor states that the Board achieves relevance only by 'sticking to its knitting' (113, Vice-Chancellor).

More than one council member expresses the view that the Academic Board is becoming less powerful and its role is becoming more specialised and narrowly focused. Two potential areas for disagreement are whether council has the right to overrule Academic Board or whether the Board has the right to discuss broader matters of university policy. And, in one institution, the relationship between council and the Academic Board has become polarised and oppositional, requiring constant renegotiation of boundaries. These disagreements are reflected in the repertoires discussed in succeeding chapters.

## *Accountabilities*

Interviewees are very clear about accountability being a good thing and something that a university council, in general, should provide as much of as possible.

For some council members, accountability begins and ends with a sense of accountability to the State legislature that establishes the university as a legal entity and in so doing establishes its council. As a corollary, a few council members explicitly reject the idea of accountability to stakeholders, while others extend the idea of accountability to government to the Federal Government, where multiple contractual accountabilities exist.

For the majority of council members, however, accountability is problematic precisely because of the claims of a wider group of stakeholders, which may or may not include the internal university community. The dilemma of accounting for the diverse senses of accountability may be handled through a strategy of separation: there is accountability to government, and then there is accountability to a range of stakeholders. The divide is defended in terms of legal requirements and of primacy, as council members strive to locate their views somewhere between 'agency' and full-blown 'stakeholder' models of governance (Hung 1998). Four distinct discursive formations are evident, as follows:

- To assign primary accountability to State Parliament and a 'secondary' accountability to stakeholders;
- To differentiate between being 'accountable' to State Parliament but 'responsible' to stakeholders;
- To differentiate between a 'legal' accountability (to State Parliament) and a 'moral' accountability to stakeholders; and
- To assign equality in accountability to State Parliament and to stakeholders.

Another, more subtle, distinction, is drawn between the accountability of universities as a whole and of council as the apex of a chain of accountability, as this council member notes:

> They're accountable formally to themselves, as I understand it, so that they're established as an act of Parliament and govern themselves. (512, staff)

The functions or activities for which council should be accountable are less able to be articulated by council members, reflecting other research findings in regard to not-for-profit boards (Holland 2002). Accountabilities might be expected to relate closely to the roles of council as presented by council members, and some council members indeed state that council is accountable for 'good governance'. However, financial accountability is discussed in terms of compliance rather than effective control, consistent with the lack of consideration by council members of risk management and a role for council in the assessment of risky new ventures.

The question of how universities account proves difficult for many council members, especially when considering accountability to stakeholders. A common answer is that accountability is provided by council through the university's annual report to the State Government.

Council members adopt at least one of two positions in discussing their own accountabilities, referring to accountability to the Chancellor or to council but also to a personal sense of accountability to their own standards. For staff and student members, there is an additional sense of accountability to a constituency.

Many interviewees describe their accountability as an individual as the same as council's accountability generally, i.e. it is accountability for all the roles that council is required to perform. For others accountability lies in 'right' conduct, in behaving ethically, or in being answerable for performing the functions assigned. A sense of broader accountabilities for institutional well being can also be involved. As one council member observes:

> I think you're accountable to the Chancellor for anything that's delegated to you, number one, quite clearly, that's straightforward. But you're also accountable to

> the Chancellor to inform him not of rumour and innuendo but of anything which you consider is a potential difficulty for the institution from staffing, student or administration point of view. (405, external)

On the question of how individual members account, there is wide agreement that accountability is achieved by performance:

> I guess by turning up, by participating, and by observing, and once council makes a decision I guess I'm expected to defend it, or if I'm going to criticise it to be very transparent about that to my colleagues, but I haven't found that to be necessary so far. (501, staff)

Although some staff and student members state they also account by reporting back to the constituencies that elected them, most council members indicate that how to account is seldom talked about.

### *Expectations of council held by others*

Council members' views of the expectations that other groups or individuals hold of councils are characterised by vagueness: the idea of expectations is nowhere near as naturalised as that of accountability. Many council members qualify their answers by admitting that they are speculating, although another strategy is to suggest that expectations are so high as to be almost unachievable, as this staff member remarks:

> I think people expect more of the council than it's actually able to deliver, particularly if you're not au fait with the realities that feed the processes of working on boards and all that sort of stuff. They expect it to be the leadership, they expect it to show vision and to make good decisions, and that's expecting too much. (503, staff)

Nearly all council members draw a distinction between expectations of council and expectations of a university. They take for granted that communities have expectations of universities, in terms both of individual goods (jobs or careers) and public goods (an educated society). In contrast, a few council members state that only those close to a university, or local elites ('leading decision-makers') would even be aware of councils.

At the same time, some council members rather patronisingly interpret the public as regarding universities as 'black boxes', institutions where the norms of business are less

significant than the mysterious alchemy of 'scholarship', which turns (mostly) teenagers into employable graduates.

Council members' couch their accounts of the expectations of State and Federal Government in terms of expectations of good governance and oversight. Additionally, there are darker references to occasional political interference in the affairs of a university or its governance. Industry expectations of councils are described, for the most part, in only a highly generalised fashion, as 'good graduates', accompanied by a view that industry prefers to interact mainly with the Vice-Chancellor, deans or researchers.

Staff and student expectations of council are presented by external members through discursive strategies that on the one hand imply the expectations that 'sensible' people would have, of good governance and the orderly conduct of the institution, and on the other suggest that actual staff and student expectations are unrealistic or doomed to disappointment:

> Well, certainly a body that will help organise the institution that's going to provide them with their ticket for life. I also think that those students and staff see council as, if you like, a court of last appeal. (402, external)

Alternatively, and consistent with other research (Meek & Wood 1997), internal members of council are likely to suggest that staff and student expectations of council are low:

> I think that within the university expectations - this is quite difficult because I think that probably there'd be a fair level of cynicism about the council. Either the council has a lowest common denominator outcome or the council ultimately does what the Chancellery wants, or the council doesn't listen. (202, staff)

For the most part, council members state that particular groups do not have expectations of them as individual council members. The exceptions are some of those members who have quasi-representative roles or a relationship to identifiable 'proximal' stakeholders (Jensen 1998), where the expectations of a regional community, or of staff or students, are presented as important to meet.

The Chancellor of the university is, for the most part, cast as having no particular expectations of council members other than a generalised and unspoken wish for diligence and commitment.

### *The Vice-Chancellor's expectations of council*

My question about the Vice-Chancellor's expectations of council evokes jokes and laughter, probably as a means of diffusing tension or uncertainty. Only a few respondents give a neutral response, as when one council member states that the Vice-Chancellor should expect 'a very clear operating framework' (507, staff). Council members use various means to disclaim vice-chancellorial expectations that are felt to be wrong (if understandable), such as the expectation that council will be a 'rubber stamp' for the Vice-Chancellor. One common method is to present a hypothetical 'good' Vice-Chancellor and what she or he 'should' expect, as this council member comments:

> Firstly, a sensible Vice-Chancellor, who wasn't paranoid, would think that the university council was there to support him (sic) in his managerial and executive role as the chief executive officer of the organisation.... But having said that, I think many Vice-Chancellors appoint people to councils in the expectation that this person will be amenable or support them or will carry their view, and very few people get appointed to councils because they're genuinely independent or clear and free thinkers.. So it's hard to answer that question in any way except to say different things, some of them are good and correct and some of them are mistaken. (509, external)

Of the 'should' responses, the most common is that the Vice-Chancellor should expect 'support' from council, whether this is support in the sense of lending the authority of council to management decisions or in a more personal sense of individual council members being available to discuss difficult cases on a confidential basis. This second sense shades into an account of Vice-Chancellors as expecting councils to provide community 'sounding boards' for new initiatives. More cynical responses are evident from staff and students who are outside the Vice-Chancellor's immediate executive group: 'Pretty much okay everything that goes through and don't ask many questions' (202, staff).

### *Council structures and processes*

The five university councils are conspicuously isomorphic (DiMaggio & Powell 1983) in structural terms and in an apparent lack of experimentation with alternative governance structures. However, at the time of my data collection, there were proposals at two universities for the enactment of regional advisory boards, as a way of involving a wider external stakeholder group and to address concerns about the ongoing development of regional campuses. Another university uses campus committees in a similar way.

A standard comment around the performative conventions of council comes from members who have previously served on TAFE or CAE councils. Several comment wistfully on the greater formality of the university council compared to the more 'hands-on' institute or CAE councils, indicating that even the newest universities have adopted the conventions of their older counterparts.

Many council members dismiss the problematics of rubberstamping and lack of discussion at full council meetings by portraying 'the real work' of council as 'exercised through subcommittees, and committees and personal contacts' (103, external), so that 'the real power in council comes from sitting on committees' (303, student), whereas the processes of a full meeting are structured so that 'it's often too late to influence decisions there' (111, staff). This patterning is common to most accounts of council, across all the universities in my sample, and supports findings from the literature (Marginson & Considine 2000).

Council committees are usually presented by council members as sites where scrutiny can productively and satisfyingly be enacted, private spaces away from the theatrical performance of a full meeting, where those who speak may be accused of 'grandstanding' (401, staff). To this extent, 'rubberstamping' may be presented as a virtuous outcome of council having done its homework beforehand.

A counter-discourse, however, expresses the need for additional time for strategic discussions and more open reflection on issues, outside both committee work and the prescribed conventions of council meetings.

Alongside the presentation of 'real work' as done in committees is the clear sense many council members express of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' among council members, where those on the outside are cast more as audience than as actors. The 'insiders' usually consist of long-standing council members, such as Deputy Chancellors, who have earned respect or who bring other external sources of influence (Zald 1969). As one senior council member observes: 'I tend not to say very much at council meetings often but usually I've said a lot of stuff before quietly' (116, external).

Those who are 'insiders' in university terms but not part of a senior management team often see themselves as 'outsiders' on council, marginalised by the Vice-Chancellor. While sometimes the 'insider-outsider' structure is formalised by the presence of an executive committee of council, pecking orders (Marginson & Considine 2000) are mostly presented as informal.

### *More effective councils and expectations of the Chancellor*

When asked about the worst aspects of being on council, most council members loyally minimise any difficulties, stating 'I can't think of anything that's really negative' (112, staff) or indicating there are 'only trivial things' (109, staff). The only specific examples refer to individualised personal concerns, such as council meetings being held at inconvenient times.

More generally, and as noted earlier in this chapter, council members identify the most problematic aspects of their governing body roles as concerns over effectiveness. Some council members' sense of frustration and impatience with existing processes is palpable.

In particular, council members express concern around factors identified by Lorsch and MacIver (1989) as 'disempowering', such as a lack of ability to contribute or a lack of time or lack of knowledge of the 'business'. Control of information and 'not getting the full story' are other issues. A significant cluster of improvements suggested by council members address the processes of council, including the constraints imposed by managerial control of agendas: 'it's very easy not to get any input if you don't wish

it. You've got to structure it properly.' (207, staff). Another unsatisfactory element for council members is the tedium of formal, often largely procedural, council meetings, accompanied by few opportunities for debate or discussion of wider concerns. As well, some council members express a desire for a better sense of international trends and developments, in short, for better contextual understanding.

Problems over council size and membership are couched partly in terms of structural elements, such as the number of members, but also in terms of ensuring the 'right' mix of people. An emphasis on the need for 'teamness' in this latter discourse provides a noticeable contrast to the 'insiders and outsiders' grouping presented as the norm.

Diversity and the representation of minorities on boards is a sensitive issue in US studies (Van der Walt & Ingley 2003) but is scarcely touched on by interviewees, and does not form part of their public discourse about council membership. Whether council members themselves should be university graduates is not discussed: my sense was that this was taken for granted by all council members except those few who were not graduates.

Two of the stronger patterns of similarity among council members are seen in demands for proper induction programs and the assessment of council performance, to reduce what several council members see as confusion among their colleagues. Although individual members may claim to be clear about their roles, uncertainty and role confusion are projected onto others as an indirect criticism.

Induction programs or other structured education for council members are conspicuously absent from council members' accounts, and most council members find it difficult to identify explicit sources for their ideas about university governance. A small number of council members refer to background reading, and some members from a TAFE background mention the Guide to Best Practice in TAFE Institute Councils (ATII 1996). Only one or two mention the AVCC program for governing body members but those who do note that the program is valuable. However, no council members volunteer that they have attended formal training or induction programs of this nature. Life experiences, general reading and previous board experience are the main influences mentioned.

The attitude of some Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors to induction programs is curiously laissez-faire. One Chancellor states '...it's a very complex industry and if you don't know anything about it you're way behind the eight ball...they've just got to learn slowly' (211, Chancellor). The lack of induction programs is in effect deproblematised.

Evaluation of council performance is one issue where university management and council members express different views. While external and internal management are confident in asserting that assessment of the council's performance should occur and does not, Vice-Chancellors, council 'insiders' and senior management claim that such evaluations do already occur in respect of individual council members.

Most council members express truly heroic, if idealised, expectations of the Chancellor, as a source of wisdom, a symbol of the university and the person responsible for ensuring council's (and the Vice-Chancellor's) effectiveness. Leadership of council, plus effective chairing of meetings, is emphasised. So however is crisis management, as in this council member's description:

> ....But it's a question of the public face of a university being absolutely pristine and the Chancellor can make that happen. Or if it isn't pristine, if the Vice Chancellor or professors get charged with fraud, the Chancellor would play a role as a kind of, I suppose as a head of company role in doing a mopping up operation and preserving the integrity of the place. (512, staff)

Student views in particular vary widely, from those who express admiration for inclusive and supportive Chancellors to one council member who says provocatively 'unless you develop a personal relationship with the Chancellor he really couldn't give a rat's arse' (403, student). The responses point to widely differing interpretations of the role by different Chancellors.

However, council members themselves stress that the position of Chancellor is a difficult one and that no one individual can optimally perform all its roles. Criticism of actual Chancellors is muted and depersonalised, but present nonetheless, expressed

in language such as: 'a very soft chairman' (411, external) or 'there's no leadership there' (504, external).

## *Discussion: ideological dilemmas and competing logics in university governance*

Responses to my interview questions indicate there is no one naturalised language of university governance - there are only small patches of closure around a dominant or hegemonic discourse, as in the discussion of council roles where a single naturalised discourse is used. The 'paradoxes' of governance identified by Cornforth (2003b) are present in force, from tensions over corporate and stakeholder boards to questions of council empowerment. As one council member says:

> I think the watchdog role is well served by having a largish representative group of people representing the major stakeholders...overseeing the management of a university, its governance, looking to its good governance, is probably best done by a much more focused, smaller, if necessary unrepresentative group, more like your company board. (401, staff)

Each of the six 'regimes of justification' identified by Boltanski and Thévenot (1991) is demonstrably evident, from the 'domestic' logic of personal relationships and satisfactions and the 'civic' logic of public service and community development, through the 'commercial' and 'industrial' logics of agency and professionalised management, to the 'opinion' logic of public reputation and the 'transcendent' logic of academic ideals.

Although council members are comfortable describing council roles, the lack of any evidence of discussion among council members of accountabilities and expectations suggests that, at the time of my interviews, there was no overall 'culture of governance' among Victorian university boards. Council members' ideas about governance reflect 'craft' views of governance as involving personal satisfaction and service more than reflexive discussion of the governance needs of a particular institution. However, council members themselves identify the need for greater professionalisation of university governance in the face of apparent indifference by university management.

This is not to say that good 'governance' should not possess personal meaning for board members. An emerging consensus from recent literature is that attention to governance processes and internalisation of norms is likely to be more productive of good governance than structural changes or the imposition of rules (Edwards 2003b). Nevertheless, university council members in Victoria did not, at the time of my interviews, find themselves with opportunities to collectively consider how better processes could be achieved.

A noticeable feature of the responses to my interview questions is the ways in which different concepts provoke different types of account (Wetherell & Potter 1988: 178). Mention of 'accountability' inevitably provokes a more stakeholder-based series of responses than questions about council roles. Similarly, questions about remuneration provoke virtuous disclaimers of any personal motive for service on council. A discourse of community service is employed, even though director remuneration is a staple of corporate governance.

As the method of interpretative repertoires suggests, although the responses to a particular topic vary, there are 'common moves' or patterns in the variability, as when council members seek to reconcile accountability to government and to other stakeholders or when they discuss the expectations staff and students have of council.

Two of the more obvious patternings that emerge across a range of topics relate to the primacy of 'agency' or 'stakeholder' models (Kay & Silberston 1995; Monks 1998) and the primacy of 'operations' or 'mission' (or values) language (Daley, Netting & Angulo 1996). These two fracture lines have been found in other studies of not-for-profit boards (Brower & Shrader 2000), although such boards frequently take a stakeholder approach (Steane & Christie 2001). Parallels can also be drawn with the 'consumer interest' (market) and 'collective concern' (community democracy) ideologies identified in Deem's (1995) study on school governance. Within the 'stakeholder' and 'mission' elements of university governance, however, there are appeals to two distinctively different value sets. One set refers to community development, social justice and public welfare, while the second refers to collegial and scholarly ideals of the academy. It therefore appears that at least three 'interpretations' (Abdo 1998) of

governance are present in council members' accounts: an agency or business interpretation, a community interpretation and a collegial interpretation.

Analysis of the responses across the range of interview questions, through coding and iterative readings, suggests that the language of councils comprises multiple discourses or repertoires, punctuated by efforts to manage ideological dilemmas where the internal logics of the repertoires collide.

Ideological dilemmas manifest themselves firstly in efforts to 'manage' through language the contradictions that are evident to the speakers (Wetherell & Potter 1988), as, for example, in efforts to explain how university governance 'does and doesn't' differ to corporate governance, including the overt acknowledgement of multiple models and of tensions over the appropriate roles for stakeholders. References to effective but 'hands-on' TAFE or CAE boards versus 'more formal' university councils exhibit this strategy of 'explaining away' potentially dangerous contrasts.

For many, there is a tension between the legal powers given to councils and their perceived effectiveness. If actual experience differs greatly from the expectations generated by an 'authorising' discourse, new empirically-based repertoires or modes of ordering may emerge. In the case of Australian universities, the 'authorising' discourse of their statutes is repeatedly challenged by a counter-discourse of 'rubberstamping' or managerial hegemony. One way to manage this is seen in the attempted appropriation by some council members of the concept of 'rubber stamp' as a virtuous outcome of council processes. A second way of managing this tension is to refer to the contrast between ideal and actual performance, where limitations of time and information are presented as part of an inescapable reality, where 'good people are always busy'. The difference here is between 'mention' and 'use' (Potter & Wetherell 1987): there are many mentions of how council could be improved but council members seldom use their insights as a springboard for critique of the status quo.

Other methods for managing these contradictions, and the criticisms they imply, include the use of generalisation or hypothetical examples, as when council members discuss what a 'good' Vice-Chancellor will expect of council or the functions of an 'ideal' Chancellor. The extent to which any construction - for example, claiming that a

council is like a corporate board - can be used metaphorically rather than literally provides widespread opportunities for disclaiming by interviewees, as an additional means to displace problematic constructions.

Dilemmas also manifest themselves in responses to different questions, separated in time, that seem inconsistent, such as the rejection by council members of remuneration, even when particular members claim that university councils are just like corporate boards. Perhaps the most difficult task is the management by elected members of council of the dilemmas between 'individual' and 'representative' functions. While elected council members deny acting other than as individuals, on numerous occasions they refer to themselves as 'representatives' and offer approaches to accountability that stress their constituencies.

One way of resolving an ideological dilemma of course is simply to take a position that one view is right while another is wrong, drawing on standard arguments available to the speaker. Social fields are inherently political (Fligstein 1998) and one important use of repertoires is to criticise alternative formulations, as when a council member argues that there should be no staff or student members of council. In the interviews, most council members imply some criticism but they do not adopt an overtly political or wholly consistent position. Rather, council members use different discourses at differing points during their interviews. Each of these discourses offers opportunities to criticise specific practices from a position of legitimacy without, however, requiring that the speaker restrict himself or herself solely to the lines of argument or 'logics' presented by that discourse.

The discursive field in which the 'agency-stakeholder' battle is enacted is a fairly fluid space, shaped by council members' own knowledge and linguistic resources. For example, interviewees make little mention of cooperatives or of German board models with employee representation, and not all may have access to discourses of the 'public good'. Within the discourses available to council members, it is possible to say that university councils both are and are not like corporate boards, i.e. positions at both extremes are 'allowed'. Less movement is permissible around the metaphor of 'business', where the norm is to accept that universities must be run in a 'business-like'

manner, although the dialogic turn here is to insist that universities are not *only* businesses.

What is not said is also significant, as indicative of missing discourses or repertoires - the topics than 'cannot' be discussed or which are not salient for those interviewed. There is no discourse, for example, of philanthropy or fundraising, and little talk of the role of councils in promoting higher education. The concept of ownership by staff, students and alumni is not touched on, although it may be implicit in references to university ideals. As noted above, there is little mention of risk management and the ongoing commercialisation of university activities, while there are only minor references to the need for performance measurement or better ways to protect the reputation of the university.

Overall, council members portray universities as businesses, *and* as the site of a particular conception of a public good (education and especially higher education) *and* also as an enduring institutional ideal operating within its own particular and privileged space, one that differs from the spaces occupied by purely commercial enterprises. Council members apply commercial, civic and transcendent logics of justification, in an attempt to create a place for universities that is apart from private enterprise while partly subject to the logics of privatised enterprise. Their ideas about university governance are, to a considerable extent, reliant on these different conceptions of what universities are 'about', which form the basis for the repertoires discussed below.

## *The four repertoires*

As noted in Chapter 2, an interpretative repertoire is characterised as a 'culturally familiar, recurrent or habitual line of argument comprised of recognizable themes, common places (sic) and tropes (doxa)' (Wetherell 1998: 400).

My analysis of the various responses given in interviews suggests that council members draw on four main interpretative repertoires in their accounts of university governing bodies. These repertoires are not just abstract ideas or categorisations but form the building blocks for the 'practical politics' of governance in action (Heffernan

1997). They imply differing governance processes - more 'efficient' or more 'participatory', more 'professional' or more 'collegial' - and shape the emphasis given by governing bodies to matters such as fiscal rectitude and academic reputation. Moreover, they can be expected to influence the ways in which council members wish to see university governance improved.

Each repertoire acknowledges that effective governance equals a sense of appropriate control and order in institutions and their practices. The differences lie in conceptions of what is being governed: a business, a resource for the greater community good, an association of scholarly professionals or a generic 'organisation'.

Three of these repertoires correspond directly to the differing 'interpretations' of a university identified above, and each can be related to one or more of Hung's (1998) six governance models. Each possesses its own internal logic and offers opportunities for critiquing or co-opting elements of the other two. These three repertoires are:

- The business repertoire: the frame of 'business', a commercial logic and support for agency/stewardship models;
- The community stakeholder repertoire: the frame of 'public purpose' and community engagement, a civic logic and support for stakeholder/resource dependency models; and
- The university community repertoire: the frame of 'the republic of the mind', a transcendent logic and support for stakeholder/institutional models.

The fourth repertoire relates not to any particular interpretation of a university but rather to empowering practices of 'good governance'. It reflects the fact that council members echo some normative prescriptions of good board governance identified in Chapter 2 and identify both constraining and empowering factors. This repertoire is therefore described as:

- The repertoire of professionalisation: the frame of 'generic governance practice', an industrial logic and opposition to a managerial hegemony model.

The business repertoire

This repertoire conceptualises universities as similar to other forms of business in their operations, stressing efficient operations. Its internal logic suggests small, skill-based boards with a narrow accountability to an owner, and to this extent it resembles agency or stewardship models of governance. Financial accountability and the expectations of owners are important and there is considerable sympathy towards the right of managers to manage.

The community stakeholder repertoire

This repertoire stresses the explicitly stakeholder nature of university councils, conceptualising universities as similar to other forms of public institution, such as schools or hospitals. It also emphasises the legitimacy granted by a local community and civic engagement of the university. Its internal logic suggests larger but honorary boards, drawn from citizens with an ability and willingness to contribute. A key role of the board is to provide community input into strategic directions for the university. Accountability to a local community and an understanding of community development needs are viewed as important. There is some concern over the ability of management to 'snow' external members of council.

The university community repertoire

This repertoire stresses the values that universities embody, such as the pursuit of knowledge and long-term development of society. It rests on the idea of a university as an independent and autonomous institution, emphasising the non-transferability of its purposes and its longstanding traditions. Its internal logic suggests democratic participation by owners, where owners are implicitly taken to be academics, students and alumni. Accountability is to members of a community who support and enact the core values and there is considerable mistrust of the culture of 'management'. To this extent it closely matches the theoretical model of managerial hegemony, but institutional and stakeholder models are also supported. In another sense, this repertoire reaches toward co-operative models of self-governance. Key roles of the board are to protect the position and values of the university, on behalf of all universities.

**Appendix H** shows the contrasting positions of these three repertoires across a range of governance topics, including topics addressed in interviews. That these repertoires align to a considerable extent with some of the major conceptual models of governance should not come as a surprise. The council members interviewed in many cases identify contrasting models that draw on concepts from the literature, although sometimes they use slightly different language, for example in making a distinction between 'corporate' and 'collegial' models.

The repertoire of professionalisation

This repertoire allows council members to give voice to concerns over council effectiveness and to employ a discourse drawn from the literature on best practice in governance. It acts to naturalise prescriptions about council roles irrespective of any particular governance model and legitimises the expression of anxieties over disempowerment of council members, using concepts drawn from the disciplines of management as well as of governance to lay down generic expectations of council's performance.

Use of each of the four repertoires does not mirror the structure of council membership. Many staff members of council displace the idea of a university by the idea of a university-as-business, while some external members are more interested to stress the idea of universities as crucial to a strong civil society than they are to suggest that councils should act like corporate boards. It is quite possible for any one council member to use all four repertoires in the course of an interview. One can imagine a council member using a business repertoire to describe a preferred governance model, a stakeholder repertoire to discuss accountability and remuneration, a professionalised repertoire to talk about roles and managerial hegemony and a university community repertoire to discuss expectations others hold of council.

However, there are certain correspondences. Staff and student members of council are, on the whole, more likely to use consistently the repertoire of the university community than external council members. Two of the four Vice-Chancellors interviewed, and one senior manager, employed the business repertoire to a significant extent. Among external members of council, the picture was mixed: although the

university community repertoire was certainly present in many accounts, it was not used consistently by external members.

A noticeable feature of the repertoires is their use of ambiguities and shades of meaning in naturalised discourse to move across various positions. For example, 'community' may refer to an external or an internal community or both, while 'support for the Vice-Chancellor' may be meant in a political or a much more personal sense. The need for councils may be justified in a common language of 'public accountability' that contains both the sense of accounting to an 'owner' but also to a wider group of stakeholders. The underlying references exist side by side, each constraining the other without wholly cloaking its presence, as examples of the 'overdetermination' present in many uses of language (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 104).

The sense of virtue inherent in words such as 'community', 'efficiency', 'values' or 'accountability' is thus available for use in more than one repertoire and allows the different repertoires to engage in dialogue with each other.

To some extent, then, these four repertoires can be viewed as involving smaller 'bundles' of concepts, flexibly applied. Other repertoires or groupings could possibly be identified, such as a repertoire around public sector organisations or around ideas of personal relationships. As noted in Chapter 4, the justification for a particular repertoire is in the strength of its internal logic and the light that is shed on the relationships involved, based on reference to the texts from which the repertoire is drawn.

Each of the four repertoires is explored in the following chapters, starting with a discussion of the business repertoire.

# Chapter 6

# THE BUSINESS REPERTOIRE

*News Corporation, Australia's largest company, has 17 directors on its board. Murdoch University has 25. BHP Billiton has 15, but James Cook University has 26. And while Alcoa finds a pared-down board of 11 is best suited to meet the challenges of global commerce, the University of Queensland lumbers along with a massive council comprising 35 members.*
*(Australian 5 November 2003: 12)*

This repertoire uses a cluster of ideas that cast the university as a business, requiring business-like efficiencies in operation. The logic is commercial (Boltanski & Thévenot 1991), reflecting a focus on 'operations' over 'mission' (Daley, Netting and Angulo 1996).

While this repertoire has some commonalities with the repertoire of professionalisation in its acceptance of the idea that all boards are - or should be - basically similar, the key model is the board of a for-profit corporation. Organising concepts are drawn from private sector models and, specifically, from an agency or stewardship perspective (Donaldson & Davis 1991; Davis, Schoorman & Donaldson 1997; Hung 1998). A further underlying theme is the need for strong and effective management of the organisation by the Chief Executive Officer, expressing a 'hard' rather than 'soft' form of managerialism (Trow 1994; Meek 2003b).

The business analogy positions government as the key 'shareholder' or 'owner' of universities and emphasises accountability to this owner rather than to other stakeholders. An agency logic is used to justify the need for councils, by reference to a general need for boards to protect the interests of owners; just as companies need boards, so do universities and any organisation that is regulated or funded by parties with an ownership interest.

Use of the business repertoire appears to be more deliberately rhetorical than interviewees' use of the other repertoires, the product of decisions to employ the language of business to

make claims about the need for efficiencies and the problems of staff and student representation. In presenting an extremely polarised position of universities as only businesses, council members are encouraging their colleagues to seek a middle ground that accepts, at least to some extent, the importance of financial and market considerations in assessing university outcomes.

### *Governance model and ownership (business repertoire)*

In the business repertoire, university governance is made sense by reference to corporate boards, as in this council member's account:

> Well, my view is that the council is essentially a board of management, a board of directors. It's an organisation, whether it's established by trust or whether it's established by a Companies Act or whatever, the reality is that someone invests resources, they have expectations, for whatever reasons it's impractical for them to manage those resources so they appoint other people to manage those resources to best achieve their expectations, and in this case it's clearly public resources. Governments have established the arrangement but the council is essentially the board of directors charged with developing policies and long term strategy plans to best enable those expectations to be met ....that's what it should be, it's certainly not what it is. (502, external)

As noted, the business repertoire makes use of the language of legal forms and an agency perspective to identify 'government' - sometimes both the State Government and the Federal Government - as the 'owner' of universities. Although council members may not uncritically accept a corporate model of university councils, they may use the language of the business repertoire to explain the logic of a new situation. One council member comments:

> Now, I would say the contemporary model, certainly the one we have here, is very much one appointed and given authority by government and of certain agents of government for the governance of the university. (106, staff)

As one Vice-Chancellor suggests, external pressures to adopt the language of business may be important for universities in securing ongoing legitimacy (Pfeffer & Salancik 1978; Birnbaum 1992):

> Well, it's the governing body of the university and I mean, there is this view - and we all know why - that universities have to conduct their affairs in some very significant ways much more in a business mode. (113, Vice-Chancellor)

This repertoire therefore is used by council members, including staff and student members, to signal to the Federal Government, as the major funder, a commitment by universities to the implementation of 'business-like' practices (Abzug & Galaskiewicz 2001; Shattock 2002a). As other studies have suggested, reliance on government as the main source of funds may reduce the need for not-for-profit boards to seek legitimacy from other sources such as the community (cf. Stone, Hager and Griffin 2001).

However, universities may need to signal legitimacy not only to government but also to others who provide funding, including prospective consumers. In the words of one council member:

> I think universities have to be run like businesses and I think that's going to become even more important as my view is that there will be greater emphasis put on private fund raising. I think there'll be a move away from government funding, and I've got to say I support that because I think it does create accountability. (110, external)

That is, the business repertoire can be used to assert the claims of customers (or consumers of the university 'product'), as another council member suggests:

> Our customers are two people: the community, probably the students or the people that we're training or educating is our first customer; our second customer is the community. Really, that's the only two customers we have. The other ones, the government and stuff, really they're not our customer. (202, staff)

The conception of a university as responsive primarily to its customers suggests that governing board members may in future increasingly express the 'consumer interest' ideology identified by Deem (1995) in her study of school governing boards.

In the business repertoire, the model for a corporate board is that of the British, Australian or US board of directors, with little consideration of European dual-board models or the

presence of employees or workers on the board. This model is reflected in the views of one Vice-Chancellor:

> I see the university council as the equivalent of the board of a company.... Now, I might also say that it seems odd, and would seem odd to a public company, to have staff representatives upon the council and that certainly has potential for difficulty. (513, Vice-Chancellor)

However, another Vice-Chancellor mentions and rejects the idea of 'worker shareholders' (404, Vice-Chancellor).

The business repertoire casts the Vice-Chancellor in the role of CEO and the Chancellor as Chairman of the board, and in general strongly supports the role and authority of the CEO. There is much less suspicion of managerial hegemony than in other repertoires and claims of 'rubberstamping' by council are turned aside through references to efficient operation. In this respect, the business repertoire is closer to a 'stewardship' than to an 'agency' model of governance (Davis, Schoorman & Donaldson 1997).

### *Size, membership and remuneration (business repertoire)*

The business repertoire takes for granted that smaller councils are more likely to be effective than larger ones, while some council members assume that smaller councils must be more 'corporate' in their operations. As one member observes: 'as a result of the recent changes it's become a much smaller group...and consequently I think the council is much more like a board of a public company than it was before' (410, external).

The repertoire is therefore used to support smaller councils, as in the words of one Vice-Chancellor who applauds the reduction in size of some university councils in Victoria:

> Of course, I think one of the good things about the downsizing of councils and our council is that my observation is that's it's been a lot easier for all of the councillors to readily contribute to debate.... There's been a noticeable improvement in individual participation in discussion. (113, Vice-Chancellor)

The internal logic of the business repertoire dictates that representation, embodied in the presence of staff and student members but also in some external stakeholders, is kept to a minimum (Hoare 1995). While other repertoires are used to put the case for 'more equal representation of the stakeholders' (115, student), the business repertoire advances arguments for reduction in the numbers of (mainly internal) stakeholders or even their total removal.

In the business repertoire, elected representatives on university governing boards are presented as problematic: 'It ought to be a board of directors, but because of the constituent parts of it you end up getting a lot of people who actually represent certain constituencies' (116, external).

This repertoire is used to imply that there is no place on governing boards for widely divergent perspectives or single-issue members, as this council member states:

> I have a very strong view that the council is the governing body of the university and is essentially like a board of directors. But in practice, sometimes councils are made up of people who represent disparate groups who have a point of view or a barrow to push and when that happens on councils they don't work too well. (509, external)

Some council members suggest that council's job of oversight of management performance is made difficult by the presence of internal representatives, which 'really complicates the picture as far as the Vice-Chancellor's authority and council's oversight of that are concerned' (210, external). As another council member expresses it:

> It makes monitoring really difficult, it makes saying negative things very difficult indeed and extremely destructive. It's why I don't do things in public meetings. It really is. You cannot monitor the chief executive officer's performance in a body that includes his employees. You cannot do it... (116, external)

While Vice-Chancellors and other council members may not overtly reject staff or student participation, using the business repertoire they sketch scenarios (in 'other' universities or 'in the past') where representation has been problematic, as in this example:

> But an area of tension, a very important one, is the issue of representation and that's where I think the major difference to a company board, an ideal company board, should be one where the members don't represent at all but behave only in response to the company when they're sitting there. What we have had in those bad days of downsizing, the funding cuts and all the problems, was a fairly strong union ticket onto the staff and they acted in a very predictable way... (304, Vice-Chancellor)

In the business repertoire, the criterion for effective council membership is expressed in managerial terms of the 'right mix of skills' rather than in terms of 'perspectives' or 'ability to contribute'. In the words of one council member

> I think that really is very helpful to have people with a strong business background, with a legal background...All of those talents can be brought to bear on the running of the university. I think that's just stating the obvious, isn't it...
> (410, external)

An implicit distinction is made between skills-based and stakeholder-based boards, and the skills required of council members are expressed as those of business or management, rather than skills in education or research.

The business repertoire, by analogy with corporate governance, can be employed to support the remuneration of council members. One Vice-Chancellor states:

> ..my view is they should, all council members, whether internal, students or what have you. Yes, I believe that.... I introduced it in the debate about the restructure of council.... you wouldn't be paying sort of $300,000, but I would have thought $15,000-20,000, just to make it clear that you are a council member and that is what you're there for and you'd better take it seriously and you need some recompense for the responsibility, not for time or effort, because you're not repaying time because you can't do that, but just to signal that responsibility. That's what most board memberships in most organisations are. Away from the big end of town it is just some recognition of your willingness to expose yourself, basically.
> (404, Vice-Chancellor)

While most council members choose not to use a business repertoire in discussing the possibility of remuneration, this repertoire permits the issue to be canvassed.

### *Council roles (business repertoire)*

While many elements of interviewees' accounts of council roles are drawn from a professionalised governance discourse, the business repertoire emphasises financial accountability and commercial 'realities', including those of the marketplace. As one student member of council comments:

> Obviously, the financial accountability is a huge one. The role of council is to find as many opportunities to get money for the university as they can through getting involved in investments, through getting involved in financial schemes, perhaps through buying shares, to getting involved in markets. The university is...it's almost become like an organisation where the role of council is to keep the business going and as with any normal organisation the thing is the bottom line.
> (205, student)

The business repertoire also employs the language of markets and competition in the sale of educational products (Marginson 1997), expressed by one council member in the following terms:

> Council members now are far more aware for the need to be competitive with other universities. I think that competition makes council members aware that if they don't perform they're going to be in trouble, the university will be in trouble, and that focuses the mind. Competition does focus the mind considerably and it doesn't matter whether you're in business or politics or education or anything else, when you have competition your mind will focus; when you don't have competition you will become fat and lazy and not care. I think we saw that from a number of universities over a number of years. (505, external)

The language of marketing and business, however, may suggest emerging opportunities and to this extent the business repertoire may be used to legitimise non-traditional roles of newer universities (Marginson & Considine 2000). One council member of a new university states:

> I think recently universities have been encouraged to become much more alert to the way in which they individually can approach the market for students, so a particular identity of a university, a particular flavour or mission - that's the in word - that a university would take is something that's been encouraged. We shouldn't all slavishly follow the sandstone universities. You know, pick the market, find a

> niche, and very often it's the council that would assist - or at least it's the council that thinks that they should be assisting - with developing that particular niche spot. (512, staff)

A concern voiced by some is the extent to which markets focus attention on the 'branding' of institutions rather than on the quality of teaching or research in specific disciplines:

> One of the problems at present it seems that the university has is the increased corporatisation and negotiating deals with software companies and having [University company] bringing in extra income...As that happens, the sense of responsibility tends to shift from students and staff as the learners and the researchers to the corporate body as a whole and the success of [University] as having the most number of students, having the biggest income... (303, student)

In this example, as in others where speakers wish to distance themselves from wholehearted support of the business repertoire, concepts of the repertoire are 'mentioned' rather than 'used' (McKinlay, Potter & Wetherell 1993).

### *Individual roles on council (business repertoire)*

The business repertoire is used to state that the role of each individual member of council is the same as any other, even if there are individual differences in skills, as this council member notes:

> I think each person brings to council a certain level of competence or experience or whatever, and in that sense I guess that's how you would judge the difference. I think each councillor is expected to determine policy for the whole university, keep a watchful eye on what's happening in terms of the senior operations... (409, external)

The logic is based, in part, on a sense of the responsibilities of directors in corporations law and in common law, although many council members are unsure just how far their liability would extend if a financial crisis arose. Internal members of council, especially those in managerial positions, are likely to use comparisons with other boards to emphasise the extent to which they are not the mouthpieces of a particular set of interests. One academic manager states:

> My own belief, and this hasn't come only from this particular board but from experience on other boards, is that, first of all let me start with what it's not. I don't believe that I need to represent a constituency. I bring the expertise that that constituency has invested in me to the consideration of the issues in front of the board. I think this is a primary issue, an unresolved issue, in terms of boards in general and the council in general, particularly in terms of staff and elected representatives who believe they are representing their constituency and bring that bound opinion to council. (106, staff)

From the logic of the business repertoire, any use by elected staff and student members of a 'representative' logic is presented as illegitimate, as one Chancellor comments:

> The most important thing is that they - staff and students - do observe the fact that they can't behave as representatives when they're on council, and that's very difficult, to treat the staff and the students - the students particularly are understood to be perhaps not really realistic. (211, Chancellor)

The business repertoire therefore provides a way of assigning staff and students to 'renegade' positions on council. The destabilisation and delegitimation of staff and student members is accomplished in a variety of ways, including the infantilisation implicit in this account:

> Well, I think that's a really difficult thing because it's important to listen to them, but at the same time it's like talking to your children and saying, well, 'What do you think we should do for the holidays?' And then they always say 'We want to go to Disneyland', but you know that for a raft of reasons, you either can't afford to go to Disneyland, or you've been there four times and you don't want to go again, you know, or if you've got elderly parents and you're going to go and visit them. (101, external)

In the comment below, the speaker suggests that internal elected members of council experience major tensions, although he is at pains to stress that he is not expressing a view that staff and student members should not be on council:

> Firstly, there are tensions between external and internal - the people who are on council as - and I'm not saying they shouldn't be there - who are elected by various bodies which are named. And their first I think conflict is that they're not representatives of that group but they're members of a body, a single body, and they're there to see to the wholeness of the university. I think that's a very big

> conflict and whilst staff may and should be able to deal with that... it's very difficult for students, who are elected on a popularity vote. (511, external)

### *Accountability (business repertoire)*

In the business repertoire, accountability largely begins and ends with a sense of accountability to the State legislature that establishes the university and the council. When asked to whom councils are accountable, one council member says 'Well, in the legislation, to the minister. It's quite straightforward' (109, staff).

Consistent with Tomasic and Bottomley's (1993) findings for Australian company directors, some university council members use a 'shareholder' analogy to reject the idea of accountability to stakeholders. In the words of one council member:

> No, I don't think there should be any stakeholder accountability. Well, do you mean the university to its stakeholders? It depends what we call a stakeholder. If it's an investor, yes, if it's just an interest group, no. To me, you go back to marketing, that's markets area...There's no reason for you to have an accountability to the interest groups unless you deem that appropriate. (502, external)

The idea of meaningful accountability to the internal community is rejected, as in this Vice-Chancellor's account:

> Well, they are but not in any real sense whatsoever...I mean, I think if one looks at the tabloids that the real legal accountabilities are all between the external area and the supreme governing body of the university. I mean, it's to their eternal credit if individual councillors see themselves as accountable, you know, to the internal university community. I would have said there's more of a duty of care in relation to the internal membership. (113, Vice-Chancellor)

In a more critical vein, another council member explains how other stakeholders are placed in a secondary position, deconstructing while affirming the dominance of a 'corporate' approach to governance:

> I think the corporate model that we have moved to, the university council is accountable to Government and the Minister...I think, of course, the culture is accountable to the organisation and its officers and its students and it has all of those

> within its frames of reference, but in a sense they are the mechanisms by which he [the Chancellor] achieves his ultimate accountability to government. I think that's how it's constructed. (106, staff)

Another, more subtle, distinction, is drawn between the accountability of universities as a whole and council as the apex of a chain of accountability where councils, as the agents of the owners, are not responsible to anyone, precisely because they represent the owners. One council member comments: 'They're accountable formally to themselves, as I understand it, so that they're established as an Act of Parliament and govern themselves' (512, staff).

On the question of what councils are accountable for, the business repertoire places emphasis on 'good governance', seen particularly in terms of financial and legal compliance. Accountability may be presented as a series of items to be ticked off a list, as this council member's account illustrates:

> They're accountable for the performance of the university, they're accountable for the proper expending of government grants, they're accountable for the proper expending of other revenue which is received by the university in the form of research grants, and they can be government grants or private industry grants. I think councils have responsibility in respect of specific acts, such as anti-discrimination laws and equal opportunity laws, handicapped persons... (110, external)

If the university is viewed as a business, its financial health is the overriding responsibility of council. One council member says:

> Well, obviously the one that, you know, in the current society in which we live, the one that you have to put number one is finance. You can't sort of sit there and let it go broke, so it has to be accountable for that... (101, external)

Or, as another member puts it: 'You're not putting the dollars in the Bahamas' (102, student). Anxiety over financial responsibilities and the extent of liability is evident, however, from this comment made by a third council member:

> ...Land and buildings, decisions for borrowings, for example, because universities are increasingly borrowing now; whereas once upon a time the money used to be lent to it by the government but now we're borrowing externally. I've got to say there's some concern about that. People are saying, you know, especially within a volatile interest environment, is that a sensible thing to be doing at present? (301, staff)

Such constructions focus on 'conformance' over 'performance' (Barrett 2003a), although other accounts combine the two, referring to accountability for 'results, whatever that means' (201, external) or 'making a good job of it' (302, external).

The question of how councils account is answered in the business repertoire by reference to formal reports, in terms similar to the views of this council member:

> Well, in strictly operational terms, through their statutory annual report, et cetera. In many ways that's probably the only way but in other ways you like to think they are accountable by their actions and what's perceived of what job they're doing, but that's a bit nebulous. (401, staff)

The business repertoire, with its rejection of representative roles and emphasis on equal liability, stresses that individual accountabilities should be the same for all board members. Talking of his own accountability, one council member explains:

> Well each one has got to be signed off on, so I suppose you can say personally. I suppose you are also accountable to the Chancellor because he's the chairman of the team on that...we are the board, we're the whipping boy at the end. It's the Chancellor and the board who would be seen in the public eye as having the responsibility for things that happen at all levels, as a board of directors. (107, external)

Although council members may admit some sense of accountability to the people who placed them there, in the business repertoire they present themselves as accountable to their own consciences and to the Chancellor. One council member comments:

> At the end of the day I see myself accountable to, you know, to our leader, to the Chancellor. Yes, I'm a Ministerial appointment from the wider community and there's some accountability there. But frankly, as I work in this role I see myself accountable to the Chancellor. (114, external)

In the business repertoire, individual accountability is, however, accountability for results rather than for the process of 'making a contribution', which is a common formulation in stakeholder-focused repertoires. One council member expresses passionate objection to this type of process-based thinking:

> No, making a contribution is no good, making a contribution is an old-fashioned kind of leftist way of saying you feel good. I'm not into feel good politics, although I probably am leftist, but I'm not into feel good politics. You actually have to do something. You have to be able to say not, 'I feel good', not 'I did my best', that's not good enough. If you do your best and the place still goes bust, you failed, so feel good is no joy. What you want to do is you want to get out and say, 'When I left the place it was in better shape than when I came'. (509, external)

### *Expectations of council held by others (business repertoire)*

The business repertoire is used to convey the idea that universities are established for largely instrumental purposes. It positions other groups as expecting that universities should deliver employable graduates at a low cost, together with good 'bottom line' outcomes for State (and Federal) Governments interested in income producing activities, industry growth and employment. This view is expressed by one council member in the following terms:

> To my mind it's not much good producing graduates who can't get work, you know, you've sunk megabucks into them and apart from having broadened minds, it's useful...I come from a school which thinks firmly that people should go and do some work at the end of the investment that the Commonwealth [Federal Government] and State taxpayers of Australia have invested in them. (506, external)

The expectation of governments for financial accountability is emphasised in this repertoire. As one council member observes:

> I think probably, just looking at the context of the recent review, they [the State Government] expected the university to become more responsive. I think they were concerned about two things, the speed of decision making, and it's notorious, it takes forever, and they thought a smaller focus, a more corporate type council would help push that along. I think they have been a bit concerned about the financial involvement of the institution in the context of the whole range of income sources

> and so on that have been a bit risky, and I think they are wanting to make sure that there's that clear monitoring of the financial health and that if anybody was getting into difficulties in the university, if the management is getting into difficulties financially that would be known and steps would be taken and so on. So I think it's probably both those things: to make decision making more efficient, and particularly quickly, and overseeing the financial health. (408, staff)

Whether or not this expectation can be met is subject to counter-claims advanced by some internal council members:

> And I think government's going to be disappointed. I think they've set up this new council structure assuming that it's going to give this kind of broad, financial, commercial focus for universities, where in fact what they've done is shift control completely - or almost completely - to the executive committee and senior management. (501, staff)

In accordance with its problematisation of staff and student representation on council, the business repertoire presents the expectations of students and staff as unrealistic. The following examples are typical:

> They [academic staff] see the council as a genie in a bottle and all they have to do is rub it and we appear and grant them three wishes. (505, external)

> Well, in my day the students used to expect the university council to be fair, and I think a lot of students still expect that, but more and more in the last 20 years students have seen council as a place where they can re-run battles that have already been lost in other areas, in other forums. (509, external)

In common with other repertoires, it is taken for granted that communities have expectations of universities, but not expected that those communities have expectations of university councils beyond a generalised desire for sound management. In the business repertoire, a shorthand way of referring to expectations of university governance is to compare the university to a major corporation, as this council member does:

> It's a bit like, you know, when you talk about BHP: no one really talks about the board of BHP, it's the company. (402, external)

In this example, the corporation is Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd (now BHP Billiton), a common reference point for a number of interviewees that is used both to reinforce similarities between university boards and corporate boards (cf. Hatton 1991) and to explain why universities are 'different'.

### *Role of Academic Board (business repertoire)*

In the business repertoire, the Academic Board is presented as a specialist committee of council, working under delegated authority to provide advice within prescribed limits. Attempts by staff or students to expand this role are delegitimised, as this speaker, head of a Board of Studies, indicates:

> I see the Board of Technical Studies as being a body that is focused on the core business of the TAFE division, which is to get high quality curriculum and teaching them learning strategies. They [students and staff] see it as a board which, by virtue of its reporting relationship to council, is likewise a forum into which they can throw any concern and therefore they believe the membership has to be representative so that those concerns can go forward. (109, staff)

Those who espouse a 'hard' form of managerialism may even criticise the Academic Board for a lack of accountability to council, as this speaker remarks:

> ...nobody sat down and said to the Academic Board, 'These are the expectations. What are your strategies? Who's measuring whether you are meeting those?' It is simply about a group of academics putting up a course and Academic Board seeing that it makes our standards and it comes to council as a line in a set of minutes and we endorse it. That's hardly an accountability framework. No one ever goes back, as far as I know, and says, 'Did that course actually meet the expectations of whoever? (502, external)

The focus is on the Board's role of providing 'professional technical expertise' as one council member describes it: 'If you're on the board of BHP you don't tell the analytical chemistry department to change the mixture of chemicals they're using in a particular process' (509, external).

### *The Vice-Chancellor's expectations of council (business repertoire)*

The business repertoire is sympathetic to Vice-Chancellors' views that council is not there to manage the university. As one senior academic manager puts it:

> It's probably like your board, you know, when you're a big company, you don't really want all those board members running around telling you what to do but you're happy if they'll sign off on things and make it look as though it's consensus. (412, staff)

In this repertoire, council members expect Vice-Chancellors to seek support for their strong 'presidential' leadership (Fisher & Koch 1996), as expressed by this council member:

> I think a Vice-Chancellor would hope for support in the direction that he or she is trying to lead the university. That is a very wide expectation but very simply expressed, but at the same time, within that very simple expression it's a very wide area. So I would anticipate that that's what he or she would - again, the bottom line - that's what they would be expecting. (505, external)

The business repertoire is also used to express a view of council as a necessary evil, the price paid by the CEO for support of her or his authority. While vice-chancellorial norms of behaviour may mandate polite words in public about the need for councils, the first sentences of this Vice-Chancellor's remarks express some frustration with council processes:

> What would happen if I had no council for the last year? I'd have to say that in fact I probably would have got on faster with certain things and I would have had to spend less time wasting time with council and with council members. That's a shortsighted, short view of things. In the end, that would lead to enormous corruption of the system. The council is vital. It's vital that you have a good council...And what has to happen is a Vice-Chancellor and a council have to work together to make it a positive experience for both. (513, Vice-Chancellor)

Vice-Chancellors can also use the business repertoire to legitimise an explicit and narrowly defined line of information to council:

> I expect them to keep out of management and I expect them not to collude with people who try and loop around due process. Fortunately, they're extremely good at doing that and we occasionally get people ring up and try and get things looped around. We have very clear lines to council agenda, basically only from the major committees, which are Resources, Academic Board, and from the Vice-Chancellor. (404, Vice-Chancellor)

At the same time, the business repertoire reinforces what council should expect, in business terms, of a good Vice-Chancellor:

> That he is going to operate at a level of performance that will put him in the top quarter of performing executives in business. He will be maximising the efficiency of the performance of the organisation against benchmarks which have been established either with the Chancellor or the council. But he will be operating with a high degree of sensitivity to the environment which he is in, and yet at the same time will not shrink from the hard decisions that have to be made, like redundancies and that type of thing. (107, external)

However, the extent of the Vice-Chancellor's power as the head of a semi-autonomous institution may also be critically examined through use of a business comparison, as in this example (with another reference to BHP):

> At the moment, really much more, I think, than in other organisations, the CEO, the Vice-Chancellor, sets the direction and tone for the university to a much, much greater degree than CEOs in other organisations that I've been involved in... Perhaps in the case of, say, BHP but, I mean, clearly, in those sort of very large public companies the CEO has an enormous degree of influence as well. So that one [point] is probably a closer correlation perhaps between a very large public company and a university. (208, external)

### *Attitudes to management and the performance of council functions (business repertoire)*

As noted above, the business repertoire relies on a corporate analogy, which privileges management and casts the governing body in an oversight role. For many council members, behaving as a 'rubber stamp' is indicative of poor council performance. In the business repertoire, however, considerable effort is put into sanitising the metaphor to reduce its pejorative connotations. One approach, used in the comment below, is to suggest that council can be satisfied by reference to expert advice:

> Firstly, I must say where council wants certain people to have a specific role it best deals with it by giving it to the subcommittee...and so it comes back and then council more or less rubberstamps it, because the most relevant people in council have already spoken - unless there's something very fundamentally wrong they don't interfere. (407, external)

The business repertoire advances the claims for efficiency over participatory processes in governance (Bargh, Scott and Smith 1996; Edwards 2000a, 2003a). University decision-making processes are presented as frustrating, even when it is acknowledged, as by this council member, that they reflect important 'traditions':

> But the worst is the committee system, the committee meetings you have to go to and the time taken to make a decision. It's a very long drawn out process and I've found that difficult. I can understand it but, you know, I think we talked about how the mix, making an efficient university and a council, [and] for keeping the traditions of the graduations and everything that's wonderful. (210, external)

Notwithstanding the frustrations of committee processes, the business repertoire is used to justify a committee structure where the 'real' work occurs through the 'off balance sheet' management of situations of internal conflict and protection of confidentiality. In contrast to the community stakeholder and university community repertoires, the business repertoire dictates that full meetings of council should be largely depoliticised: 'Council meetings aren't the place for that sort of thing anyway' (302, external).

The re-casting of full council meetings as a consensus making rather than a deliberative space is reflected in this Vice-Chancellor's account, where strategic committees are a way of:

> ...rehearsing ideas before they hit council, getting an idea of what council is likely to think about new directions... so that when things hit council they're not surprises (404, Vice-Chancellor).

The business repertoire is used to reinforce conventions of council meetings, by justifying the need for an avoidance of 'shaming' behaviour and enactment of accord (cf. Lorsch & MacIver 1989). As one Chancellor says:

> ...most of that sort of thing [vetting of ideas] would actually go through one of the council committees before it came to council and you would hope that you'd never subject the Vice-Chancellor to the indignity of voting down one of his ideas. Executive committee certainly does that - I'd say frequently. There have been a number of occasions where we've told him to go and rethink but that's always happened before it gets to an open council. (508, Chancellor)

The business model, in its stewardship elements, does not necessarily accentuate the need for the independence of council members. Its emphasis on people trying to work together is an implicit criticism of more 'oppositional' or political models. The achievement of agreement, bypassing the need for a vote, is presented as a virtue: '...a good committee shouldn't really go on votes. They should work on consensus' (401, staff).

Informal communication among the 'wrong' people is portrayed as a danger, as a risk to management control. In particular, the exchange of information from staff members, with claims to possessing uncensored 'insider' knowledge, to curiosity-driven external members is frowned on. The business repertoire presents such inside knowledge as being unsanctioned, biased and politically motivated. If the admission of 'danger' is felt to not be appropriate, the leaking of information can be presented as more of a nuisance than a threat for the CEO:

> There are those who are mischievous and like to intervene and like to caucus with those they perceive as will give the executive and the Vice-Chancellor a hard time and will listen with great interest to complaints, never relay the complaints on, except in some dramatic fashion, and so on. (513, Vice-Chancellor)

Most council committees are corralled, to ensure there is no trespass across the boundary of management prerogative, with policing of the frontiers by both internal management and sometimes external members of council with insider status. Council committees with compliance responsibilities are taken as standard but other committees, and particularly committees on human resources or staffing, have a more precarious place in the business repertoire.

The need for the professionalisation of councils, through the education or information of all council members, is not a concern expressed through the business repertoire. Rather, within a blueprint that presents much of the work of scrutiny as devolved to council committees, and therefore requires council meetings to take much on trust, the business repertoire relies on underscoring the high levels of confidence council members have in their committees. It stresses the occupational qualifications and expertise of committee chairs as well as the work of internal staff. This council member expresses a common approach:

> ...the chair of our finance committee...I've got full confidence in him. You know, I know that anything that comes out of there is going to be terrific. The audit committee, we work really hard to ensure that we focus on the issues and risks in particular. So, yes, I have a lot of confidence in those committees....
> (203, external)

Alongside the presentation of 'real work' as done in committees is the clear sense many council members expressed of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' among council members, where those on the outside are cast more as audience than as actors:

> I have a problem with the openness of council too I have to say...I have a strong view that council should actually meet in concert, do its business stuff, and then have a public meeting afterwards and answer questions to stakeholders or something. (502, external)

The existence of an insider group or 'kitchen cabinet' (Marginson & Considine 2000) is presented as an unproblematic contribution to the achievement of efficiency in governance, as this Vice-Chancellor implies:

> This university has an executive committee, which is a small group of people who I interact with mainly. I don't interact with the rest of the council members - there would be another 15, 16 members of council and I interact with them at council meetings and afterwards. (513, Vice-Chancellor)

At its most extreme, however, this example suggests that those not part of the inner circle may not get to question the Vice-Chancellor on major questions of policy or direction.

### *Summary of the business repertoire*

The business repertoire provides strong arguments for certain ways of approaching council membership, roles and functions. While it has some elements in common with the professionalising repertoire examined in Chapter 9, the business repertoire is less concerned with the professionalisation of governance than with ensuring that governance is sympathetic to the need to support the Chief Executive. Use of the business repertoire is a strong feature of the interview responses of two of the four Vice-Chancellors and present to a significant extent in the responses of one other.

A feature of this repertoire is its lack of explicit reference to examples of value-adding through good corporate governance practices: the business repertoire deals with structural features such as the size of councils and board skills, but is less able to be used to express benefits in terms of improved outcomes. Legitimacy claims are made in the business repertoire by analogy and assumption (Meek 2002), not by reference to results. This is perhaps not surprising, given a popular view that the governance of for-profit organisations is seriously in need of improvement (Lorsch & MacIver 1989; Monks 1998).

Within the business repertoire, corporate boards are considered in fairly narrow and stereotypical terms. Debates present in the literature over companies' wider social responsibilities are referred to by some university council members but they use other repertoires to do so.

The next chapter examines the community stakeholder repertoire, which presents an obvious contrast to concepts articulated within the business repertoire.

# Chapter 7

# THE COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER REPERTOIRE

*[Not-for-profit] boards exist...to serve as the binding which holds together the 'sticks' - political, economic, cultural, public and private - that comprise public life (Hall 2003: 29)*

This repertoire is predicated on ideas of the university as working for a public purpose, responsive to community and social concerns. It shares with the business repertoire an underlying assumption of government as owner, but locates universities squarely within a public sector, not a purely commercial, environment. That is, the university is treated as a 'community established institution' (401, external). Legitimacy, in terms of a resource-dependency perspective (Pfeffer & Salancik 1978), is achieved through decisions by democratically elected governments to fund universities, mediated by consultation on specific issues. The repertoire, in offering a broad middle ground between the extremes of corporate and scholarly governance, reflects the language and ideas of 'soft' rather than 'hard' managerialism (Trow 1994).

Analogies are drawn with the boards of other public sector or not-for-profit organisations, such as hospitals, schools, and arts organisations. This repertoire employs a 'civic' logic with some elements of a 'domestic' logic of personal trust and personal satisfaction (Boltanski & Thévenot 1991). Its theoretical counterparts are stakeholder (Hung 1998) or democratic (Cornforth 2003a) models.

The organising concepts of this repertoire are drawn from public processes at various levels of government, including the principles of participation, social justice and community development. The language of this repertoire emphasises 'mission' over 'operations' (Daley, Netting & Angulo 1996) but with 'mission' understood more as a general aspiration for a healthy society than as a professional calling.

Underlying themes are the need for civic engagement, wide stakeholder representation, and effective processes to facilitate consultation with relevant parties through

processes of 'inclusive' governance (Brown 2002). In this regard, the repertoire has commonalities with the 'new local governance discourse' identified by Reddel (2002), with the discourse of public sector governance (ANAO 2003) and with discourses about university engagement with local and regional communities (e.g. Harman & Robertson-Cuninghame 1995; Garlick 1998, 2000; Chatterton & Goddard 2000; DEST 2002c; VDET 2002b; Ostrander 2004).

While the theme of stakeholder consultation overlaps with concepts in the university community repertoire, the community stakeholder repertoire is less concerned with self-governance and more with effective external advising on priorities. This repertoire could serve as a repertoire for the governance of many not-for-profit organisations (Olson 2000; Abzug & Galaskiewicz 2001; Ospina, Diaz & O'Sullivan 2002). It positions council, in the words of one council member, as 'the link between the university as a public institution and its stakeholders in the community, and more generally as a public institution' (512, staff).

The community stakeholder repertoire is widely used by both external and internal council members. Not unexpectedly, it is most obviously used by members of universities with a strong regional presence, where 'community' refers explicitly to a local community rather than to society at large or to an internal constituency, that is, where there is a 'proximal' community with an active interest (Jensen 1998) and claims can be made for the role of universities in promoting regional growth, especially in rural areas.

### *Governance model and ownership (community stakeholder repertoire)*

In this repertoire, the idea of a corporate board is replaced by an alternative, such as the board of a public sector agency or 'a very large community organisation' (103, external), as this council member explains:

> I would say that if you're looking at it from... community organisation boards, they're probably very similar. Volunteers trying to do the right thing, some have their own political agendas a bit, some don't, basically genuine people. I probably would put the university council as somewhere in that category with probably just a little bit more expertise. Certainly not the same as a board of a company. (202, staff)

The stakeholder repertoire advances legitimacy claims based on the need for external oversight of universities 'through a group that is broadly representative of the community controlling it' (510, external). It draws on principles of transparency and scrutiny of bureaucratic actions by interested parties: 'I think it is important that...they do have that kind of responsibility and accountability so that there is perhaps more public scrutiny or, yes, more transparency' (111, staff).

Another justification for university councils in this repertoire is their function as an audit or accountability mechanism for public funds. The difference between the business repertoire and the community stakeholder repertoire lies in their differing conceptions of public ownership: in the former, the state is an owner because it is an investor, while in the latter, the state embodies the owners, who are members of the community.

In accounts using this repertoire, universities are positioned somewhere between the public service and somewhere within a wider vision of institutions of civil society. One speaker summarises by saying:

> While there's a corporate responsibility on behalf of a board of directors or a university council, ultimately one has a profit maximisation motive, whereas the universities have a more general public good responsibility. (510, external)

Some of the strongest proponents of the 'public good' arguments, not surprisingly, are academic staff members of council, familiar with the terms and lines of argument:

> I do think that there are different principles, that the public sector is there for the public good first and foremost and that that's the principal criteria and that policies which government are foisting on us to make us act increasingly like private companies with the outcomes that private companies are supposed to produce are harmful and make it more difficult for universities to achieve their broader social responsibilities...so therefore the whole nature of the citizenry that we're shaping is becoming marketised, so citizenship itself is being redefined into a very narrow framework and education is largely contributing to that. (503, staff)

In contrast to the business repertoire, the community stakeholder repertoire emphasises the discursive, representative and highly diverse nature of council membership. It is

used to suggest that council exists as a space where differences can be contested but ultimately accommodated. As one council member observes:

> ...if you take it from a perspective of the corporate governance perspective, I think it's an interesting but largely inefficient vehicle, but if you take it from the point of view that a university is not solely a, it's not a corporate entity, then I think you would see it as being quite an interesting and useful model of bringing together a range of interests, people working together for a broader interest. (101, external)

The participatory discourse of the stakeholder repertoire displaces the formal legal definition of council by a more 'social' definition, which legitimises council as a pluralist quasi-political space (Kogan et al. 1984). The coming-together of communities of interest (Adams & Hess 2001) is emphasised, rather than the oppositional politics suggested by the university community repertoire.

This repertoire's cluster of responses places council in a consultative role as an 'advisory body', a 'forum', a 'strategic planning group', a 'place where overall issues are discussed', and a 'policy approval body'. Other descriptions use the analogy of a 'peak body' (107 external, 208 external), but in an ambiguous way: on the one hand, council is the 'peak' authority of the university but, on the other, a peak body can be a constituency of interests, whose role is essentially that of advocacy for its members.

Stakeholders provide connections to the wider society that in turn mould the governance function. Three of the four Vice-Chancellors interviewed invest some effort in describing council as a body to be taken seriously as 'the most significant interface between the university and both government and the community' (113, Vice-Chancellor). However, in their accounts, council is also carefully presented as a bridge between a posited 'inside' space of university operations and a threatening outside world, so that the council's 'existence is what gives university its autonomy' (304, Vice-Chancellor).

The community stakeholder repertoire is also used to posit different and lesser legal liabilities or accountabilities of university governing bodies: 'They're also honorary, they don't have the same legal accountabilities' (508, external).

### *Size, membership and remuneration (community stakeholder repertoire)*

The internal logic of the community stakeholder repertoire supports larger boards where a variety of interests can be represented. One internal member of council comments:

> I see nothing wrong with having fairly large discussion situations where you've got a number of different kinds of people there. You wouldn't want to run the train system like that, but in a university council I think it's perfectly acceptable. (512, staff)

However, in keeping with its emphasis on external oversight and public funding, this repertoire is used, as in the following example, to favour external over internal members:

> I personally don't think there's a profit in increasing the percentage of staff and students on university council. I don't really think that that's a good use of their time. I think what's needed is it's the community, politically and every other way now...I personally, if you haven't gathered, think that the lay arm of council is critically important to the success and wellbeing of institutions. (204, external)

Another council member justifies an increase in external members as being in tune with current thinking:

> I think what happened at [University] as a result of [the Victorian Government review of councils], and at some of the other universities, is the internal influence was reduced and what you might call the 'wider community perspective' became more important. (511, external)

In contrast to the business repertoire, where skills are emphasised, the external stakeholder model engages with the 'civic' logic (Boltanksi & Thévenot 1991) of a range of perspectives: 'So you don't want a university council dominated by lefties or righties or centries, you want a nice mix up' (201, external). This repertoire is used by one council member to justify occupational diversity in external membership:

> You need some people, I believe, who have clout and contacts in high places, and that needs to be a range of people. If anything [University] council's probably now, and I suspect many of them, a bit too true blue, establishment, captains of industry, and so forth. There's not so many industry based or union

> based or social justice based type of people now...So, yes, there's a balance in there somewhere. (302, external)

As well, members of council can use the community stakeholder repertoire to criticise inaction over diversity in the broader sense of social inclusivity, as in this example:

> We tended to have a predominance of business people, and they're important but business people from the commercial world, or educators, and to have people from the media, people from the law. I mean, to actually open up that representation a bit more I'd like to see more multicultural and Aboriginal representation as well, all of those things. It's still a very mono-cultural structure...I mean, if you're going to be accountable to a government, a government actually represents more than one middle class person, so how do you manage to make sure that the university is fulfilling that function and how does the council make sure that it's accountable in those terms, but it would seem to me that a more diverse form of council representative would have to help there. (412, staff)

Notwithstanding this apparent valuing of heterogeneity over homogeneity, this repertoire can also be used to define diversity within fairly narrow limits. One council member expresses a preference, echoed by several other council members, for the traditional 'pillar of the community' governor (Deem 1995):

> Well, I would say as a group of senior almost exclusively university educated or highly educated representatives of the community with wide and complementary experiences...we are all laymen when it comes to education, although we have, of course, all been through university. (407, external)

This preference for governance by community elites is also hinted at in other accounts: '[The Victorian Government] is looking for people of standing in the community to guide the future of universities...' (510, external), a theme reflected in statements by the same Government (VDET 2002b).

Another council member compares the traditional 'dignified' lay membership of council to a new breed of 'efficient' member with an entrepreneurial focus (Deem 1995; Bargh, Scott & Smith 1996; Marginson & Considine 2000):

> You attract the membership of council from that group of worthies in the community who are worthies, who have that old style value, that value in existing social institutions and keeping them, not from the new capitalists, people

> who see the success and growth and change, who embrace those kind of things, and you are successful in your company while it is growing. You tend to pick up more of the executive [of council] from that kind of group of people, so I expect there's an inherent conflict between the executive of universities and [the] councils in that they're actually coming from. (303, student)

In the community stakeholder repertoire, a skills-based board is less important than a board which allows wider perspectives to be brought to bear on an otherwise-closed community. A degree of understanding of and sympathy for the general purposes of universities is required, but not specific expertise, as this speaker observes:

> I don't think you would really say that university council's a skills based board. Obviously people get appointed to university councils because they have some experience and qualifications and that sort of thing, but I don't think that necessarily...you don't specifically have to have an understanding of the provision of engineering education. (208, external)

Council membership, in the community stakeholder repertoire, is both a form of civic duty and a reward in itself. This repertoire is used extensively to dismiss the prospect of remuneration of council members, where voluntary service is commonly justified by reference to 'a community service' (203, external); 'an honorary thing that's done for the community' (211, Chancellor); 'public volunteer duty' (303, student); 'as part of a community service' (506, external) or a community service obligation.

The arguments in this repertoire employed against remuneration include pragmatic considerations: 'I think most members of council take the view that universities haven't got very much money and this is not a high priority for them to spend any of it on' (211, Chancellor). Some note that most council members are already well remunerated in their working lives or provided for in their retirement.

Other dangers of remuneration offered within this repertoire are the likelihood of over-zealous involvement and difficulties with independence:

> I think that it should be voluntary because then that shows true commitment. I think remuneration could cause all sorts of problems and suspicions on the part of maybe our stakeholders. (206, external)

More commonly, however, remuneration is seen as removing council members 'from being part of the broader community' (408, staff). In the words of another council member:

> I believe the university function, like the old hospital function, was one of the keys that took the institutions into the local community. As soon as you pay them (a) it would appear that the pay levels are out of context and (b) the local community acceptance becomes much more critical. The local community's involved in their local hospital board, they'll have some fights but they're involved. If it's done by Mayne Nickless Health Services all they'll do is bitch, there's no support at all. (405, external)

The discourse of 'community' is here used as a justification for honorary membership, largely regardless of any reference to the actual community links that would be jeopardised.

The strongest argument against remuneration is however that of a civic contribution, which is woven into the underlying logic of the community stakeholder repertoire. One council member takes great pains to disguise the emotional meaning of this idea:

> I think it's terribly fashionable to talk about community involvement but I guess it's a sort of citizen responsibility kind of issue, a bit like becoming coach of your kids' football team or basketball team. Playing a voluntary role is one which is rewarding in itself, all that kind of rubbish. (512, staff)

Alternatively, some other reward for service can be proposed, as it is 'nice to be recognised' (210, external) or, in the words of another council member:

> They [external council members] don't really want the money side, they don't think that's entirely appropriate or necessary, but there should be some other forms of reward or support or something that would be meaningful to council members themselves. (116, external)

Although some external council members indicate that being on council is an honour, it is possible that the exchange that occurs when serving on council may have less to do with serving a specific community than with providing its members with the cultural and social capital of 'community-spiritedness'. Often, however, any imputation of status rewards is disclaimed, in favour of personal satisfaction:

> ...even as we sit here I can't think of the worst thing. If there was a worst thing I'd have better things to do with my time, I'd be off council in other words. So, to me it's an utterly positive view, and I guess there's a fair bit of self development in it. You're obviously not there for the money, you don't get paid, the status appeals to some people, but not me, but I do enjoy the stimulation, the bright minds, and a whole raft of people. (506, external)

The community stakeholder repertoire thus involves a complex mix of ideas about obligation, altruism and the personal satisfaction gained from engagement in 'worthwhile' causes.

### *Council roles (community stakeholder repertoire)*

In the community stakeholder repertoire, council oversight and monitoring roles are accepted unproblematically as key governance tasks (Bargh, Scott & Smith 1996). However, in contrast to the business and university community repertoires, greater emphasis is placed on strategic planning and on broad statements of policy direction: 'strategic policy drafts, strategic policy decisions, accountability, oversight, check the policy directions in the interest of the broader community' (103, external). This finding accords with Gill's (2001) research in relation to the influence of board members' own interests on the factors to which they pay attention. The emphasis on strategy is related back to wider interests: as one council member summarises: 'It is there to provide direction and strategy and policy. It's ultimately responsible for the very considerable investment that the community at large puts into the university' (101, external).

The descriptions of governance roles within this repertoire stress the balancing of interests and the role of council as a 'sounding board', an audience for new proposals (Magalhães & Amaral 2000), as in this member's account:

> I think it's the peak body in terms of discharging the accountabilities or making sure the accountabilities have been discharged to the major stakeholders. It's there to act as a sounding board for the Chief Executive and his staff, in seeking validation or expertise in a particular area. (107, external)

One council member emphasises a particular need to pre-test likely external reaction by universities with a strong regional focus:

> But, again the unwritten thing is - and this particularly applies to provincial universities - the council as a whole has to be a very important conduit to the community. I don't think it matters a hoot in Melbourne [capital city], but in the provinces, if you like, I think they're very important. (204, external)

Moreover, the community stakeholder repertoire allows weight to the role of council in linking the university to the community:

> In terms of the community I suppose it's about disseminating information, it's about an interaction between the university as a body and the local community. Council might never need to get directly involved in it, just to keep an ear to the ground and make sure that views are well aired and strategies are properly thought out. (208, external)

Together with the idea of expanding 'the university into the community' (205, student), the role of the council in this repertoire may be extended to shaping the university as a potential vehicle for a 'better' form of organisation, one that respects its employees and has a wider social mission.

### *Individual roles on council (community stakeholder repertoire)*

An important feature of individual roles on council, in the community stakeholder repertoire, is bringing 'the perspective' of a particular group or a wider set of experiences, as this council member notes:

> I speak for myself as a lay person whose only involvement has been as a student. I mean, clearly there are people on councils who have had long experience, who have worked in academia and that is not a black box to them, but certainly to others it is a little bit more confusing...I don't mean that people are dummies...Or they don't have any understanding or they don't have any particular fields of expertise, but they don't come in, someone doesn't come in because they've had a career in agriculture or something like that. They come in because they're seen to be people with some wisdom, some ability to make reasonable judgments and can work in a team environment. (208, external)

This does not mean acting as a representative of a particular group but rather acknowledging that certain sectoral or regional interests are involved and need to be taken into account. Both external and internal members of council use the community stakeholder repertoire to stress the importance of bringing a specific perspective or set of interests while not being captive to any one group:

> I have to be very careful, and I have been very careful, not to be pushing that line, otherwise I get seen to be the [name of regional area] councillor and my views don't get listened to on other issues. In a way, if anything, I've drawn back from being that and the [region] people sometimes get cross at me for that, but I say, 'Look, you're much better off with me being a respected voice on council, rather than being the member for [name of regional area]', and I'm sure that's so. (302, external)

Making a 'contribution' is something that council members feel personally accountable for and is a major part of their conception of their roles. Several council members comment that an element of their individual roles is acting as a personal coach or confidential 'ear' for the Vice-Chancellor: 'What I call the more thoughtful, the less egomaniac [Vice-Chancellors]...do see council...to be excellent sources of advice to them when they need to talk to somebody' (204, external).

Consistent with the accounts given in regard to remuneration, the descriptions of council members' individual roles on council accentuate the 'service' aspects, as in this example:

> At a personal level, it's about more to life than just working from seven till seven in an organisation that is really directed at corporate profit, and it's about trying to get a balance and seeing some community values and social obligations. (101, external)

A sense of personal contribution may result from the particular experiences of individual council members who have been active in the 'foundation' stage of a new university (Mathiasen 1990; Wood 1992), as for this speaker:

> I suppose, again, being on [the] council which brought this university to its particular status, that we learnt a lot, we all learnt as council members a lot there and what our role should be and the importance of a council and of our roles at that time. That became very obvious to us because we could realise how important it was that we stuck to our goals, stuck to our vision. (206, external)

Even after the new institution is established, council members can retain a strong sense of commitment to supporting features they view as unique to a fledging university:

> The best things are, I suppose, I think the best things are contributing to a policy framework for our university that really is based on social justice, and that's what

> I think makes us different to other universities, because I think the people on the council actually do believe that. (503, staff)

Similar attitudes, and a high level of commitment (Wood 1992), are expressed by one council member involved in a more recent merger:

> I had something to contribute to that and then the mergers came and we had to stay through that and then after the mergers there was a lot of difficulties with the regional campus, settling that down and that sort of thing. (302, external)

An additional subset of the concept of 'contribution' for council members of universities with strong regional ties is making a contribution to the development of the region or community: 'But the best thing is about making a commitment and a contribution to the local community and the regional community' (203, external). Some members explain their role on council largely in terms of wider regional development, consistent with Widmer's (1993) finding that not-for-profit board members normally play multiple roles:

> I guess that I feel that my efforts are fruitful. I don't feel that my efforts are for anyone in the institution specifically, they're for the community...My responsibility - pleasure really - is to see the university develop. (204, external)

Within the accounts of individual roles, the community stakeholder repertoire is used to express tolerance of, or even support for, staff and student representatives on council. One external member makes the case in these terms:

> ...the student representatives and the staffing representative, now I think they are very difficult roles to play. I must say I'm quite impressed from my experience at the way in which those roles, the contribution that they make almost all the time, and also the way in which they listen, because I think that it's quite important. And in a way you could say, well, having that representational structure to the council isn't efficient. On the other hand, it's a tremendously effective line of communication into your consumers and the community and particularly to pick up some of the issues that come in from the staff. (101, external)

The converse also applies, with internal members able to express support for the role of external members:

> Most of the members are really dedicated and most of their views are worth listening to, and insofar as they provide a bit of a window on what the outside world thinks, they do bring a certain level of objectivity to the operations which may or may not be correct. (109, staff)

### *Accountability (community stakeholder repertoire)*

Of all the repertoires, the community stakeholder repertoire is most used when council members talk about accountability. One use of this repertoire is evident in the view, expressed by a number of interviewees, that accountability is symbolised by the 'stakeholder' composition of councils. This claim may of course be subject to challenge:

> It's not realistic that the school at [outer suburb of Melbourne, regional campus] feels that the management and operations of the university is accountable because Mrs Bloggs from [outer suburb of Melbourne] is on the council. I don't actually think that's real. (504, external)

Although most council members accept that council is accountable formally to the State Government, the community stakeholder repertoire can be used to argue that accountability to stakeholders ranks equally highly, as in this statement:

> Practically, if you're running the university well you are accountable to the students, you are accountable to the staff, and you are accountable to the broader community. It depends on the state of development of the university and the particular views of the council members at the time which of those takes priority, but all three are, in my view, class one stakeholders and need a lot of attention. (405, external)

Another way of setting up accountability relationships in the stakeholder repertoire relies on the sense of preserving the trust of a broader, if abstract, community (Kearns 1996). One council member expresses this idea in terms of social capital:

> I think we're accountable to the community in the wider sense. As a company director you're accountable to your shareholders, and in this case the shareholders, to a large extent, are the community at large, not just because that's where the clients come from and the students come from, but in terms of the kind of society that we're going to have from the education that we give to our young people. (116, external)

The community stakeholder repertoire is also used to convey the sense of moral accountability (Smith 1995; Abdo 1998, 2002) experienced by some council members, even where, as this speaker implies, the logic is not provable:

> Council is responsible, in my view, principally to the community at large - in other words, it's an unenforceable accountability, it entirely rests on the consciences of the people and their comprehension of the responsibility to the community...I find it very difficult, accountability. I think it is a moral accountability more than anything practical. (407, external)

For regional universities, 'accountability to the community' can have another, immediate significance. In the words of one staff member: 'We should be there speaking up on its behalf, articulating its concerns and needs and trying to contribute to the resolution of conflicts or problems...' (501, staff). A more dispassionate observation is made by this council member:

> The community would have an expectation, particularly in a regional university, that the council would display some level of accountability to it; that it wouldn't act in a way that was against the interests of the regional community. (208, external)

The avoidance of financial or ethical scandal is a key feature of accountability in this repertoire, as is achievement of instrumental outcomes. The difference in the community stakeholder repertoire is in the sense of direct oversight, rather than oversight through government:

> We're there looking after, always checking on it for the community. Certainly we don't report to anybody except the government and I guess that's where we're accountable. If we make a mess of it, it's going to be on ethical or financial grounds, I suppose, they're about the only two ways you can make a mess. (302, external)

The stakeholder repertoire allows for different senses of individual accountability, although for many council members their accountability is first and foremost to council. Predictably, individual accountability also has another personal meaning for regional members of council (Jensen 1998), several of whom mention the experience of being asked about the university by people they 'bump into' or by whom they are 'bailed up' in the street.

Using a community stakeholder repertoire, many council members would agree with this interviewee, who states: 'as a council member, I'm accountable to the council. In another sense, I'm accountable to the constituency that resulted in my being there' (103, external).

In common with views expressed about the accountability of councils as a whole, council members articulate their own individual sense of accountability to 'the community at large':

> In the end I thought that it's really the Chancellor as chair of the council and the minister in terms of being appointed. You could take it as narrowly as that but if you want to go back to the core reason for a university in terms of the learning community and intellectual freedom then really you're responsible or accountable to the community at large for ensuring there are good graduates who are given the best available education. So it could be very broadly interpreted as a very wide accountability if you believe passionately in education being so important. (203, external)

As well, specific events with symbolic significance may remind council members of their individual or moral accountabilities. The stakeholder repertoire is used to make sense of both the symbolic and the accountability dimensions of council membership, as in this example where a council member talks about the best aspects of being on council:

> You might think this is a funny answer, but - graduation ceremonies...I've been to two graduation ceremonies at the university in six months, so it's not a bad hit rate. And they've influenced me more than anything else...the point is, that there are so many people who this is so important to, that my perspective of it changed....It's important to them, they've invested a lot of money and time in doing the program, and they expect us to be doing the right thing by them. (104, external)

Accountability is presented, in this repertoire, as accountability for making a contribution and 'just for providing a little bit of wisdom and a bit of common sense' (506, external).

### *Expectations of council held by others (community stakeholder repertoire)*

In contrast to the business repertoire, where distinctions are drawn between a company that everyone has heard of and its largely anonymous board, the community stakeholder repertoire can be used to refer to local elites as holding expectations of council. One interviewee contrasts the regional setting to larger metropolitan universities: 'It's a bit different here...I don't want to use the phrase like leading citizens but, if you like, articulate citizens, they understand the difference between a council and the management...' (204, external).

However, even in the community stakeholder repertoire and in a regional setting, the general public is presented as holding largely generalised expectations of council, as this council member notes:

> I think that the expectations from the people in the community [are] to guide the university in the right direction, I do think that, and to keep them informed through the committee structure. That's certainly an expectation that I feel from the community. Again, I don't think the community is all that informed of what council and the university are doing, even though we try to do that. (202, staff)

Using the regional emphasis implicit in the community stakeholder repertoire, one interviewee points out that local government authorities have clear economic expectations of benefits arising from the presence of a university campus:

> Local government certainly does [have expectations]. If we were to think of moving a campus, or closing a campus, or reducing or changing the proportion of higher education and TAFE courses, they would be very vociferous in expressing their dislike of such because it would affect their council's economic plans...(511, external)

The community stakeholder repertoire is used to convey some sympathy for the expectations of council held by students, as concerned stakeholders, and for their seeing council as a last resort or 'some sort of a mediator with management' (116, external).

This repertoire also legitimises the use of consultation between external and internal stakeholders, as a way of ascertaining the needs and expectations of both sides. One external council member explains:

> Got to consult and got to talk. That's what I said, it's no good just believing what you read, you've got to actually get out there and find out. Now, you know, you don't talk to [total number of] students but if you find yourself being able to get involved in certain issues, even on the periphery, it gives you an opportunity to get out some first hand information that otherwise you wouldn't find. (402, external)

With its emphasis on individual contributions to council, the community stakeholder repertoire allows speakers to assert that councils are sensitive to a weight of expectations:

> They bend over backwards - each council in its own different way, mind you - to meet criticism or to resolve potential difficulties. So, they certainly believe there's a big expectation on them. The trouble is it's too hard to know whether that expectation is for outcomes or just a process. (509, external)

### *Role of Academic Board (community stakeholder repertoire)*

The community stakeholder repertoire emphasises the need for internal advice on academic matters, as this council member indicates:

> One of the things that I would like to see happen is far greater concentration by staff members on advising council in respect of academic matters because, quite frankly, we don't have any expertise in that particular area. (110, external)

The community stakeholder repertoire is used to express the need for cooperative relationships between council and the Academic Board (and the Board of Studies for TAFE components of dual-sector institutions), recognising the Board's right to relations of equality: 'It is that sort of cooperative view. There's certainly not a subservient view from one group to the next' (507, external).

This repertoire also allows several external members of council to suggest the need for greater consultation and liaison between the two (or three) bodies, and even to propose that external council members attend Academic Board meetings.

### *Attitudes to management and the performance of council functions (community stakeholder repertoire)*

The community stakeholder repertoire expresses the need for external scrutiny as a justification for the existence of councils but conveys a stronger sense of the possibility of managerial hegemony than the business repertoire.

Within the community stakeholder repertoire, council members may use the language of 'hope' to distance themselves from implied criticism of actual council performance: 'I hope the Vice-Chancellor would see the council as a very good sounding board where robust discussion can take place, not just rubberstamping...' (101, external).

The emphasis in this repertoire on contribution to council debates also provides a vantage point from which to express more direct criticism, as this speaker does:

> The worst [thing about being on council] is rubberstamping, there's that rubberstamping times when council members can't really understand the issues, let alone what the substance of the report is. (201, external)

The stakeholder repertoire is employed to indicate that a good Vice-Chancellor should expect council to offer a source of advice, 'wise counsel' or a 'community sounding board' (208, external) and a test of how developments will 'play' in wider communities.

However, this formulation may mean that council is likely to accept a Vice-Chancellor's views without challenge. One council member contrasts the power relations on a university council with those of an actual corporate board:

> If the Chancellor had said, 'I want to go international', we would never have done more than saying, 'We think this is hazardous, you haven't got the resources, don't do it', and he would have said, 'No, we'll go, I think it's a good thing', and ...we would let him go. Now, that's a big difference. The company board would not say, 'We have told you', the company board would say, 'Never', and I think it's a legitimate difference because our status is not as firm and as solid as a corporation director. (407, external)

Using the community stakeholder repertoire, members present council committees as satisfying because they are a form of backstage tour, a 'coming closer to the university' (511, external) and an opportunity to interact with the full-time professionals, to 'try and form an interface between the normal community and the academic community without sort of making a judgment about whether the academic community is normal or not' (208, external).

The need to make a contribution, a feature of this repertoire, also allows council members to express a desire to be exposed to university business 'at least in some depth...which you can't be on an open council' (211, Chancellor). External council members also welcome the opportunity to pursue particular interests: 'I'm looking forward to working with [senior manager] on [a specific issue]' (107, external). At the same time, internal members of council welcome the opportunity to ensure their concerns are voiced to an external audience:

> That's where staff and student internal membership of the committees is incredibly important...what you want those people there for is particularly to say, 'How will this affect you on the ground?' (115, student)

For the community stakeholder repertoire, there is some tension between recognising that council is composed of members with varying interests and ideologies and an appreciation that discussion of certain matters could be divisive or damaging. In general, however, this repertoire is used to legitimise the need for discussion amongst all council members and to express concern for matters that are dealt with outside formal channels:

> ...a number of other universities have run into this problem where either the Vice Chancellor has lost the confidence of the staff or there is some major issue that is dividing the university. Basically, that just makes council less effective because some of those sorts of issues are kept away from council basically, they just don't appear. They might arise as other business or something but they basically manage it. (508, Chancellor)

A related theme that emerges through the stakeholder repertoire is the need for an additional space for strategic discussions and more open reflection on issues, outside both committee work and the prescribed conventions of council meetings: 'opportunities like retreats for more general discussions' (211, Chancellor) or a separate

but carefully delineated part of a formal council meeting. High hopes are held for retreats that are yet to be held: 'the retreat will do that, the retreat will do that, yes' (206, external).

The community stakeholder repertoire supports participatory processes, but only so far as the participation is felt to be genuine. The lack of a process to openly discuss and debate issues is therefore presented as problematic (Lorsch & MacIver 1989), as it is for the university community repertoire. The lack of these processes is a disappointment, as this council member notes:

> The worst: the six o'clock meetings, or five o'clock meetings, or you know, just those late afternoon meetings and also associated with that is the procedural nature of the meetings. They are not lively dialogues or discussions that end in a decision...(101, external)

Some council members hint at potential stakeholder activism (Gould 2003) if council is becoming too complaisant or providing too few opportunities for input:

> I'm a little disappointed with [University] that some of the council meetings - we've become a bit of a rubber stamp when motions are passed. But every now and then a juicy argument occurs and the council will win perhaps as against the Vice-Chancellor and his deputy. (201, external)

One internal member of council casts the external members in the role of activists:

> It's now both bodies [Academic Board and council], I think, are saying - and in the case of the council this is interesting because it's being prompted by external members - I've got better things to do with my time than to spend an evening attending a meeting, albeit for a nice meal - these are not their words, this is my construction - when basically we're being told of these decisions. What is our role in terms of discussing it? (301, staff)

In the community stakeholder repertoire, expectations of the Chancellor are expressed in terms of a leader who is committed to the university and also to the process of fair and open discussion of issues. There is an implied criticism of any Chancellor who is appointed chiefly to lend business credibility to a university, as this council member suggests:

> I'd probably be less chasing after high profile big name corporate citizens who in their own right are excellent contributors but have their own agendas and have their own time constraints. I would want to be talking [to] or having people involved who can feel that they have some very close affinity with the institution and understand the institution and understand the stakeholders in the institution. It's not just industry, it's not just students. You've got to be able to work through the blend of those. I think it's all led by a Chancellor. (402, external)

The stakeholder repertoire offers some support for the professionalisation of council, through processes that are inclusive and transparent, and for the orientation of members to the university (cf. Henderson 1990; SHEFC 1999; DETYA 2000; CUC 2001; TAMU 2001c). One member explains the need for effective induction in a stakeholder context:

> I think most boards or councils are pretty typical. You've got a very diverse range of interests, you've got a whole set of motivations for people to be in there. You would have different perceptions of responsibility because there's no training, no support, no guidance, and a different view of their place in the community. I mean, it's a very elitist sort of club, atmosphere, that is breaking down now but in the past has really been clubby. (203, external)

The community stakeholder repertoire is also used to convey an implied criticism of council processes and of the way new members are made to feel excluded: 'they tend to be very polite discussions about things' (507, external), a 'cosy club' (509, external).

### *Summary of the community stakeholder repertoire*

The community stakeholder repertoire provides a form of middle ground within which to discuss council membership, roles and functions. It appeals to commonly held ideas about democracy, engagement, participation and a sense of community. While it has some elements in common with the university community repertoire examined in Chapter 8 and with the repertoire of professionalisation, especially in regard to participatory and empowering processes, it is squarely focused on the need for external scrutiny of universities and the importance of 'fixing' universities within their local external communities. A recurring theme is the willingness of council members to make a contribution to the work of the university.

This repertoire is most obviously used by council members of regional universities, whether they be staff, students or external members, but it is also used in a more

general way to assert - in a moderate fashion - the value of diverse viewpoints and the legitimacy of differing interests.

The next chapter examines the university community repertoire, which intersects with this model in regard to participatory membership. It also engages with the community stakeholder model of governance to underpin its own, more oppositional, stances towards management.