

Interrogating Corporate Social Responsibility through the lens of environmental justice: The case of corporate waste

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Abstract

Existing literature on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) highlights the importance of integrating social, environmental and economic factors into corporate operations. Consideration for environmental justice however remains limited, and concerns remain regarding if and how corporations are considering issues of distributional, procedural and recognition justice in their actions. Through a case study of corporate waste in Sydney, Australia, this thesis aims to explore if and how corporate actors are addressing environmental justice in their CSR strategies. Based on a review of CSR reports and interviews with corporate actors, the thesis provides insights into the opportunities and challenges of corporate adoption of environmental justice into CSR frameworks. The findings demonstrated that despite the barriers experienced with the structural versatility, influences from conflicting interests, and the invisibility of environmental justice incorporation, CSR was found to be a supportive facilitator for incorporating environmental justice into the practices of corporations. It is recommended that corporations increase communication regarding their integration of environmental justice into their CSR practices in order to allow greater transparency and to provide opportunities for further CSR consideration of environmental justice.

Author Statement

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

All research reported in this thesis received approval from the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol number: 5201700008).

(Signed)_____

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1 Introduction

The growing prominence of waste and its potential impacts on the environment and human health is becoming a global crisis (Hertzman et al. 1989). The impacts of waste-related operations, particularly the mismanagement of landfills, incineration and pollution, are impacting on our environmental and social health and wellbeing and resulting in the instigation of environmental and social injustices (Holifield 2009). In the Australian context, waste is described as 'rising faster than GDP growth' (ABS 2013), bringing to light the magnitude of the waste catastrophe. The implications of this acute waste disposal have resulted in calculations indicating that the landfills within the Sydney region are almost, if not already, filled to capacity (Cohen 2010).

Due to the magnitude and scale of the operations and space taken up by corporations, it is widely presumed that corporations generate a substantial amount of waste. This is confirmed in the case of Sydney's waste predicament, as the private sector was revealed to be the main source of Sydney's waste to landfill, with more than two thirds of the waste disposed within the state of New South Wales (NSW) being recorded as deposited from commercial and construction sources (ABS 2010). As a result of their significance in contemporary waste and environmental impact discourses, corporations are consistently being pressured to recognise their responsibility and contribution towards environmental impacts and injustices (Porter and Kramer 2006; Weingaertner & Moberg 2014). In response, corporations have increasingly developed Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies and strategies, including those targeted at managing waste, in order to address their accountability and responsibility to all stakeholders and interest groups (Salzmann et al. 2005; Dauvergne and Lebaron 2013). To date however, justice considerations of corporate CSR strategies have not been explicitly explored.

Waste is widely recognised in existing literature as a matter of environmental justice due to its potential impacts on environmental and social health and wellbeing (Holifield 2009). In association, corporations must therefore consider environmental justice, particularly in their waste strategies development and implementation in order to fulfil their accountability for justice to ensure that risks of harm to people's health, well-being and quality of life, such as waste, are minimised (Walker 2012; Shrader-

Frechette 2002). The interactions between environmental justice and CSR however, are contested (Agyeman and Evans 2004; Haughton 1999). Some literature exhibit optimism towards the capability of corporations to attentively consider environmental justice in their CSR (Weingaertner & Moberg 2014; Gouldson 2006), but it remains that the explicit exploration of CSR and its ability to incorporate considerations for environmental justice, beyond superficial consideration for general social and environmental factors, however, remains scarcely examined (Wesley et al. 2013).

As a result of the research gaps referenced throughout this chapter, the requirement for a holistic environmental justice approach to waste related CSR activities has become imperative. This research will aim to fulfil these gaps by adopting an environmental justice lens on CSR waste strategies of Sydney corporations, as well as experience first-hand the complexity of environmental justice integration into CSR through a case study of corporate waste strategies.

1.1 Research Aim and Questions

The overall aim of this thesis is to investigate if, how and why the process and practice of CSR enables corporations to consider in their corporate waste strategies. The research questions are as follows.

Research Questions

1. How is environmental justice considered within corporate waste strategies?
2. What are the opportunities and challenges for incorporating environmental justice in corporate waste strategies?
3. What is the role of CSR in promoting environmental justice in corporate waste strategies?

1.2 Structure of thesis

Chapter 2 provides a review of existing literature on CSR, environmental justice, and the integration of environmental justice into CSR through the case of waste. The analytical framework to be used throughout the thesis will also be introduced. The research methodology, including the desktop policy review, interview and data

analysis, is explained in detail in Chapter 3. The following three chapters set out the findings, corresponding with the research questions. Findings Chapter 4 will address Research Question 1 and provide a summary of the evidence found for environmental justice in existing CSR waste practices. Findings Chapter 5 sets out the challenges and opportunities for incorporating environmental justice in CSR practices, relating to Research Question 2. Chapter 6, the discussion chapter, situates the findings in the context of existing literature in order to reflect on the role for CSR (Research Question 3). The thesis concludes in Chapter 7, where a summary of the findings, and the limitations as well as future research opportunities will be presented.

2 Literature Review

This chapter explores the existing literature of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) process and environmental justice framework, as well as their connection and relationship through the case of corporate waste strategies. The chapter concludes by setting out the analytical framework to be adopted and utilised throughout the thesis.

2.1 Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been described as a governance tool for managing the social and environmental consequences of corporate and economic activities (Albareda 2008). CSR is thus fundamentally based on an ethical and moral obligation for accountability and responsibility, whereby corporations are governed to make considerations for their stakeholders and interest groups on a wide range of issues in an ethical manner (Gouldson 2006; Salzmänn et al. 2005). In this way, CSR holds corporations accountable for their actions through assuming economic, social, legal, ethical, environmental and philanthropic responsibilities towards society and their stakeholders (Carroll 1999). While the role of corporations in society remains a concern for scholars and practitioners, the official adoption of CSR into corporate operations has gradually proliferated over recent years (Salzmänn et al. 2005; Warshawsky 2016), particularly due to growing popularity and consequent pressure and coercion from the public and regulators (Porter and Kramer 2006; Weingaertner & Moberg 2014).

While CSR as a mechanism for incorporating social and environmental considerations into routine business activity has been positively received by many, other literature critiques and contests both the effectiveness of CSR and the motives of corporations. For example, scholars critique the motivation behind corporate adoption of CSR-driven strategies as economically focused and profit-driven (Ruggie 2004; Salzmänn et al. 2005; Albareda 2008), or as a tool for strategic maintenance of corporate reputation (Hamilton 2011). These motives for adopting CSR into routine corporate governance are often viewed as contradictory to the needs of environmental and social factors (Warshawsky 2016). This argument is further extended by other literature which argues that corporations which superficially follow CSR without providing substantial

consideration for stakeholder participation fail to achieve meaningful answerability to stakeholder groups (Newell 2003; Garvey and Newell 2005). They explain that corporations' lack of effort placed into making considerations for stakeholders can be translated to insincere top-down voluntarism, rather than the desired meaningful stakeholder participation (Newell 2003; Garvey and Newell 2005). Such investigations and criticisms of CSR highlight a gap in existing literature regarding the scope and difficulties involved in measuring or judging for the level at which consideration of social and environmental factors is considered to be sufficient or substantial.

While the obligation of corporations to make considerations for environmental and social dimensions is a part of the CSR process, this obligation is extensively observed within literature and governance relating to corporate sustainability rather than CSR (Bostrom 2012; Benn and Dunphy 2009). While a distinction between corporate sustainability and CSR is drawn in certain studies, the majority of literature nevertheless considers them either interchangeably or in an integrated manner due to the similarities that are able to be drawn between them (Forray and Leigh 2012; Seto-Pamies and Papaoikonomou 2016). This includes the significant areas of overlap focused on considerations for societal and environmental welfare (Garavan and McGuire 2010; Seto-Pamies and Papaoikonomou 2016). For the purposes of this thesis, the terms and concepts of CSR and corporate sustainability will be considered interchangeably to provide a wider scope for the research, particularly during investigations of CSR and corporate sustainability reports (see Chapter 3 for further details).

While existing literature criticises CSR for its failure to govern the corporate effort placed on providing substantial consideration for social and environmental dimensions, evaluations of CSR from a social and environmental justice perspective has been limited and yet to be fully explored (Gouldson 2006). This lack of attention raises questions about the role of CSR to address the rights and needs of stakeholders (Bostrom 2012; Cuthill 2009). Furthermore, other literature highlights a general lack of consideration for the political, environmental, social and broader processes surrounding CSR strategies (Hamilton 2011) and their targeted stakeholders (Garvey and Newell 2005). These concerns in turn provide opportunity for environmental justice to be introduced into the debates on CSR, as such integration allows underlying

social, environmental and political conditions of CSR to be examined (Gouldson 2006). Despite the prospect of becoming a socially and environmentally inclusive analysis tool for CSR, environmental justice and its relevance for CSR remain scarcely explored in existing literature. This intersection between CSR and environmental justice is the focus of this thesis. Prior to setting out the case of waste, the next section sets out the concept of environmental justice in further detail.

2.2 Environmental justice

Environmental justice was first pioneered in the United States as a social grassroots movement in response to injustices regarding the denial of human rights, environmental protection, and the economic opportunities to the communities where people live and work (Bullard 1994; Bullard 2005). The movement enabled the extension of environmental justice's boundaries beyond concerns limited to the physical environment, to also include considerations for human stakes and wellbeing, as can be seen in the assertion that environmental justice is defined by the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people in the development and implementation of environmental decisions (Bullard and Johnson 2000). This extension to include social dimensions can be seen in Bullard's (1994) definition of 'environment' as centred on human everyday activity, as it is claimed that the environment is where we live, work, play, worship and the physical and natural world which we thrive on. The unbreakable link between the environment and social dimensions in the environmental justice frame has since enabled cases of social and environmental inequalities worldwide to be highlighted as violation of human rights and social justice. Environmental justice has since become a frame for interrogating the relationships between environment and social injustices (Walker 2009), aligning with arguments which maintain that environmental equality and human equality are inextricably linked (Agyeman et al. 2003).

In the quest for a more inclusive frame of environmental justice, Schlosberg (2007; 2004) draws on existing literature (Fraser 1997; Young 1997) to develop a trivalent framework which highlights the importance of examining the social, cultural, symbolic and institutional conditions underlying cases of environmental inequality. According to Schlosberg, affected communities who experience a disproportionate share of

environmental risk often hold less power to represent themselves and gain recognition and protection, and are consequently excluded from public participation in the evaluation and allocation of environmental harms. In response to this deduction, Schlosberg (2007) argued that environmental justice necessitated the integration of three components: Distribution, Participation and Recognition. This trivalent interpretation of environmental justice therefore offers an analytical lens useful for examining CSR and its capacity to incorporate social and environmental stakes.

While the trivalent environmental justice framework (Schlosberg 2007) provides an opportunity to examine CSR with an alternative outlook, there is currently limited application of the framework to CSR in existing literature. A few research explored the social dimensions of CSR, but not specifically in relation to environmental justice themes. For the literatures that explored the social dimensions of CSR policies, they discovered that social considerations of CSR have only recently begun to be addressed, but are growing in prominence due to changing public expectations of companies (Sharma and Ruud 2003; Weingaertner and Moberg 2014). The rising conversations about social dimensions of CSR give opportunity for environmental justice to be introduced and discussed further in the CSR literature space due to the relationship between environmental justice and its highlighting of social, political and equality conditions. Additionally, the versatility of environmental justice with its entrenchment with multiple, complex and shifting meanings allows the framework to be applied to an extensive variety of cases and situations of environmental inequalities, such as instances involving CSR (Holifield et al. 2011; Walker 2012). Application of environmental justice to different circumstances would allow the framework to extend to new definitions and trends, meaning that the environmental justice framework can allow analysis including and beyond the examination of social dimensions (Holifield et al. 2011; Walker 2012). The argument therefore remains that the environmental justice framework offers opportunity to be a useful analytical tool for examining CSR, and can value add to existing environmental justice scholarship and knowledge. This thesis will therefore aim to apply the environmental justice perspective on CSR.

2.3 Connecting CSR and environmental justice through waste

Waste and its social and environmental impacts have been highly prominent and critical throughout history and the present, and the detriment of waste management sites such as landfills on the environment and public health have been well documented (Holifield et al. 2011; Walker 2012). Previous records of environmental and social injustices resulting from corporate waste-related impacts include, but are not limited to, evidence of groundwater contamination, air pollution with landfill gases, and the health implications for individuals who experience exposure to these contaminants (Norton et al. 2007; Hertzman et al. 1987; Goldberg et al. 1995). Waste and its relative damaging potential therefore exemplifies a fundamental concern for environmental justice (Walker 2012), and provides a lens for studying the distributional, procedural and recognition justice implications and discourses of voluntary waste management enacted by the private sector.

Due to the concerns of waste for social and environmental justice, as well as the growing role of the private sector in contributing to waste production, waste has increasingly become prominent in the CSR strategies of the private sector (Dauvergne and Lebaron 2013; Aragon-Correa & Rubio-Lopez 2007). Multinational corporations are progressively targeting their waste conducts by implementing voluntary waste strategies within their CSR governance, with examples of such strategies being recycling, reusing materials and reducing waste (Dauvergne and Lebaron 2013). Waste-related CSR strategies however, are not limited to these examples and are growing in complexity, as waste has been reported to impose potential social, environmental, transboundary and temporal effects associated with its management, such as the consideration of rise in overseas waste export and the long-term effects of toxic and e-wastes (Walker 2012, p.77; Dauvergne & Lebaron 2013). Waste therefore remains a prominent area requiring strategic attention and planning from corporations through CSR strategies and policies which consider the social and environmental dimensions of waste.

As waste remains a prominent focus area for environmental justice and CSR, it is positioned as a prospective area of study which is able to provide for the interrogation of CSR through an environmental justice lens. Through applying environmental justice to the study of waste strategies within CSR principles, the pinpointing of situations or

outcomes which could enable environmental inequalities to manifest, is achievable. For example, an environmental justice perspective can reveal when CSR waste strategies are failing to adequately involve stakeholders in their decision-making process due to the tensions and conflicts embedded in the social and environmental context which they operate within (Aragon-Correa & Rubio-Lopez 2007). In another example, examination of CSR waste strategies involving recycling initiatives through an environmental justice lens can reveal the strategies' unknowing contribution to the production of new and growing inequalities across race, class, gender and geographical borders, as the contemporary global recycling industry constituted a growing labour force which sometimes involved the exploitation of vulnerable members of society (Peterson 2010; Dauvergne and Lebaron 2013). Waste therefore provides a case study vessel through which the environmental justice lens can be applied to CSR.

The prospect of applying environmental justice to CSR through waste case studies has been scarcely explored in existing literature. This assertion is due to the predominant focus of most research on injustices in public sector (or municipal) waste management rather than private sector waste strategies (Jessup 2014; Byrne and MacCallum 2013). In literature where private sector-led waste management was analysed for their environmental justice implications, a vast amount of the research focused on nuclear and hazardous or toxic wastes (Lloyd-Smith and Bell 2003; James 2009; Grace 2009). Furthermore, existing literature focused only on distributional injustices rather than procedural dimensions such as stakeholder engagement in decision-making (Byrne and MacCallum 2013; Arcioni and Mitchell 2005). There is therefore a research gap for investigation to be conducted on private sector-led waste strategies from a holistic environmental justice lens which covers distributional as well as procedural and recognition dimensions.

2.4 Analytical Framework

In order to consider the underlying social and environmental conditions of cases of environmental injustice, the integration of three components of **Distribution, Participation and Recognition** is essential (Schlosberg 2007). These three dimensions of environmental justice will therefore be applied and drawn on as an analytical framework throughout this thesis.

Distribution

Environmental justice research has heavily focused on questions of equity in the distribution of social, political, environmental and economic goods and bads (Schlosberg 2004; 2009). This is significant for CSR because of the maldistribution experienced by disadvantaged or marginalised communities who receive more environmental burdens, costs and risks resulting from corporate activity, as well as less access to environmental benefits such as resources, opportunities, protection, safety and freedoms (Schlosberg 2009).

Distributive justice therefore involves a focus on regulation, incorporating how environmental, social and economic equality are defined and regulated, and how various rights, goods and liberties are distributed through governance (Schlosberg 2009). This focus on regulation and governance can be consistently applied to CSR debates and cases, as CSR holds corporations accountable for ensuring minimal impact on stakeholders and the environment throughout everyday corporate activity (Gouldson 2006). The Distribution dimension of Schlosberg's environmental justice theory additionally extends the general scope and scale of CSR, as it promotes the fair treatment of all stakeholders in the corporation's activities, rather than simply the consideration of all relevant stakeholders (Agyeman 2002; Gouldson 2006). In the context of waste, the distribution dimension involves the social and environmental implications of implemented CSR waste strategies.

Participation

Participation, or equally identified as procedural justice, encompasses the fair and equitable institutional or political processes (Schlosberg 2009; Shrader-Frechette 2002). This dimension is significant to previous distribution-centred definitions of environmental justice as it focuses on the importance of stakeholder inclusion in political processes and citizen right to participate in institutional order. Existing literature explain that procedural issues of participation in the deliberation and democratic decision-making processes and structures are vital for achieving social justice since all individuals and stakeholders have the right to exercise their freedom in providing an effective voice in decision-making (Young 1997; Schlosberg 2009).

To achieve participation or procedural environmental justice, it was suggested that CSR strategies must make avenues and resources available for enabling active stakeholder participation, and that an environment or structure of participatory, discursive and communicative democracy amongst stakeholders is achieved (Schlosberg 2009; Fraser 2001). As obliged by the participation dimension lens, CSR strategies must not only fulfil the responsibility for corporate transparency and reporting commitments, but they must make extensions to ensure that all stakeholders have access to seek and receive information regarding the corporations' operations in accordance with the stakeholders' basic right to seek and receive information affecting their lives (Gouldson 2006). In relation to corporate waste strategies, the participation dimension therefore requires CSR to involve stakeholders in the strategies through provision of transparent information, to ensure they are consulted during decision-making and to consider stakeholder rights and needs throughout development and implementation of the waste strategies.

Recognition

Recognition, gained significance in existing scholarship as it was discovered that a lack of recognition of group differences resulted in injustice (Schlosberg 2009). Differences such as social structures, cultural beliefs and institutional contexts, are inherent in all social and political realms, and if the stakeholders' social, cultural, symbolic and institutional conditions are not considered or attended to, injustice and oppression could result (Young 1997; Schlosberg 2009). Justice as recognition, as current literature implies, can be sought by examining the justice needs of stakeholders through discussions of the structures, practices, rules, norms, languages and symbols inherent in the social and political realm (Young 1997). This obligation to seek justice by recognition extends the scope of CSR by necessitating corporations to specifically include disadvantaged communities and social groups in their decision-making process, as opposed to the commonly understood obligation of CSR for corporations to be accountable for factors affecting their stakeholders (Shrader-Frechette 2002; Walker et al. 2003; Gouldson 2006). In consideration of the corporate waste case study, the recognition dimension will analyse whether stakeholder groups have been explicitly considered in regards to their accessibility to services and information on the corporate waste strategies. An example includes providing recycling and waste

disposal signage displayed in different languages to cater for the cultural and linguistic diversity of stakeholders.

This thesis aims to apply these three dimensions of the analytical framework to CSR waste strategies in order to provide an environmental justice perspective on the process and practice of CSR. It now turns to present the study methodology.

3 Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach undertaken to collect and analyse data. The chapter is divided into three sections: the research aims and questions, methods, and data analysis.

3.1 Research Aim and Questions

Aim

This thesis aims to investigate if, how and why the process and practice of CSR enables corporations to consider environmental justice in their corporate waste strategies.

Research Questions

1. How is environmental justice considered within corporate waste strategies?
2. What are the opportunities and challenges for incorporating environmental justice in corporate waste strategies?
3. What is the role of CSR in promoting environmental justice in corporate waste strategies?

3.2 Methods

In order to apply the environmental justice lens to CSR, the corporate waste strategies of selected corporations was analysed using the methodology introduced in this chapter. The methodology consists of two stages: a desktop policy review method aims to analyse the CSR reports of corporations for current incorporation of environmental justice and qualitative interviews to collect data as a means to examine the processes involved in developing and implementing corporate waste strategies.

3.2.1 Policy Review

The first stage of the research comprised a desktop policy review of corporate waste strategies. This is because a comprehensive investigation of environmental justice in corporate waste strategies required the analysis of the existing waste strategies

executed by corporations. A policy review was a suitable method for collecting and analysing corporate waste strategies as the technique enabled the drawing of knowledge and conclusions from readily-available information on the Internet (Greenfield and Greener 2016, p.217). This thesis therefore employed the policy review methodology to conduct extensive analysis on the publicly available information of selected corporations' CSR and Sustainability policies.

The corporations for the policy review were selected from the top 100 publicly listed companies on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX100 List 2016) as at January 2017. The ASX100 list was used as it provided an accessible list of companies who are legally required to provide public reporting on their financial and other performance annually. In addition, research shows that publicly listed corporations, such as those on the ASX100 list, generally hold higher regard for company reputation and are more likely to conduct Corporate Social Responsibility behaviours, such as report on their sustainability and waste strategies, to seek public acceptance, company recognition and better public image or reputation (Idowu et al. 2009; Rhodes et al. 2014 and Droppert and Bennett 2015).

From the ASX100 list, this research focused only on corporations which met the following criteria:

- Companies with headquarters and operations located in Sydney, Australia
- Corporations which had published a dedicated Sustainability Report, CSR Report, or similar
- Companies who included corporate waste strategies as part of these Sustainability or CSR Reports.

These were identified through the websites and publicly-available online information of these corporations.

For the purposes of this research, the identification of 'corporate waste strategies' involved any strategic corporate response to waste related environmental and social issues caused through the organisation's primary and secondary activities (Salzmann et al. 2005, p.27; Engert and Baumgartner 2016), and the term will be referred to as such throughout the thesis. Corporate waste strategies included, but were not limited to,

waste reduction targets, material reuse, recycling schemes, waste education/training and other waste-related initiatives. Figure 3.1 displays a flow chart which depicts the research participant selection criteria for each stage of the methodology.

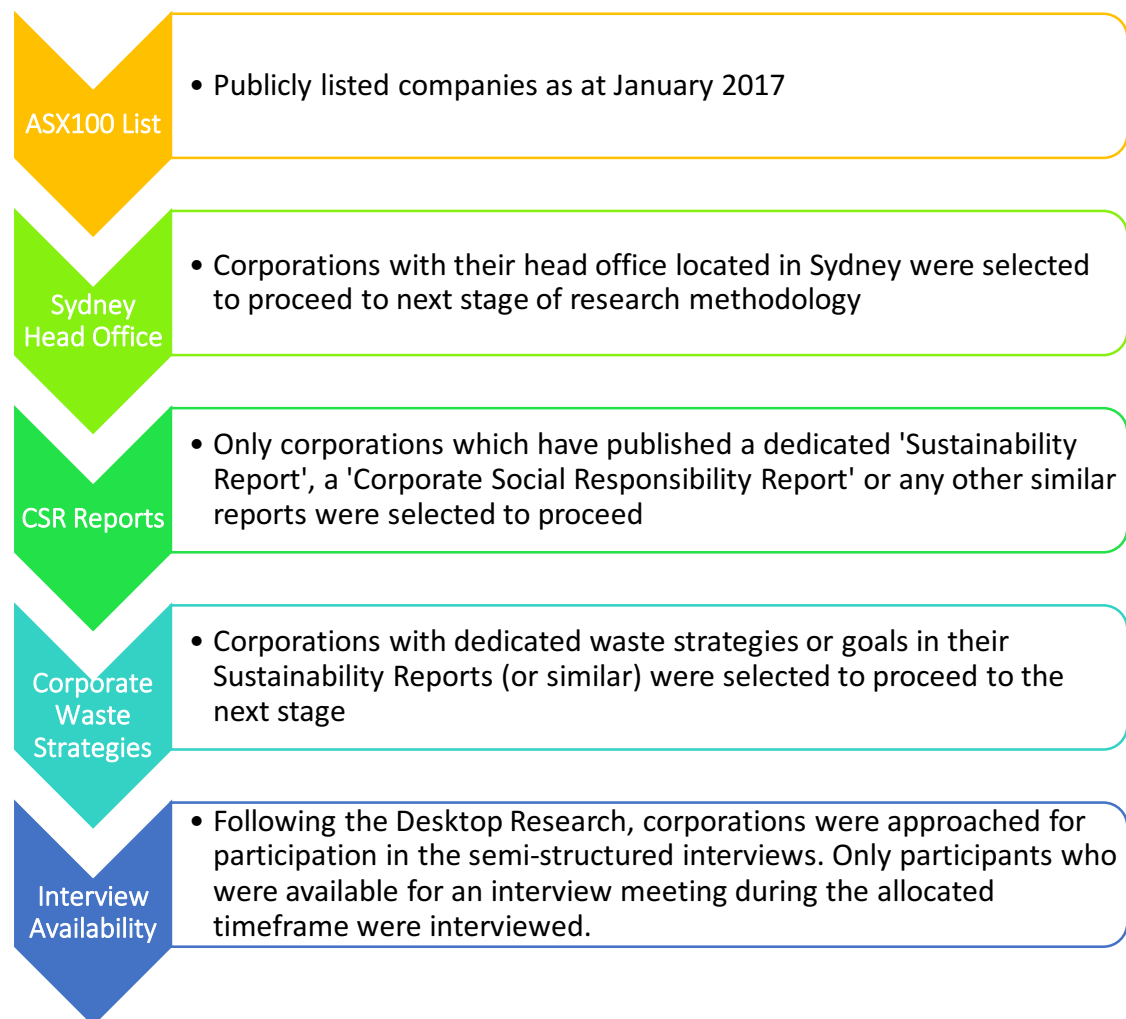


Figure 3.1: Research participant selection criteria

From the list of ASX100 companies, twenty-four companies fulfilled the criteria of having headquarters located in Sydney, as well as presenting a dedicated section for waste strategies in their published Sustainability or CSR reports. More information about these companies is presented in Chapter 4.

These CSR reports were analysed for the three dimensions of environmental justice, as introduced in the analytical framework in Chapter 2. The reports initially included CSR reports, Sustainability reports, annual reports and Code of Conduct, but was extended to include (but not limited to) environmental policies, supply chain policies,

information on the corporation's official websites and other publicly available policy documents from the websites. These secondary data sources were included after it was observed that some corporations provided details of their waste-related initiatives and activities on their corporate websites, but only published a broad overview of these initiatives in their Sustainability Reports. A potential reason for this discrepancy was that information provided for public viewing on the corporate websites was more flexible in content and structure than corporate annual, CSR and Sustainability reports, since the information published on official corporate reports are often directed by managerial control, external reporting standards and internal corporate guidelines (Wilmshurst and Frost 1999).

The data collected from the corporate reports and website information were analysed using the process of coding, which involves the assigning of interpretive tags to text based on categories identified and formed with relevance to the research concepts (Hay 2016). For this research, the coding process involved the identification of themes of environmental justice based on the analytical framework of distribution, participation and recognition dimensions, as introduced in Chapter Two. A figure of the codes developed for the themes relevant to the analytical framework can be found in Figure 3.2 below. For distributive justice, the information and reports were screened for reference to corporate responsibility for environmental and social impacts. Regarding participation justice, the information was screened for waste figures or data reporting, and references to community consultation, stakeholder engagement, stakeholder feedback, and partnerships with charity or community organisations in relation to sustainability or environmental initiatives. For justice by recognition, analysis was conducted for any mention of special consideration and provisions for stakeholders who were part of disadvantaged groups. Examples include persons of indigenous backgrounds, elderly, disabled persons, regional or rurally located residents, as well as individuals who experienced language or communicative barriers.

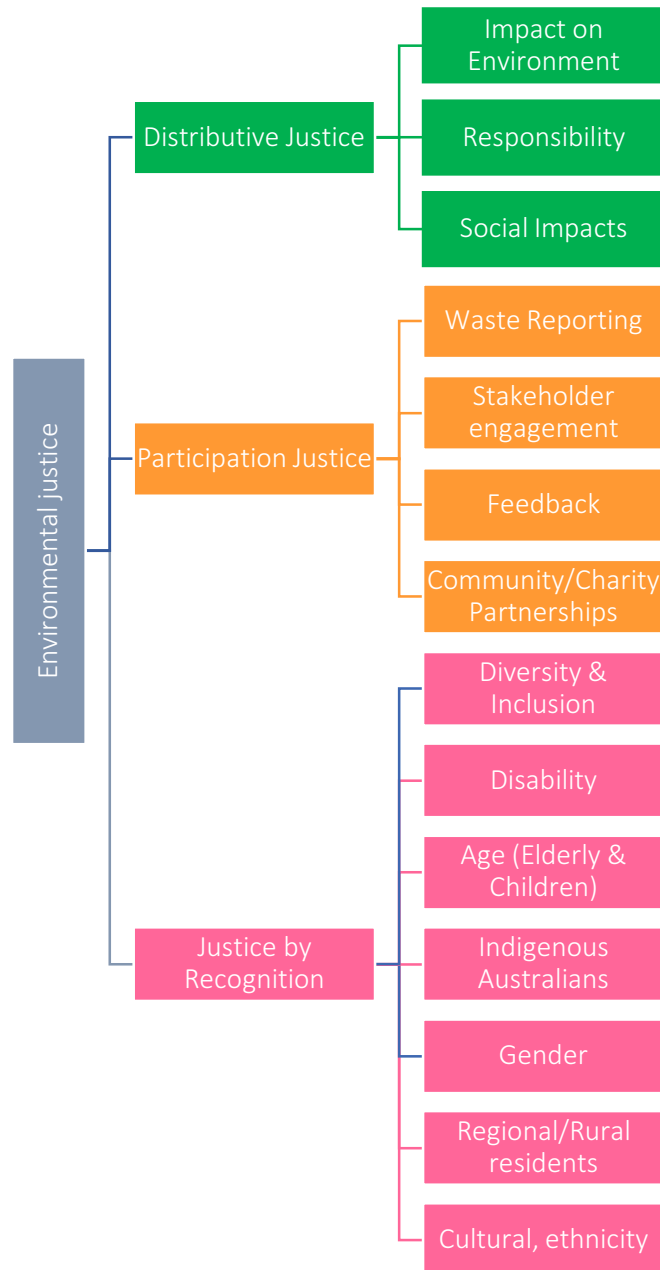


Figure 3.2: Analytical Framework's three dimensions of environmental justice and their themes

While the desktop research allowed the analysis of corporate textual data, it was not possible to gain insights into the motivations and rationale behind the creation and implementation of corporate waste strategies. The second phase of the research therefore comprised qualitative interviews in order to discover the underlying drivers and implications of environmental justice in corporate waste strategies.

3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with the aim of investigating the underlying processes driving corporate waste strategy formation and implementation. Qualitative interviews aimed to explore the complex rationale and opinions of respondents (Hay 2016) that are otherwise not observable in published corporate textual information. The use of qualitative interviews for this research facilitated the investigation of the experiences and opinions of corporate managers who were responsible for developing the corporate waste strategies. The interview questions were semi-structured to allow for further data collection through extended discussions and follow-up questions. This is due to previous assertions which argued that semi-structured interviews provide flexibility in the phrasing and content of the interview questions and responses, while still maintaining a clear structure and theme in interview questions (Hay 2016).

From the twenty-four corporations included in phase 1 of the research, interviews were undertaken with the Sustainability or Corporate Responsibility managers of eleven corporations. Only sustainability managers holding senior positions were approached. This is because literature suggests that corporate actors employed in senior or managerial roles hold decision-making power to decide which of the companies' CSR and waste activities are communicated and reported to stakeholders, and how these publications are framed (Ingenhoff and Sommer 2011). As the research aims to gather data on the drivers, motivations, barriers and opportunities for including environmental justice in corporate waste strategies, Sustainability managers were considered to be suitable participants as they possess sufficient knowledge about the operations of the corporation and its waste strategies (Vu 2017).

Potential interviewees were contacted through email where possible, and by phone where numbers were provided. Due to the time and resource restraints of the Master of Research program, only those who were available during the proposed time frame (September 2017), as well as those physically located within the Sydney region, were approached for interviews. The duration of the interviews ranged from 30 to 50 minutes, and the interviews centred around 3 major themes, including the waste strategies and efforts of the corporation, the processes behind the establishment and implementation of the waste strategies, and the opportunities and challenges to

incorporate justice considerations during the processes. In addition to describing their corporations' waste strategies, participants were encouraged to reflect on their experiences and knowledge on the context of key decisions regarding waste strategies, including how they were developed, approved, implemented, and how progress or feedback is tracked. The general structure and content of the interview questions are available in the Appendix.

The interviews were audio-recorded for the purposes of transcription and to allow for ease in subsequent in-depth data analysis. The interviewees were asked to provide their consent prior to the commencement of the interview and audio recording on the official interview participant consent form (see Appendix). This protocol, along with the entire interview process, was approved by the Macquarie University Human Ethics Research Committee. In addition, the confidentiality protocol for this thesis, which included keeping the identity of participants anonymous, was communicated to interview participants via email and in person prior to commencement of the interviews.

3.2.3 Data analysis and presentation

Out of the eleven interviews conducted, ten interviews were recorded, with one interviewee not providing consent to recording. The interview recordings were transcribed and used for coding through use of the NVivo Pro 11 software. The recorded interviews were transcribed by an external transcription company and, for the interview which was not recorded, full notes were typed. The transcripts and notes of the interviews were uploaded into qualitative data analysis software (NVivo Pro 11), and the materials were then coded iteratively. The emergent codes were developed following in-depth reading and analysis of the transcripts. The codes were created as nodes to classify the material into emerging themes, concepts, patterns and connections. The full list of the codes developed and used is available in Table 3.1. Many of the codes focused on the opportunities or challenges experienced by corporations when incorporating environmental justice in their waste strategies, dimensions and themes relating to the analytical framework, and the process of development and implementation of corporate waste strategies.

Table 3.1: List of all the coded themes or "nodes" used in NVIVO Pro 11 to analyse the interview transcripts

Challenges and Opportunities	Analytical Framework themes	Environmental justice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste Culture, Behaviour & Awareness • Approval Process & Internal Politics • Business Case • External Regulations, Politics or Bureaucracy • Balancing Different Interests, Priorities & Time • Alignment with business models or goals • Accompanying benefits (Non-financial) • Transparency • Innovation and Technology 	<p><u>Distribution</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement of responsibility and accountability for impact • Ongoing effort to reduce impact <p><u>Participation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Collaboration</i> with internal and external stakeholders • <i>Education</i> of internal and external stakeholders • <i>Engagement</i> with internal and external stakeholders • Responsibility or accountability for stakeholders <p><u>Recognition</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity and inclusion of stakeholder groups • Variation in strategies for different stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of environmental justice • Unaware or not following theme of environmental justice

The empirical findings are presented in the following chapters, where the quantitative trends from the policy review, and analysis results of interviews, including quotations. The empirical findings are presented in the following chapters. Specific information on the data, such as quotations and company identities, are presented with anonymity, as the University ethics-approved research methodology design includes strict confidentiality clauses enforcing the interviewees' and their corporations' identities to remain confidential.

3.2.4 Research Scope

A consideration in regards to the scope of the research design includes that of the impacts of subjectivity and my positionality as a geography researcher on the research design and analysis of findings. There are complexities involved concerning the measurability and boundaries of what is considered as 'achieving' the incorporation of environmental justice into CSR. These complications are especially observable during the application of the analytical framework during data analysis, as my determination of what is considered as fulfilling the dimension criteria of the framework is subjective to a degree, and may vary with other researchers' definitions and understanding. It should be highlighted that the definitions and elements of the analytical framework dimensions were drawn from works of Schlosberg (2007), whose definition and framework of environmental justice have been cited widely throughout existing literature. Furthermore, the multiplicity of environmental justice allows it to be subject to multiple meanings and contexts (Holifield et al. 2011), hence the boundaries of the environmental justice meaning as interpreted for the thesis has been set out in the analytical framework, and will be applied throughout the thesis consistently.

An additional reminder is that I set the aim of the thesis not to achieve a comparison or 'measurement' of environmental justice consideration in CSR, but rather, to investigate for presence or consideration of analytical framework dimensions in CSR practices.

4 Findings – Incorporation of environmental justice

This chapter addresses the first research question and presents findings regarding the incorporation of environmental justice in CSR and corporate waste strategies. It first sets out the findings from the policy review and then presents the interview findings. For both of these phases, data is presented according to the three dimensions of environmental justice as discussed in the analytical framework, including distribution, participation and recognition.

4.1 Environmental justice in Policy Review

The strategies of twenty-four companies were assessed during the policy review stage. The companies included in the ASX100 are categorised into different industries, with the industry categories including Real estate, Industrials, Consumer staples, Financials, Utilities, Health care, Consumer Discretionary, Energy, Materials and Information Technology. In relation to the strategies reviewed, the industry categories and the number of companies belonging to each category are displayed in Figure 4.1 below.

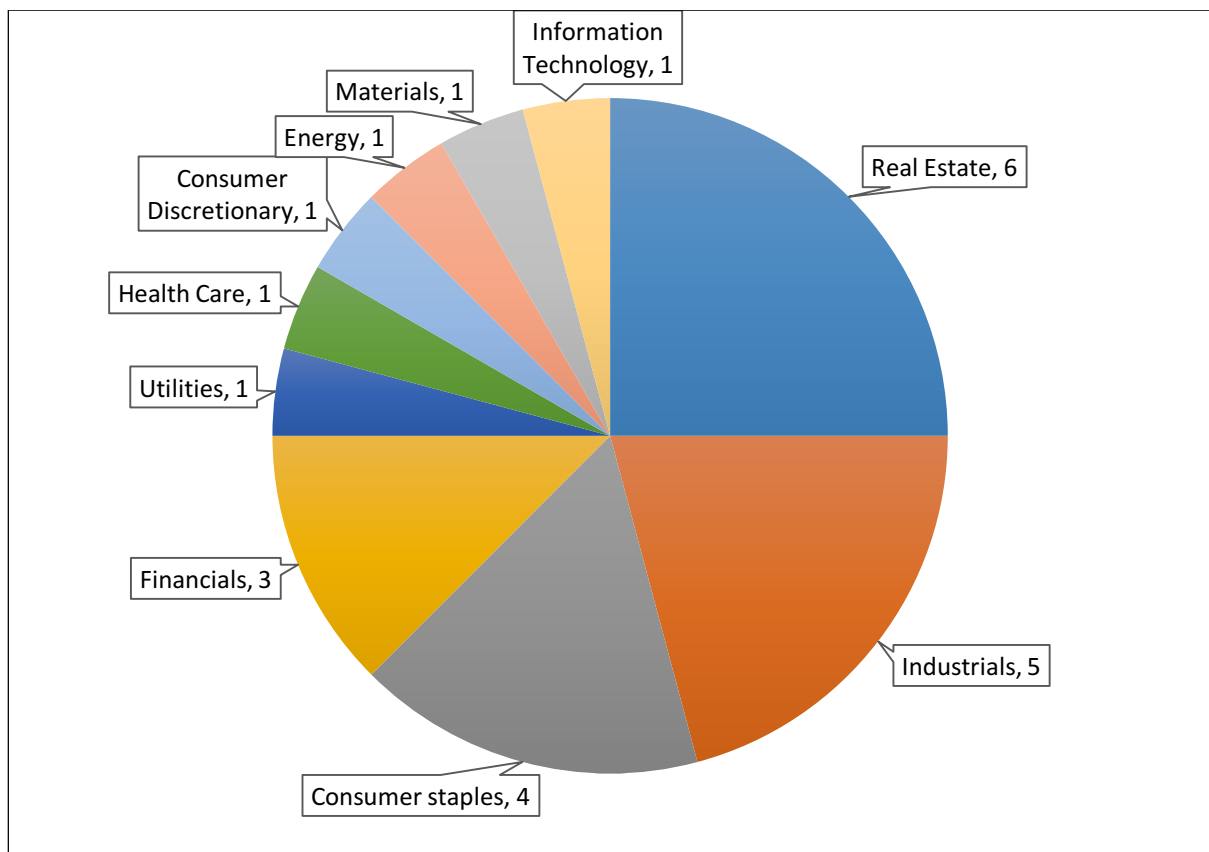


Figure 4.1: The quantities and industry categories of the 24 companies reviewed

A variety of approaches and strategies for managing waste were observed from the review of the corporations' published sustainability and CSR reports. All the corporations included recycling in their waste strategies, however the list of strategies extends to approaches tackling the following waste concerns: reuse, reduce, E-waste, food Waste, sustainable packaging, construction waste, hazardous waste, organic and food waste, furniture reuse, scrap metal or material reuse, medical equipment recycling and waste oil recycling. The range of waste strategies are not limited to the list mentioned, for example, some corporations included education and behavioural change into their waste strategies, and others revealed the adoption of sustainable models such as Circular Economy or Life-Cycle design into their waste strategies.

4.1.1 Distribution

In relation to the distribution dimension of environmental justice, the corporate reports were analysed for references to the impact of waste. The surveyed corporations all included discussions about the environmental impact of waste in their reports, and most corporations mentioned that existing waste concerns acted as a major catalyst for their voluntary development of waste strategies. Social concerns were also included in the reports, as all corporations acknowledged that waste did not only relate to environmental impacts, but included social impacts. All except two of the surveyed corporations explicitly exhibited acknowledgement of their responsibility and contribution towards waste production within their corporate reports. An example included a corporation's discussion on how their operations contributed to unnecessary material waste and deforestation, and extended to their presentation of their actions taken in order to resolve such operations towards a more environmentally friendly approach.

4.1.2 Participation

For the participation dimension, the corporate reports were surveyed for information transparency, and indication of stakeholder participation in their decision-making. Only two of the reviewed corporations did not include comprehensive data and figures on their waste operations in their publications. All other corporations included numerical data and statistics on their waste conduct. In particular, recycling

percentages and rate of diversion from landfill was commonly included in the numerical data. All corporations, including the two without numerical data on their corporations' waste conduct, discussed their corporations' efforts towards managing waste.

All corporations publicised and provided extensive information on their contributions to charitable organisations and to external public communities. Often, these charitable actions and contributions are related to the types of waste relevant to the industries and activities of the corporation in question. For example, the corporations which discussed food waste as a significant type of waste to their operations deliberated their partnership or association with OzHarvest (OzHarvest 2018) and other food recycling or food waste reduction charitable organisations. For corporations categorised in the Industrials sector, use of recycled materials in their production process, or the reusing of materials with complicated handling and safety requirements, was commonly discussed.

Feedback and inclusion of stakeholders' responses or comments into corporate decision-making was discussed by most corporations. Three corporations failed to include mention of consideration of stakeholder feedback in their reports or public websites, however all corporations included a "Contact us" or similar section which provided opportunity for the general public and stakeholders to communicate with the corporations. Many of the corporations provided accessible contact details in their CSR or Sustainability reports, and some explicitly stated their encouragement of feedback in regards to the content of their report.

4.1.3 Recognition

All corporations except one included a dedicated section or detailed information on their policies regarding diversity and inclusion. Seven commonly mentioned social groups were found within the published reports and data of the reviewed corporations including groups of: Indigenous, financially disadvantaged, age (children or elderly), disabled, remotely or regionally located, gender and cultural and ethnic diversity. The number of companies out of the 24 surveyed corporations who addressed the specific stakeholder groups is portrayed in Figure 4.2.



Figure 4.2: The quantity of companies who addressed or discussed the specific stakeholder group listed

A common trend identified was that corporations only addressed groups which were considered directly relevant to their operations. For example, the financially disadvantaged stakeholder group was mainly addressed in industries such as financials and energy. Remotely or regionally located stakeholder groups were only mentioned in reports and information of corporations whose operations extended to rural or regional areas.

Many types of stakeholders were addressed only in relation to the internal operations of the corporation, rather than external. For example, most corporations only discussed gender diversity and cultural diversity in regards to their internal employment. Other stakeholder groups were mainly discussed in relation to both the internal and external operations of the corporation. For example, some corporations discussed Indigenous stakeholder groups in terms of their employment policy, as well as Reconciliation and recognition strategies.

In summary, the policy review indicated that the distribution and participation dimensions of environmental justice were considered within corporate waste strategies of reviewed corporations. In relation to the distribution dimension, the majority of the reviewed corporations discussed their waste activities and their on stakeholders and the environment. When considering the participation dimensions, while references to incorporation of feedback from stakeholders were scarce, most corporations displayed transparency and consideration for stakeholder participation in decision-making regarding the waste actions of the corporations within their published CSR reports. For the recognition dimension however, it was found that while all reports included extensive diversity and inclusion principles, only the stakeholder groups (e.g. Indigenous Australians, stakeholders experiencing financial difficulties, etc.) relevant to the operations and activities of the reviewed corporations were mentioned in the CSR reports. While a concern included the term “environmental justice” not being explicitly mentioned in any of the analysed CSR reports, underlying themes and indications of environmental justice were nonetheless observed and recorded. The chapter now turns to present the findings from the in-depth analysis of interview transcripts along the same three environmental justice dimensions.

4.2 Environmental justice in Interview data

This chapter presents the findings from the in-depth analysis of interview transcripts, in particular, the evidence or observations of environmental justice and its dimensions. Where quotes are used for the remainder of the findings chapters of the thesis, the corporation industries, as presented in Chapter 4.1 and Figure 4.1, will be used to identify the company industry of the quoted interviewees.

The analysis of the interview data indicated that around half of the interviewees were aware of or familiar with the concept of ‘environmental justice’. Amongst the interviewees who voiced their understanding of environmental justice, two interviewees expressed that they actively applied the concept to their corporate decision-making and that the concept was relevant to their everyday operations and actions. For the remaining few who conveyed familiarity with environmental justice, some expressed neutral acknowledgement but did not explicitly mention their

application of the concept, while others articulated their use of other concepts or approaches over environmental justice, as seen in the quotation below.

“...Environmental justice is one way of looking at things, but one thing that I think that is going to more common in five to ten years’ time is how businesses explain their relationship with their key resources.”

Sustainability manager of Industrials 1

Irrespective of their awareness of environmental justice, all interviewees associated the concept with making considerations for environmental and social stakeholders, with some making this connection following my provision of its definition. Consequently, all the interview respondents expressed that they believe making considerations for environmental and social stakeholders is a crucial and routine part of their corporate conduct.

The interviews did not specifically question interviewees in relation the corporation’s responsibility to act in accordance with justice considerations. Regardless, more than half of respondents mentioned their responsibility or duty to consider their stakeholders in their waste strategy decision making without prompts. Such an example is exhibited below:

“When I think about sustainability, I could talk to a lot of our people. I’d say, keeping our people safe is about sustainability for us. Not only is it the right thing to do, it’s about acting with integrity, and we’ve got a responsibility to our people.”

Sustainability manager of Industrials 2

A considerable number of the interviews involved discussions surrounding the development and implementation of corporate waste strategies, including in-depth insights into the multiple factors involved. This includes the processes, motivations, opportunities and challenges involved when incorporating environmental justice into the development and implementation of corporate waste strategies. In order to analyse all the factors involved, the chapter now draws on the analytical framework of environmental justice to interrogate the interview data.

4.2.1 Distribution

The interviews were analysed for references to the Distribution dimension of the analytical framework presented in Chapter 2. This included references to the corporation's environmental and social impacts in discussions on the development and implementation processes of their corporate waste strategies.

A common theme which was observed recurrently across the interview transcripts included that of corporate responsibility to manage and dispose of waste in a manner which reduced the corporation's distribution to environmental and social impact. Most interviewees acknowledged and discussed their corporation's responsibility to develop and implement corporate waste strategies to help minimise impact. This corporate responsibility was not discussed by every interviewee, however all interviewees discussed the corporation's actions taken in attempt to reduce environmental impacts, such as the example below:

“The goal for us is to minimise environmental impact. And if you look at waste, environmental impacts are through resource depletion and pollution. And we can definitely control the destination of what happens to the resources through.”

Sustainability manager of Real Estate 1

The interviewees, particularly in instances such as the example provided above where responsibility was not explicitly expressed, acknowledged the efforts their corporations undertook in order to reduce environmental impact. Others specifically addressed their corporations' contribution or role in impacting stakeholders, with some interviewees detailing the type of impact, which included environmental impacts, impacts on communities, impacts on employee wellbeing and impacts on the corporation.

Another common theme was the distribution of benefits such as waste services. Many interviewees reflected that their provision of waste services and assistance was unequally distributed across stakeholders in different geographical locations due to the challenge of absence of waste facilities in remote locations. These interviewees

explained that while their corporation's intention was to provide equal services to all their locations, customers and stakeholders, a lack of facilities does not allow for such uniformity in distribution. The example below highlights the challenges experienced.

"That's a huge challenge...how fragmented the waste industry is...It's far more complex in the waste stream, because you're dealing with different providers at different locations...And we have almost no ability to influence the waste streams that are available in that format. The non-uniformity of waste programmes across Australia means that some areas are far more highly serviced than others."

Sustainability manager of Real Estate 2

Overall, with regard to the distribution dimension of environmental justice, interviewees generally acknowledged the corporation's responsibility to reduce impact, with some specifically addressing the environmental and social impact which their corporation contributed to. Other interviewees explained in detail the challenges experienced in overcoming distributive injustices of their corporations' waste activities. Evidence of active consideration for distribution justice was therefore present throughout the interview data.

4.2.2 Participation

Themes relating to participation included discussions on the corporations' consideration for stakeholders' needs, seeking and incorporation of stakeholder feedback, and other communicative efforts to reach out to stakeholders executed by the corporation. Discussions were categorised into participative efforts with three sets of stakeholder groups, including internal stakeholders such as employees, external stakeholders including customers, wider community and investors, as well as external peers such as contractors, suppliers or providers and partnerships. A difference was observed between how interviewees discussed matters regarding their customers or general public, with how matters in relation to external peers such as providers were described, hence these stakeholder groups were categorised separately. The main difference, as explained by the interviewees included that of external peers being subject to the binding guidelines and code of conduct as enforced by the corporation,

while the general public and customers do not contribute to the corporations' operations in such a manner. Participation efforts targeting the three different stakeholder groups will be discussed further in this section.

Involvement or collaboration of a multitude of individuals, teams and departments within the corporation was declared by all interviewees as vital for effective development and implementation of corporate waste strategies. The interview respondents highlighted the importance of active and continual inclusion and collaboration of all internal stakeholders, particularly through mandatory communication and meetings with staff members, incentivising schemes and developing CSR waste strategies into the code of conduct and corporate governance guidelines of their corporation. While challenging to maintain, stakeholder participation efforts were explained to be necessary for the development and implementation of corporate waste strategies as staff were considered to be positioned as the frontline of the business operations and responsible for first-hand implementation of corporate waste strategies. An example of such an assertion is below:

“You need to include the staff, and the staff generally are putting forward ideas...they're critical to coming up with more effective ways of not just reducing resource use, but also improving health and safety.”

Sustainability Manager of Industrials 1

All interviewees explained that their corporations have existing avenues in place for staff members to offer feedback, which allowed the ease of collecting staff views regarding corporate waste strategies. Several respondents discussed that the feedback of staff through company-wide surveys on employee waste behaviour and knowledge helped guide the direction of their corporation's future corporate waste strategies.

In addition to engagement efforts, the interviewees revealed that strategies focused on educating internal stakeholders during the development and implementation of corporate waste strategies was relatively effective. Stakeholder education was assumed as effective in cases where insufficient understanding or education of stakeholders resulted in low stakeholder engagement and participation. Efforts to

educate stakeholders included face-to-face training and communication, educational workshops and seminars, online intranet information, e-learning tools, colour-coded bins for easier differentiation between waste streams, signage in visible areas and consistent communication with and monitoring of staff. These staff education methods were often used in combination to increase the effectiveness of recruiting internal stakeholders in corporate waste strategy development and implementation.

A stakeholder group commonly addressed throughout the interviews include the external peers of corporations. Interviewees explained that collaboration with and participation of their manufacturers, suppliers, contractors, waste providers and external experts often lead to more effective corporate waste strategies development and implementation. An example of this is shown in the quotation below:

“...We work very closely with subject matter experts. You know, like consultancies, to help develop strategies, not only of what might occur in the supply chain, but also...what will occur as far as waste disposal is concerned by our tenants.”

Sustainability manager of Real Estate 3

The prominence of participating external peers was particularly highlighted by interviewees who expressed that collaboration with external peers often resulted in new and innovative solutions or strategies for waste management. Numerous respondents highlighted that examples of innovative solutions produced in collaboration with external peers included strategies developed and implemented with charity organisations in order to donate and reuse waste, such as food, furniture, construction materials, and other resources.

Interview respondents also discussed the participation of external stakeholders in their corporate waste strategy development and implementation. Across the interviews, a number of methods had been adopted by their corporations in an effort to engage customers, local community members and tenants. These engagement methods include the use of social media, designated websites, letterbox drops, group meetings, doorknocking, phone, email and other communication methods. Interviewees explained that often a number of participation and communication methods were

employed, as engaging external stakeholders was considered the most challenging out of the three stakeholder groups.

Interviewees additionally required the participation of external stakeholders to be a consistent process. Respondents explained that in their experience, consistent execution, communication (such as reminders) and engagement with stakeholders often resulted in the most effective or successful implementation of CSR waste strategies. The consensus across all interviewees regarding the necessity of dedicating consistent and ongoing effort to CSR waste strategy implementation highlighted the importance of collaborative participation. The interviewees also provided insight into the magnitude of resources, labour, planning and effort required for corporate waste strategies to be implemented effectively.

For the respondents, a component of participation which was considered necessary for just development and implementation of waste strategies included the tracking and provision of accurate and transparent waste data by corporations. One interviewee highlighted the importance of maintaining good data reporting by asserting the below:

“Having honest reporting and accurate reporting means that you know what’s generally going on, and you can make good decisions.”

Sustainability manager of Real Estate 1

This was also reflected in the policy review findings, as the CSR and sustainability reports of all reviewed corporations included detailed data on waste related figures, such as recycling and diversion from landfill rates.

In summary, the findings presented in this chapter indicate a clear recognition amongst interviewees of the importance of stakeholder participation in the development and implementation of corporate waste strategies. This is reflected through the extensive elaboration by all the interviewees regarding their corporations’ efforts in engaging stakeholders in their CSR waste strategy practises. The focus and efforts placed on stakeholder engagement by the interviewed corporations therefore reflect an integration of the participation dimension of environmental justice into the waste-related CSR efforts of interviewed corporations.

4.2.3 Recognition

Findings in relation to recognition focused on analysing whether consideration was given for the diversity and inclusion of stakeholders during the corporate waste strategy development and implementation processes.

A recurring conversation included the importance of providing flexibility to stakeholders during their participation in waste strategy development and implementation. Interviewees explained the importance of considering the different conditions, obligations, locations and roles that their variable stakeholders were subject to, and that provision of flexibility to account for this diversity was described as imperative for stakeholder participation. A quotation on discussion of flexibility is as below:

“I think the important thing is, when you’re setting waste targets, to allow them not to tell them this is how to get there – give them the flexibility to work out...what makes the most sense for them.”

Sustainability manager of Real Estate 3

In some cases, interviewees revealed that recognition was provided to include staff with different needs into corporate waste strategy implementation. For example, several interviewees recognised that their casual ground staff, who were responsible for sorting of waste as a part of the corporate waste strategy, faced language barriers and did not always understand the signage or training sessions provided. As a result, the interviewees developed innovative new strategies such as multi-lingual staff training, or improving signage to include universal pictures and representations rather than use of lengthy instructions. Such strategies provided a resolution for relevant stakeholders, as well as recognising diversity amongst stakeholders.

In relation to the provision of flexibility, interviewees additionally noted that the development and implementation of corporate waste strategies equated to an iterative process, therefore flexibility must be offered to allow for modifications to be made when required. For example, two interviewees identified an educational barrier amongst their ground staff, where several staff members did not possess the

educational capabilities required to read and comprehend documentation such as training booklets or company guidelines. In order to assist their staff in overcoming this barrier, the interviewees adjusted their strategies to provide targeted verbal and practical training in order to include these staff members in the implementation process.

Most interviewees discussed diversity in relation to developing their strategies to target specific stakeholders (such as communities and customers). Some interviewees discussed that their stakeholder and community engagement procedure is unique to each corporate project or waste strategy in order to cater for the specific conditions and requirements of relevant stakeholders, such as the example below:

“They’ve [Community relations teams] got a lot of experience at, sort of, assessing what their footprint is going to be, who they’re going to impact on, how they’re likely to impact. And they might have different processes for communicating with those various groups, and that will include things like direct email, letterbox drops, having their own website to allow people to look up information.”

Sustainability manager of Industrials 2

In summary, the recognition dimension of the environmental justice analytical framework was present throughout the interview findings, with participants making distinct efforts to consider the diversity of stakeholders. The interviewees demonstrated a dedication to ensuring that relevant stakeholder groups are involved in corporate waste strategy development and implementation. The elaboration provided by interviewees regarding the specific efforts aimed at including different stakeholder groups into consideration reflects the integration of recognition dimension into the waste-related CSR efforts of corporations.

The thesis now turns to explicitly consider the challenges and opportunities for the incorporation of environmental justice in waste strategies.

5 Findings – Challenges and Opportunities

The interviews provided detailed insights into the opportunities and challenges experienced by interviewees throughout the development and implementation of corporate waste strategies. The findings presented in this chapter address Research Question 2 and explore the challenges and opportunities of making considerations for environmental justice, as well as providing information on the conditions and contexts surrounding CSR, as facilitated through application of the environmental justice analytical framework. The following themes are explored in this chapter:

- Waste culture, behaviour and awareness
- Governance, regulation, restrictions, approvals and politics
- Financial considerations and Business case of waste strategies
- Balance of competing interests
- Increasing interest, technology and accompanying benefits

5.1 Waste Culture, behaviour and awareness

A prominent topic emerging from the interviews was waste culture and behaviours and attitudes of stakeholders. The responses varied with some interviewees perceiving the waste culture and attitudes of stakeholders was a challenge while others identified opportunities for environmental justice incorporation into corporate waste strategies.

For the interview respondents who expressed that they experienced positive or cooperative waste culture and behaviour from stakeholders, the interviewees drew a connection between positive waste culture with easier incorporation of environmental justice into corporate waste strategies. The interview data revealed that positive waste culture of stakeholders enabled corporate waste strategies to be developed and implemented with less challenges experienced, which consequently provided more opportunity for incorporation of environmental justice. Stakeholders with positive waste attitudes were additionally observed by interviewees to be more cooperative towards stakeholder engagement and participation efforts executed by the corporations. Interviewees added that active and successful participation of stakeholders in engagement efforts relating to corporate waste strategies additionally provided opportunity for environmental justice to be incorporated in future strategies.

Increasing interest from stakeholders was identified as the main reason for increased stakeholder participation in corporate waste strategies. It was found that recent media attention and documentaries on the state of waste disposal, such as ABC TV's (2018) documentary named 'War on Waste', have fuelled growing awareness and popularity on waste concerns. Interviewees explained that rather than seeking participation from stakeholders, their corporation was receiving feedback and questions from internal and external stakeholders which questioned or commented on existing waste activities of the corporation. A particular example includes the quotation below:

"We've had a lot of feedback on coffee cups too, because of the ABC documentary.

Because of ABC's War On Waste ... And we've got a lot of passionate staff, so we've gotten a lot of feedback from staff saying what are we doing about coffee cups."

Sustainability manager of Industrials 3

Increasing interest therefore influenced active stakeholder participation initiated by the stakeholders themselves. This was discussed to have made the incorporation of environmental justice, in particular the participation dimension, more cooperative between corporations and stakeholders.

Waste culture produced challenges for environmental justice incorporation into corporate waste strategies where there were negative or unenthusiastic attitudes amongst stakeholders, as explained by the interviewees. The interview data showed that these challenges were particularly significant when stakeholders were perceived to be unwilling or uninterested, as well as the difficulties experienced when implementing corporate waste strategies while facing a discontented audience of stakeholders. Examples of uncooperative behaviours include stakeholders disobeying recycling instructions due to misunderstanding or carelessness, employees experiencing difficulty when transitioning to new corporate strategies, and poor time management of workers leading to prioritisation of other tasks over implementation of waste strategies. Situations such as this, which were out of the corporation's control, proved particularly difficult for corporate waste strategy development and implementation, especially since the lack of ability to control, monitor and transform

the unenthusiastic waste attitudes of a large stakeholder population created uncertainty and ambiguity for future corporate waste strategy directions.

In summary, the potential to incorporate environmental justice into corporate waste strategies was found by interviewees to rely heavily on the waste culture and attitudes of stakeholders to their corporations. The integration of the trivalent dimensions of environmental justice is met with challenges when stakeholders possessing unenthusiastic attitudes or waste culture are uncooperative towards being involved in corporate waste strategies which require active stakeholder participation.

Opportunities for integration of environmental justice and its dimensions, however, arise when the general waste cultures and attitudes of the general public change and increase awareness and proactive engagement of stakeholders in corporate waste strategies.

5.2 Governance - Regulations, restrictions, approvals and politics

The interviews identified that external regulations, restrictions, politics and authorisation or approval of corporate waste strategies was a major factor affecting environmental justice incorporation. These are all forms of governance enforced by the corporations, with some being influenced or governed by legislative requirements and hence are subject to criminal jurisdiction if breach occurs. Such an example includes the legislation which enforces prohibition and governance of waste disposal methods that can potentially harm human health and the environment (NSW EPA 2017), which in turn governs corporations to adopt policies to ensure proper waste disposal.

Governance posed challenges as well as opportunities for corporations to make considerations for environmental justice in their corporate waste strategies. In regards to external governance, many interviewees explained that strict regulations on waste disposal, expensive landfill levies and costly penalties actually provided opportunities for corporations to adopt waste strategies which considered environmental justice themes such as outcomes and stakeholder participation. An interviewee describing the opportunities provided by expensive landfill levies is provided below:

“The change in landfill cost structures, around the country, has meant that there are opportunities...has increased substantially the scope and opportunity in waste, and the business engagement around waste. And some of the costs have increased dramatically.”

Sustainability manager of Real Estate 2

External waste regulation also occurred in the form of waste-related initiatives introduced by the government or local councils, such as the City of Sydney’s CitySwitch (CitySwitch 2018) and Better Buildings Partnerships initiatives. Several interviewees asserted that these initiatives helped shape the development and implementation process of corporate waste strategies, and additionally allowed opportunities for environmental justice to be incorporated within these process stages. Others explained that stakeholders, in particular shareholders, considered commitment to government initiatives favourably and encouraged corporations to align their waste strategies with the initiatives. Both external governance schemes, including waste regulations and initiatives, provided opportunities for corporations to improve their waste strategies to incorporate environmental justice.

In contradiction to the findings presented above, external regulation also posed challenges for environmental justice incorporation. Interviewees from the consumer staples industry specifically encountered challenges in regards to strict quality control on the materials content of containers for edible products. These interview respondents explained that such regulations constrained their corporation’s waste strategies through prohibiting innovative or alternative use of recycled materials. A similar challenge was experienced by interviewees when considering the internal bureaucracy and regulations for corporate waste strategy development and implementation, as interviewees explained that recycled material was subject to lengthy and extensive processes of testing, assessment and bureaucratic approval before being determined as permissible for use. The restrictions placed by internal and external governance limited the capacity of corporations to incorporate environmental justice into their corporate waste strategies.

Considering the challenges posed by external regulations, the interviewed corporations affirmed that continuous effort is being invested by the corporations into

investigating for alternative methods for distributing less waste. The opportunities from strict external regulation which encouraged the reduction of waste to landfill were confirmed by interviewees as a promoter of continuous strategizing and planning for improvement of corporate waste strategies by corporations. The dedicated effort placed by the corporations to reduce their waste distribution in response to external regulation pressures, which would involve engagement of a diversity of stakeholder groups in their planning processes, therefore reflect an active integration of the trivalent dimensions of environmental justice into CSR waste strategies.

5.3 Financial considerations: Business Case of waste strategies

A theme commonly observed throughout the interview data was the consideration of financial factors such as business case and financial feasibility. For some interview respondents, obtaining approval for their corporate waste strategies proved to be straightforward, while for others, the business case was difficult to argue, and they were consequently required to amend their corporate waste strategies in order to meet imposed financial requirements. Regardless of their experience, all interviewees acknowledged that considerations for financial and economic factors were prevalent for the development and implementation of all their present and past waste strategies.

For the interviewees who experienced ease in arguing the financial viability of their waste strategies, this was due to the correlation between waste reduction and financial savings for the corporation. This particularly aligns with Chapter 5.2 where it was argued that increased pressure from expensive costs imposed on waste disposal allowed waste reduction strategies to become increasingly financially viable. For example:

“But also it’s around the business case for it as well. Because sending waste to landfill is expensive and doesn’t add any value. So, the more we can recycle the more money we save.”

Sustainability Manager of Industrials 3

On the other hand, interviewees also experienced challenges during their attempts to obtain financial funding and approval for their corporate waste strategies. These respondents explained that their corporation was subject to internal competition for funding, and that their priorities include strategizing for financial feasibility in order to obtain approval and funding from management. Planned waste strategies which required considerable financial or resource dedication were often turned down, with examples of such strategies including the overhaul of manufacturing processes, implementation of new educational or engagement programs requiring increased time dedication from employees, or the introduction of new waste disposal facilities or methods requiring substantial labour and time.

The prioritisation provided to financial feasibility, as well as the potential rejection of corporate waste strategies proposals, all pose challenges for corporations to incorporate environmental justice into the development and implementation process. Corporate actors facing less pressure to demonstrate financial feasibility in their corporate waste strategies were observed to possess more opportunity to include environmental justice related techniques, such as stakeholder engagement and distribution of impact assessment.

Despite facing challenges of making the case for financial feasibility in proposed corporate waste strategies, most of the interviewed corporations often developed alternative strategies which still managed to achieve improvement in waste activities of their corporations. The increased stakeholder consultation and engagement required in developing alternative strategies in turn allowed the participation and recognition dimensions of environmental justice to be incorporated in the corporations' CSR waste strategies.

5.4 Balance of competing interests

A challenge which was consistently discussed by all interviewees included the difficulties of balancing the competing interests of stakeholders. While corporate waste strategies were acknowledged as an area of importance and interest for the corporations, interviewees explained that employee commitment to corporate waste strategies was seen as secondary to their main job responsibilities. Interviewees

expressed that internal stakeholders such as staff and contractors were often required to manage their time efficiently to ensure job responsibilities are fulfilled while also committing to the requirements of corporate waste strategies. The time and effort required for ensuring that corporate waste strategies were balanced with competing interests posed difficulties for environmental justice to be integrated into the strategies. Additionally, several interviewees revealed that many staff held the conception that incorporating environmental justice required extra effort and resources that was not easily attainable. Assumptions such as these served as a barrier to ensuring environmental justice integration into corporate waste strategies.

Another set of competing interests included the management of client and customer demands, which occasionally did not align with environmental justice principles. Often where this occurred, interviewees found that the waste attitudes of clients or customers were unenthusiastic and not compatible with the goals of the corporation's waste strategies. For example, several interview respondents found that despite their suggestions for alternatives which would lead to more waste reduction, clients did not accept or adopt the alternate methods. It was found that apprehension towards change and innovation, strict governance from corporate regulations, and indifferent attitudes towards waste reduction efforts were examples of reasons which interviewees provided for the client rejection of alternative waste strategy recommendations.

Despite the challenges experienced, interviewees expressed their dedication to continual encouragement of stakeholders to adopt or adhere to corporate waste strategies which considered environmental justice. This indicated that the balance of competing interests will remain a foundational part of their decision-making processes regarding the corporate strategies, and that the incorporation of considerations for environmental justice and its trivalent dimensions will be routinely continued by corporations.

5.5 Increasing interest, technology and accompanying benefits

While a number of the interviewees described the balance of client interests to be a barrier to environmental justice in their waste strategies, several respondents detailed

more positive and opportunistic experiences with client demands. Several interviewees specified that they often found that their clientele enforced sustainability, waste and other targets such as charitable contributions which aligned with the sustainability principles of the interviewee's corporation. Other interview respondents explained that increasing widespread interest in waste and sustainability concerns (as explored in Chapter 5.1) influenced the waste attitudes and behaviour of the general public, thereby creating opportunity for customers of the interviewed corporations to follow the corporate waste strategies.

Another area considered by interviewees to be opportunistic for environmental justice incorporation and corporate waste strategy implementation include innovation and technology advancement. Technologies, including new waste management equipment, programs for tracking waste data and software or applications involving interactive participation of stakeholders in waste strategies, were some examples of technologic strategies discussed by interviewees to be helpful for the development and implementation of corporate waste strategies. Use of technology and innovation was particular useful in promoting environmental justice in an interviewee's example where mobile applications were used to educate and interactively engage staff on waste reduction strategies. Interviewees additionally anticipated that advancement in technology would help overcome existing challenges which can be associated with environmental injustice. For example, an interviewee explained that advancement in waste data tracking software would allow the corporation as well as stakeholders to have better access and transparency to their corporate waste information. Another respondent explained that improvement in waste services and equipment for organic waste in remote areas which currently do not have access would allow their corporation to distribute their waste services and strategies more equally for stakeholders in all operation areas. Interviewees were therefore observed to be in consensus in their favouring of technology and innovation as an opportunity for corporate waste strategies, and its potential for integrating environmental justice.

A final opportunity recurrently discussed by interviewees includes the non-financial benefits which accompanied the delivery of environmentally just corporate waste strategies. Interviewees listed examples such as competitive advantage, enriched company reputation, improvement in business operation efficiency, enhancement of

work health and safety for employees, and subsequent improvement in staff satisfaction as some of the accompanying benefits. Respondents described that benefits mostly only accompanied waste strategies which were inclusive or collaborative, such as through stakeholder participation. For example, several interviewees confirmed through company-wide polls that employees were more satisfied following increased participation and education regarding the corporation's waste strategies. Employee satisfaction consequently resulted in improved reputation and competitive advantage as customers, investors and contractors were more willing to work with corporations which exhibit social responsibility for their employees' wellbeing. Accompanying benefits additionally facilitated further opportunity for increased environmental justice integration into corporate waste strategies as interviewees found that managerial approval for further corporate waste strategies was more easily achieved when the initial corporate waste strategy was implemented with positive results.

Increasing general interest in waste matters, technology advancement and accompanying non-financial benefits were all observed to simplify the incorporation of environmental justice by the interviewed corporations to their CSR waste efforts. This is especially demonstrated in the interviewed corporations' maximisation of the benefits in the development and implementation of their corporate waste strategies, such as expressing the competitive advantage benefit of improving corporate publicity by implementing more corporate waste strategies. The trivalent dimensions of environmental justice were often further integrated with each increase in the corporations' collaborative efforts to strategize with stakeholders and increase in reduction to the corporations' distribution of waste to landfill.

6 Discussion – Role of CSR?

The empirical findings demonstrate that corporations have dedicated some attention into addressing waste and justice considerations in their CSR strategies and practice, but that significant challenges and limitations nonetheless exist. This discussion chapter addresses Research Question 3 and reflects on the overall role of CSR in promoting environmental justice, by considering the multiple interconnections between waste, CSR and justice and situating the study findings within the academic literature. Firstly, the chapter considers the role of regulatory structures of CSR in facilitating environmental justice integration. It then discusses the role of CSR in balancing interests and tensions, as the potential result of such balancing acts include providing just consideration to all stakeholders and factors. Finally, the implicit and often inadvertent integration of environmental justice by CSR is highlighted in the concluding section of the chapter.

6.1 CSR structures

From the analysis of the research findings, it is clear that the structures and foundations which regulate and persuade the CSR practices of corporations are prominent contributors to how and why CSR can incorporate environmental justice. A particular structure includes the fundamental obligation of CSR which necessitates corporations' interaction with stakeholders in an ethical manner (Freeman 2010), henceforth incorporating ethics and social or moral contract into organisational decision-making (Beckman et al. 2016; Freeman 2010). In practice, the research demonstrates that in adhering to this, corporations do integrate the moral and ethical considerations of their stakeholders into their CSR principles, such as through their maintenance of transparency and access to information at all times to stakeholders.

This supports existing scholarship which explains that environmental justice involves the humanising, moralising and ecologising of business ethics and CSR (Little and Lucier 2017; Dolan and Rajak 2016). The research therefore highlights that the alignment between ethical and moral obligations of fundamental CSR principles and environmental justice framework can allow CSR to be a facilitator of environmental justice when such moral obligations are fulfilled, for example when corporations ensure that the current waste data and figures in their CSR reports are accurate and current. This act consequently fulfilled the participation dimension of the

environmental justice analytical framework as it ensured that reliable information was communicated to stakeholders.

Existing literature (Arias, 2010) asserts that the constitution of CSR's strategic, political and ideological character will emerge in different ways and in different places, which results in CSR being constructed, disseminated and experienced differently between every individual corporation, context or application (Wesley et al. 2013). While this versatility of CSR aids in creating individuality for corporations' CSR across a variety of industries, the findings revealed that limitations resulted from this versatility in the practise and structure of CSR. This is because such variability across corporations and sectors resulted in the CSR strategies of some corporations to possess a more restricted scope than other corporations in different industry sectors. For example, explicit requirements for remote community consultation were only included into the CSR strategies of corporations in the industrials sector as their corporate operations involved direct impact and contact with community members located in rural and remote regions. For corporations whose operations do not stretch beyond the Sydney metropolitan area, such as those in finance and insurance service industries, their CSR would appear irrelevant if they included considerations for remote communities in their waste strategies, especially since their operations do not come in contact with remotely situated stakeholders. Variance in the recognition dimension of the analytical framework such as in the example provided is common across corporations as all corporations report to different stakeholder groups. As a result, the flexibility and diversity of CSR beyond the minimum mandated regulatory requirements can highlight variance in opportunities for the incorporation of environmental justice.

A further limitation is apparent regarding the structural foundations of CSR in terms of internal political structures, bureaucracy and regulation of corporations. Many interviewees described circumstances where the foundational policies and organisation of the corporation hindered the performance of their CSR strategies and hence created a barrier for environmental justice incorporation. A specific example is where fundamental procedures such as the Research and Development stages of innovative waste technology investment were required to be followed, which resulted in a lengthy process for corporate waste strategy implementation. This in turn forced innovative waste services to be unevenly distributed and intermittently provided to

customers, meaning that remotely located customers received waste services later than those in metropolitan regions, causing a distributional injustice. The research shows that such structural challenges and contradictions are embedded within CSR and may encourage certain political powers to overcome others (Blowfield 2005; Wesley et al. 2013). The political powers experienced in this example allowed the requirements for undergoing structural and lengthy procedures to overcome the power which fought for timely and fair distribution of waste services across all customers.

The CSR structures and foundations of reviewed corporations may often provide challenges for environmental justice integration in several circumstances, but the alternative opportunities provided by such institutional structures, such as the requirements of CSR reporting, guarantees that the participation and recognition dimensions of environmental justice are always met through ensuring that transparency and moral obligations of corporations to engage and include stakeholders are satisfied. Conflicting interests are often inevitable, and are discussed further in the following section, but the reviewed corporations managed, to an extent, to integrate environmental justice into their CSR waste strategies.

6.2 Tensions and conflicting interests

Throughout the research data analysis, the versatile roles of CSR in ensuring the engagement of internal stakeholders as well as meeting the needs of external stakeholders and factors were observed. The flexibility of CSR complemented the versatility of waste, as waste affected both internal and external stakeholders and processes and consequently required the development of CSR waste strategies that are able to meet the requirements of both internal and external stakeholders. While these corporate waste strategies aimed to meet the needs of all relevant stakeholders, difficulties surfaced when the incorporation or consideration of environmental justice was analysed. The conflicting interests and tensions of stakeholders were not always complementary, as observable in the interviewee's example provided where corporations were forced to choose between their obligations to provide bespoke services to their clients and meet their precise demands and specifications, or to advise clients to forgo their demands and opt for a more environmental or less resource-wasteful option which contradicted what the clients were requesting. The

tensions between the differing interests and influences on decision-making led to environmentally unjust outcomes in the past, due to corporations favouring the interests of the elite or more powerful voice over more marginalised interests (Byrne and MacCallum 2013). The interviewees explained that tensions and conflicts between competing interests were common, however there were numerous occasions where the clients' sustainability and waste goals aligned with the CSR goals of the corporation, resulting in coherent implementation of CSR and incorporation of environmental justice. Further investigation however must be conducted regarding conflicting interests, as interviewees highlighted this matter as a major barrier which they experienced difficulties in finding solutions for.

Tensions between conflicting interests were also observed between financial or economic interests on the one hand and socio-environmental interests on the other. This was prevalent throughout the findings, as many interviewees mentioned circumstances where they were required to provide supporting information about the financial feasibility of a corporate waste strategy, or were denied access to funding for investment in certain waste technology due to the high costs of the project and the failure of management to agree on the business case of the proposal. The tensions between environmental or social interests and financial interests are commonly discussed and researched topics in existing CSR scholarship. Commonly, this literature is sceptical over the ability of social and environmental influences to overcome economic interests, because CSR is part of a capitalist system premised on profit maximisation and a limitless cycle of growth (Enoch 2007; Magdoff and Foster 2012; Wesley et al. 2013).

Furthermore, it is often argued that CSR as a merger of profit interests with moral interests would eventually see social and environmental matters as secondary to the dominant economic rationality (Charkiewicz 2005; Shamir 2008 and Wesley et al. 2013). Such strong views exhibited against the possibility of coherence amongst social, environmental and economic interests, poses a major challenge for CSR to incorporate environmental justice without being overshadowed by financial powers. The interviewees however, exhibited a more optimistic view by explaining that with a changing public interest in environmental concerns, and the accompanying advantages that come with meeting public interests such as competitive advantage and improved

company reputation, there is potential for environmental justice to be incorporated into future CSR practices. In this context, many interviewees acknowledged that the application of an environmental justice framework for future CSR strategies would result in the direct acknowledgement of the underlying political, social and environmental factors and contexts (Hamilton 2011).

This positive outlook of interviewees, including their exhibited efforts in managing the conflicting interests involved in the development and implementation of their corporate waste strategies, suggests that the existing integration of environmental justice into CSR waste strategies are present. It is also implied that future strategies hold potential for further incorporation of environmental justice in order to allow for more inclusive, considerate and environmentally just CSR processes for the interviewed corporations.

6.3 Visibility and implicit environmental justice

The findings from both the policy review and interview data clearly demonstrate that the environmental justice analytical framework concepts and dimensions were mostly observable and present. Unrelatedly however, no explicit language or terminology of environmental justice was found throughout the research data, despite the fact that a few of the interviewees expressed acknowledgement or a degree of familiarity with the environmental justice concept.

An interesting contribution to this notion included the work of Davies (2006), who revealed that while the participants in her research were not intentionally or actively including environmental justice into their practices, their circumstances nonetheless allowed them to include considerations for environmental and social interests without active effort dedicated to such incorporation. The extent of considerations provided to social and environmental stakeholders in her research's case (Davies 2006) consequently resulted in the facilitation of CSR to incorporate justice elements. This lack of dedicated effort committed to incorporating environmental justice parallels the findings of this research thesis, as it was found that public interest in environmental and social matters have pressured corporations into including considerations for

environmental and social stakeholders to the extent that they were unintentionally incorporating justice into their CSR strategies.

The presence of elements of environmental justice in CSR observed in Davies (2006) work and in this research, despite the absence of explicit declaration of environmental justice by corporations, consequently raises questions about whether it is important for actors to be aware or to be vocal about their incorporation of environmental justice. This is especially since justice integration into CSR was found in situations where it was not actively intended or expected. A concern to be raised includes that if environmental justice is incorporated into CSR strategies in an explicit and vocal manner rather than implicitly and inadvertently, there is increased attention placed on the ability of CSR to become a facilitator of justice incorporation, thereby offering greater opportunity for CSR to be publicly accepted and utilised for the purposes of incorporating justice. It can be argued that explicit recognition of environmental justice incorporation would increase awareness of CSR practitioners and potentially lead to more acceptance and utilisation of CSR for the facilitation of environmental justice incorporation. Increased transparency in providing information and communication by corporations regarding their integration of corporate social responsibilities could also provide stakeholders and the general public opportunity to appreciate the CSR efforts dedicated by corporations. It is therefore recommended that public communication and declaration of environmental justice principles in CSR policies of corporations could facilitate further CSR incorporation of environmental justice and improve participation justice for stakeholders.

7 Conclusion

The overall aim of this thesis was to investigate if, how and why the process and practice of CSR enables corporations to consider environmental justice in their corporate waste strategies. This chapter sets out a summary of the key findings as well as the study limitations and opportunities for future related research.

7.1 Summary of findings

The section below summarises the key findings in relation to each research question.

Research Question 1. How is environmental justice considered within corporate waste strategies?

While evidence of environmental justice within the policy review provided general insight into whether corporations were considering the analytical framework dimensions of distribution, participation and recognition into their CSR waste strategies, further insight was provided from the interviews into the processes involved in the integration of environmental justice into CSR practices. It was observed that all reviewed corporations and corporate actors dedicated effort and resources to making considerations for environmental and social stakeholders and concerns, hence they were deduced as having achieved an incorporation of environmental justice and its themes into their CSR waste strategies

While the term ‘environmental justice’ was not explicitly referenced within the CSR reports or during the interviews, similarities were drawn between principles of environmental justice and the topics mentioned throughout the interviews including those of CSR ethics, stakeholder engagement, inclusion, and impact management, whether environmental or social. Particularly observed within the interview data included that despite the absence of specific references to environmental justice, the interviewees demonstrated a degree of understanding and incorporation of the environmental justice elements into the discussions.

Research Question 2. What are the opportunities and challenges for incorporating environmental justice in corporate waste strategies?

The research demonstrated a number of challenges for greater incorporation of environmental justice in corporate waste strategies. As shown in Chapter 5, the reviewed corporations were dedicating effort into incorporating dimensions of environmental justice into CSR waste strategies, and promising prospects exist for future CSR efforts to meaningfully incorporate environmental justice. This is due to the observations of public, investor and shareholder interest consistently changing in favour of environmental and social justice considerations, such as concerns for the future of waste in Sydney. Such trends are predicted to continue as a result of changing waste cultures and the behaviour of stakeholders to become more conscious of waste and environmental concerns (Bostrom 2012), therefore the opportunities for incorporation of environmental justice into CSR are improving and expected to accelerate in the future.

The challenges for corporate waste strategies implementation were not described by research participants to be overwhelming or unmanageable compared to the opportunities available but are nonetheless important. Barriers such as the opposing waste culture and behaviour of stakeholders, balance of differing interests and external or internal politics were all discussed with the optimism that the contemporary landscape of environmental and sustainability awareness would improve public interest in environmental concerns (Bostrom 2012). This may reduce the challenges to incorporate environmental justice into CSR strategies. Other challenges including lack of waste facilities and financial feasibility were acknowledged but were also largely met with positivity by interviewees as they discussed that current innovation efforts would allow advanced waste services and technology to become more cost effective and readily available. From the perspective of the interviewed corporations, there is an overall optimistic outlook for future CSR waste strategies to incorporate environmental justice, especially as all interviewees discussed their strategies and capabilities for overcoming the barriers to incorporating all three dimensions of environmental justice. An important issue to note however includes that this optimism may not be shared by all stakeholders and further research is needed to allow for a more nuanced understanding of these opportunities and challenges and how to overcome the challenges.

Research Question 3. What is the role of CSR in promoting environmental justice in corporate waste strategies?

From the in-depth analysis, there are multiple roles of CSR to incorporate environmental justice. The CSR practices of the reviewed corporations provided numerous opportunities for environmental justice to be integrated into the corporate waste strategies. This was achieved either intentionally through the choices of corporate actors to balance conflicting interests in favour of environmental and social interests, or inadvertently through the structural regulations governing existing CSR principles, or through general incorporation of consideration for environmental and social stakeholders into the CSR strategies.

Overall, it was observed that the interviewed corporations often maximised their utilisation of the opportunities provided by the structures and processes of CSR to incorporate the dimensions of environmental justice into their corporate waste strategies. The research recommends that transparent communication and more explicit and visible incorporation of environmental justice principles into CSR strategies, rather than the current inadvertent integration, would prove more effective for corporations in terms of increased stakeholder engagement, as well as future opportunities to integrate environmental justice.

7.2 Limitations and future research

This research has explored corporations in Sydney and the specific role of their CSR practices in the field of waste in the context of environmental justice concerns. It has generated important empirical findings but there are nonetheless various limitations and constraints given the boundaries and scope of the Master of Research program. This raises opportunities for future research in this field. Both of these are discussed in this section.

My position as a geography research student has resulted in a degree of subjectivity in my choice of methodology and analysis technique of the research data. The data collection and findings chapter was based on my perspective of whether environmental justice is being considered and incorporated into the corporate waste strategies by the reviewed corporations. A point to highlight is that the intention of

this research was not to examine or determine the impacts and consequences of environmental justice incorporation in corporate waste strategies like much of existing literature, a majority of which looked at the effectiveness or impact of corporate sustainability strategies (e.g. Epstein and Roy 2001). Future research projects, such as a PhD thesis, could focus on or incorporate specific methods and research aims dedicated to comparing and measuring the outcomes and effectiveness of CSR strategies which incorporated considerations for environmental justice.

This research was designed with the aim of determining whether corporations were considering or incorporating environmental justice into their CSR activities. The purpose was therefore to look at the process rather than the product of the strategies. Investigations into the effectiveness and outcomes resulting directly from CSR strategies are important and present a potential opportunity for further research. Future studies, such as a PhD project, can be designed to set a lengthier period of data collection so that the effects and results can be compared between corporate waste strategies which employed a more participative approach for stakeholders and one with less participation involved. A PhD program would additionally have potential for bigger scope to include methodologies which are longer in duration, such as participatory action research to explore the views of a range of corporate participants on environmental justice and reflect on whether their incorporation of environmental justice into their strategies resulted in a different outcome than previous CSR strategies.

Another limitation includes that of research design. The trivalent analytical framework including the three dimensions of environmental justice was adopted for the purposes of analysing the data for this research, but a variety of other environmental justice frameworks may also have been appropriate. The majority of existing literature focuses on the distribution dimension of environmental justice, while other literature such as Fraser (1997; 2000) places more in-depth focus on the recognition dimension. This research did not directly interrogate the recognition dimension in terms of theoretical application but instead focused on searching for presence of diversity and inclusion policies within the CSR reports of reviewed corporations. This limitation provides a potential avenue for future studies, as instead of focusing on whether corporations were enacting the integrated recognition dimensions within their CSR

strategies, the methodology could also examine the perspective of stakeholders in terms of if and how they were being recognised and considered, and how effective the CSR strategies were in engaging stakeholders. This type of research that explicitly interrogates the stakeholder's perspective is a potential focus of future studies, as investigations through methods such as surveys, polls and interviews, can be implemented to gather data on the stakeholders' opinions on whether they feel included and considered by the CSR strategy, how they perceive the issue of environmental justice and by the corporation overall.

A final limitation included the logistical constraints of the Master of Research program. The boundaries of the program, including the time, budget and resource restrictions, influenced my decision for the research to include only participants within close proximity (Sydney-located), and only publicly-listed corporations due to their ease of access and availability of published information and CSR reports. Future studies such as the PhD program, while still subject to time, budget and resource constraints, would allow for a lengthier research period which could facilitate investigation into other types of corporations such as small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), as well as those located more remotely or further afield than Sydney.

In summary, this research suggests that there is a need for more critical research on the role of corporations. This could include future studies focused on stakeholder perspectives, other types of corporations in different locations, and alternative methodologies such as participatory action research. The most suitable and likely direction for future research following this thesis include a project focused on applying a participatory action research design to an investigation into the implications and outcomes resulting from a case study of increased transparency and communication by corporations on their CSR incorporation of environmental justice towards stakeholders.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Interview questions

Background

- What does your role in the corporation entail?
 - = What are your responsibilities, main tasks, etc.?

Development of strategies

- How were you involved in the development or implementation of your company's sustainability strategies?
 - = What other actors and/or departments are involved?
- How does your corporation dispose of waste?
 - = What services are used?
- How are the waste initiatives within these sustainability strategies developed?
- Why are issues of waste included in your sustainability strategies?

Environmental justice

- Who do you consider would be affected (positively or negatively) by the outcomes of your waste initiatives?
- How does your corporation approach diversity amongst affected groups?
 - Prompts:* How are individuals with disabilities, language barriers, and different cultural beliefs considered?
- Do you communicate with these stakeholders? How?
 - = How does the corporation manage the feedback received?
- How do you understand/define 'environmental justice'?
- How and why do you believe corporations should assume 'responsibility' in pursuing environmental justice?

Barriers and Challenges (Opportunities)

- What were the difficulties in incorporating 'environmental justice' in your corporation's waste strategies?
 - = What were the opportunities?
- What were the barriers or challenges experienced when communicating with stakeholders?
- What were the barriers or challenges encountered when considering the differences amongst stakeholder groups?
- What changes might you and/or the corporation take on in the future, in regards to waste management?

Appendix B – Participant Information and Consent Form

Participant Information and Consent Form: Environmental Justice and Corporate Waste Strategies in Sydney

You are invited to participate in a study entitled 'Environmental justice and corporate waste strategies in Sydney'. The purpose of the research is to investigate the voluntary waste management practices of private sector corporations in Sydney and to explore if and how issues of environmental justice are considered in corporate waste management practices.

The study is being conducted by Olivia Hsieh from the Department of Geography and Planning at Macquarie University to meet the requirements of the Master of Research (MRes). The project is being conducted under the supervision of Dr Sara Fuller (02 9850 8385, sara.fuller@mq.edu.au) from the Department of Geography and Planning.

Participation in the study will involve taking part in an interview exploring the motivations and actions of your organisation in the context of waste management in Sydney. The interview will last 30-45 minutes and with your consent, will be audio recorded.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential, except as required by law. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results. No other people other than those listed here will have access to the data. A summary of the results of the data can be made available to you on request. The data from this research may be retained for use in a future Human Research Ethics Committee-approved PhD project.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate, and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

I have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

☐ I agree to audio recording of my participation in an interview for this research.

☐ I would like to be contacted to receive a summary of the findings.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Name: _____

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Participant Information and Consent Form