Chapter 2
'People, Planet, Profits' and *Perception Politics:* A Necessary Fourth (and Fifth) Bottom Line? Critiquing the Current Triple Bottom Line in the Australian Context

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Abstract The 1990s saw the emergence of one of the most influential aphorisms in the area of sustainable development: 'People, Planet, Profits'. Coined by John Elkington, 'The Triple Bottom Line' (TBL) motivates a kind of "balancing-act" benchmark for businesses to aspire to in the areas of social, environmental and financial responsibility. Importantly, the TBL continues to hold relevance, in theory and in application, considering the increasing global concern for sustainable development as well as with regards to practices concerning social and corporate responsibilities. Whilst this alleged "win-win-win" strategy places important emphasis on the role of business to lead the way towards sustainable development, the complexity of governance and the influence of political parties on the process, has gone underemphasised. This chapter supports that the inclusion of a fourth (and fifth) 'P' should be introduced to the TBL, in order to take the influence of governance into greater and more specific consideration on the issue of sustainable development. The notion of 'Perception Politics' will be explored in terms of the impact of politics, political parties and policymakers on society, business and the natural environment, whether real or imagined, given the *perceptive* nature of public polices and political discourse. Whilst a difficult concept to measure, to explore the possible application of Perception Politics, this paper analyses the *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan* (2015) as released by the Australian Liberal Party, in their endeavours to *save* the Great Barrier Reef in Queensland. This example is used to justify why the current framing of the TBL would struggle to implement, in isolation of the political sector, necessary sustainable development measures. Ultimately, this chapter emphasises that the redevelopment of the TBL framework has great potential in fostering a more effective relationship between business, politics and society to achieve goals crucial to the sustainable development journey.

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2.1   Business, Politics, Society and the Natural Environment: The "Foursome" that Needs to Work

The imperative to improve relations and collaborations between business, politics, society and the natural environment can no longer be viewed as an optional activity, but rather, a necessity, especially in the area of sustainable development. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries, in particular, have fronted all nation states—along with each of these groups—with an awkward, and highly conflicting, responsibility; nation states have been asked to collaborate, plan and implement a viable path towards sustainable development in response to global warming and climate change concerns, whilst also acting within their mandated responsibilities to provide economic and social progress for their nation's society. What has manifested however, is the clear conflict for said nation states to protect and operate within their own sovereignty, while balancing the need, at least within the current international system's expectation, to be a globally *cooperative* actor. For Australia, in particular, this has been an interesting conflict to observe. Not only does the nation state have an intertwined economic reliance with natural resources, such as coal and Liquid Natural Gas (LNG), the state, arguably, continues to lack an observably strong political momentum across the board, when it comes to the creation of any viable path towards sustainable development; put otherwise, for researchers, it remains difficult to ascertain what policymakers intend to do, or not do, in the realm of sustainable development, let alone, with regards to global warming and climate change responses. To complicate matters further, Australia has one of the most exploited, yet fragile ecosystems on the planet, as supported by research conducted by the much respected Geographer, Biologist and Pulitzer Prize winner, Dr Jared Diamond. In his book *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive* (2011, 436) Diamond explains that "[e]cologically, the Australian environment is exceptionally fragile, the most fragile of any First World country except perhaps Iceland." In addition, Diamond also highlights the clear key conflict that Australia faces with its mining industry, arguing that (2011, 435):

> Mining in the literal sense—i.e., the mining of coal, iron, and so on—is a key to Australia's economy today, providing the largest share of its export earnings.

> In a metaphorical sense, however, mining is also a key to Australia's environmental history and to its current predicament.

Lastly, and most alarmingly, Diamond predicts that "[a]t present rates, Australia's forests and fisheries will disappear long before its coal and iron reserves, which is ironic in view of the fact that the former are renewable but the latter aren't." (2011, 436) Considering this, Australia in particular cannot afford to ignore

or delay the call to act when it comes to sustainable development, nor should it presume that it can do so in isolation of the world, let alone by any of its key stakeholder groupings without the others. More now than ever, the need for business, politics and society to collaborate is at its most crucial juncture, making it one of the most important endeavours for Australia (and other nation states) to undertake within the twenty-first century.

In arguing the above, however, this chapter does not suggest that this task will be in any manner, *easy.* Tackling sustainable development is a feat in and of itself and doing so alongside other national and international demands is proving to be quite difficult on political, business and societal grounds. As global pressure continues to mount for nation states to take viable steps to protect the world's environmental stability, so too does the demand for economic, social and political progress. For example, in the case of Australia, the 2016 Federal Budget, handed-down by the currently led Malcom Turnbull government, lauded their use of the catchcry "jobs and growth" (Commonwealth of Australia 2016). Aimed at promoting their plans to enhance employment opportunities and jump-start the economy, this catchcry not only overwhelmed discussions concerning environmental and social investments, but prompted an understandable *'please explain'*—particularly by the business community—out of fear that this would be just "…another three-word political slogan with no substance." (Innes 2016) In this case, a clear disconnect between businesses and the Federal Government emerged, as goals and expectations became confused, while everyday voters and the natural environment were seemingly left out of the mix, or perhaps, incorrectly, mistaken as being thoroughly accounted for in the midst of budget promises and unheard discussions. What this confusion suggests is that trying to appease a working relationship between business, politics, society and the natural environment, is an irritatingly difficult task; not only has Australia proven to lack political leadership and togetherness in economic and social matters, the state's silence on environmental concerns has become overwhelmingly deafening. This uncertainty has not only affected Australia's capacity to govern effectively, but also provided a *blind- leading-the-blind* march towards sustainable development for both business and society, even independently of the political process. Importantly, this is all taking place while the natural environment waits for the world to make their moves, with the threat of climate change looming and no direct seat at the table to fend for itself.

Whilst the above critiques on the lack of collaboration between business, politics and society, are, arguably, within reason, researchers are no longer achieving enough by simply criticising this dynamic without trying to better understand it, especially within the context of Australia. No solution towards sustainable development in this nation state—or any other pressing economic, social, political or environmental concern for that matter—can be devised if the discussion simply stops at criticism. One especially troubling dynamic between the four aforementioned groups is that between business and politics in particular. The influence of politics, political parties and policymakers on a nation state's endeavours should not be underestimated, as is often done by the business community. Whilst no claim to the perfection of the political sector is being made here, the business sector is,

at times, guilty of identifying themselves as self-defined *leaders,* operating inside and outside of the regulatory process, and—within various degrees of success—the expectations and needs of its stakeholders, including the natural environment. As will be further explored in this chapter, some businesses worldwide have been quick to condemn the slow pace of governments to enact reforms or forge clear directions on new policy needs, leaving the business sector to try and *pick up the slack.* On the flip side, some political parties and policymakers can be quick to criticise the business community for either contributing excessively to issues concerning economics and the environment, or alternatively, not doing enough to respond to issues, particularly concerning employment and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Ultimately, these two groups are very quick to criticise each other, not necessarily realising that society alone cannot possibly be expected to deal with the crisis of environmental uncertainty in the midst of constant quarrel. Considering, however, that Australia's eligible societal members vote in political parties, and not businesses per se, it is important to first establish who some of these key political influences are, and why we cannot simply categorise them as all being part of the *same* political problem when it comes to approaching sustainable development.

Australia's various political parties have all offered their own interpretation as to what sustainable development in Australia should *look* like, whether via a process of perception or, arguably, implementable grounds. No party, however, has been able to implement their interpretation of sustainable development, policy-wise, without severe criticism on the part of other policymakers, business figures and/or the voters, with one prominent case resulting in the complete reversal of a climate change policy—namely—the *Clean Energy Act 2011* also known colloquially as 'The Carbon Tax'. Put simply, this policy attached a price to Australia's carbon emissions, aimed particularly at the largest carbon emitters in the state (Australian Government—Clean Energy Regulator 2016). Infamously, however, the limited time span of this policy gained Australia the title of being the first and, to date, the only nation state to reverse a climate change policy in the world (Coorey 2014). When implemented in 2012, the journey of the 'Carbon Tax' contained a number of extremely controversial policy—moves on the part of the major, and some minor parties, which not only concerned but also confused voters and the business community as to whether or not the policy was in fact *justifiable* in the context of the goals it wished to achieve. Summarised briefly, the policy was implemented by the Australian Labor Party (ALP), alongside negotiations with The Greens and certain Independents, only to be repealed by the Liberal-National Coalition (LNC) during 2014. Whilst only quickly assessed here, what the overall journey of this policy suggests, however, is the necessity for Australian businesses and society to recognise the very real impact of policymakers and political parties on the journey towards any policy implementation, and that, rarely, is this journey ever without controversy. Further, and of great importance to also recognise is that policies concerning the natural environment in general have a very little chance of surviving their implementation if greater collaboration between policymakers, the business community and society does not take place.

Considering this phenomenon, naturally, researchers have worked to devise any applicable frameworks to ease and necessitate the imperative towards sustainable development, whether in conjunction with, or in isolation to, the policy making process, especially considering the already well-established controversy associated with this journey. Looking back to the 1990s, John Elkington, a well-established and achieved writer, entrepreneur and sustainability expert, created one of the most famous and influential aphorisms of the twentieth century: 'The Three P's' (3P's), which each included a mention to People, Planet and Profits. Also known as, 'The Triple Bottom Line' (TBL) Elkington presented a kind of balancing-act benchmark for businesses to work towards, making sure that all of their endeavours were aimed at providing for society, protecting the natural environment and placating all necessary financial obligations. What is interesting about this aphorism, and as will be explored further in this chapter, is the lack of mention to the influence of politics on this mix. As noted previously with Australia's former 'Carbon Tax' policy, political parties have had an observably active impact on the state's creation of environmental policies. Regardless of whether the 'Carbon Tax' was a viable policy or not, the fact remains that before any collaborative discussions could take place between policymakers, business figures and the voting population in particular, the policy was already rapidly implemented and hastily repealed. As such, not taking politics into consideration, as this chapter supports, is a concerning, and arguably, unproductive, oversight. Business and society, in particular, cannot afford to ignore the influence of politics and policymakers, thinking that their efforts in isolation will be enough to *lead the way.* This chapter supports that this way of romanticised thinking will not, in practice, allow for any substantial progress towards sustainable development, unless a viable collaboration can be achieved, acknowledging as well that whilst the natural environment cannot in and of itself, collaborate, it also cannot be left out of the discussion. As such, this chapter supports the inclusion of a fourth and fifth 'p' to Elkington's TBL, that being, 'Perception Politics', critiquing, of course, it's conceptual application to the aphorism as well as its practical application to a key sustainable development issue in Australia concerning its iconic, Great Barrier Reef (GBR). By first situating Elkington's TBL, as initially expressed within two of his key texts 'Towards the Sustainable Corporation: Win-Win-Win Business Strategies for Sustainable Development' (1994) and *Cannibals With Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business* (1997), and analysing the policy measures suggested and/or implemented by the current federally led LNC[1] on protecting and preserving the GBR, this chapter will support the inclusion of a political element to the TBL, emphasising that whilst the TBL may support businesses taking the lead when it comes to sustainable development, for the case of Australia and the GBR, the impact of a political influence cannot be left out of the mix.

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[1]Whilst this chapter is focusing solely on the intended policies on the part of the LNC for implementation to protect the GBR, note as well that further analysis would need to take place to also consider the impact of the ALP and The Greens, in addition to other political parties, on the very same policy. Such analysis is beyond the scope of this particular chapter, but is suggested for consideration within additional research.

2.2   What Is *Sustainable Development?* and Who Actually Makes up This *Foursome?*

Of vital importance to recognise about the term 'Sustainable Development' is that in nearly 20 years, the most common framing of the term has remained largely the same; in short, the general framing of the term relies on the idea of present generations meeting their needs in a way that does not inhibit future generations from meeting their needs. The conceptualisation of this term is often credited by the commissioning of a report during the 1980s, often shorthanded as 'Our Common Future'. Published in 1987, the report is also correspondingly referred to as 'the Brundtland Report' after the WCED's Chairman, Former Minister of the Environment and Former Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) was assembled by the United Nations in 1983 to investigate concerns regarding long-term strategies for sustainable development into the twenty-first century, to make recommendations for co-operation between nation states with an acknowledgement for the interconnectedness among people, the natural environment, resources and development, as well as the international community, and, as taken directly from the report (United Nations—Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future 1987):

> …to help define shared perceptions of long-term environmental issues and the appropriate efforts needed to deal successfully with the problems of protecting and enhancing the environment, a long term agenda for action during the coming decades, and aspirational goals for the world community.

The impact of the Brundtland Report should not be understated or underestimated, given that, as mentioned before, the overwhelming narrative concerning sustainable development has been mostly embraced and largely unquestioned, since this report. For example, as supported by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD 2015), ".the most frequently quoted definition [of sustainable development] is from *Our Common Future,* also known as the Brundtland Report." Specifically though, and as also cited by the IISD (2015):

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

- the concept of **needs,** in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- the idea of **limitations** imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.

In his book, *Cannibals with Forks,* Elkington acknowledges that the Brundtland Report placed sustainable development, a notion that had been on the scene since the 1980s, strongly onto the political agenda at the international level (1997, 55).

Further, Elkington supported the Brundland Commission's argument that industrial production would increase "5-7-fold" during the mid-twenty-first century and that even though this increase would not be the best outcome for the world's natural environment, it was the outcome that everyone would have to prepare and control in practice when the time came (1997, 55).

Whilst this concern has not been overtly addressed in the Australian Government's definition of sustainable development, its definition remains relatively in keeping with that expressed within the Brundtland Report. One of the ". key functions of the [Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts] is to promote and support ecologically sustainable development." (Australian Government—Department of the Environment and Energy). Specifically, this department promotes that (2016a):

> Australia's *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (1992)* defines ecologically sustainable development as: 'using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased'.

Considering the responsibilities that this government agency has been legislated to uphold, acknowledging the importance of including political parties and policymakers into the equation for sustainable development is, arguably, crucial, considering as well the key concerns Elkington has raised concerning ongoing development and infrastructure that will likely ensue, and under the Australian Governments mandated watch. To what extent, however, the Australian Government is able to deliver on its sustainable development mandate versus what it claims to be able to deliver upon, will of course, always be up for debate. In addition to this, whilst further exploration of the complexities of the term sustainable development is beyond the scope of this chapter, it does however support a re-evaluation of the term to determine its current appropriateness. In terms of its applicability, what is worth pointing out about the term is its conceptualised nature; the sheer use of the term to describe a situation does not offer an immediate practical insight into its achievement despite its need to be so concretely achievable in nature.

In terms of categorising the various members within the four aforementioned groups: business, politics, society and the natural environment this chapter has set the following parameters, acknowledging that these may not be universally applicable to all nation states.

Business:

Any reference to the business sector includes a mention to those organisations either small or large in nature which operate independent of government control, yet with the assumption that government regulations, members of society and the natural environment are factored into the decision-making process with regards to operations and finance. Further, this sector should be acknowledged for its capacity to influence and impact the politics sector in terms of suggested and/or implemented policies, as well as members of society and the natural environment.

Politics:

This sector may also be referred to its included groupings, that of political parties and/or policymakers. This term should be altered to suit the specifics of any political system being analysed, however, in the Australian case, mention to this sector includes those parties and policymakers who have been democratically elected by eligible voters, and are thus held accountable to the state's enforced legal apparatus. This sector is acknowledged for its capacity to directly introduce laws, policies and/or regulations, which can be legally enforced upon businesses, society and the natural environment. Lastly, this sector should be acknowledged for its capacity to directly impact the natural environment.

Society:

This sector refers to all people, regardless of culture, ethnicity, age or geographic location who are considered legal residents or citizens of a state (in this case Australia). It could be argued that all citizens or residents could fall into the business or politics sectors, however, this grouping refers specifically to who do not have a position or endeavour (business or political in nature) which could justify their inclusion into the other groupings. This sector is acknowledged as being able to be directly influenced and affected by the business and political groupings, whilst also being able to also influence both with their activities, ideologies, beliefs and responses to business endeavours and/or those policies suggested and/or implemented. Further, the society group should also be acknowledged for its capacity to directly impact the natural environment.

Natural Environment:

This sector has been understood within the scope of this chapter as those regions in the world which encompass the combined interaction of naturally occurring fauna, flora (and those living organisms not categorised within flora or fauna), weather/climate patterns, within a variety of ecosystems (including land, sea and air) on Earth. Importantly, the natural environment has the symbiotic capacity to both impact, and be impacted by, the developed world, including business, politics and society.

2.3   John Elkington and the Triple Bottom Line (TBL)— Who Is *Really* Responsible for Addressing Sustainable Development?

It is important to reiterate that what this chapter is seeking to do is to undertake an analysis that explores the viability of extending Elkington's TBL to include a fourth and fifth 'p' to more acknowledge the impact of policy and politics on sustainable development. In addition, it aims to assess to what extent this extension (to be explored later in the chapter), is the most appropriate to suggest. For the past 20 years in particular, Elkington has gained notoriety as a leading figure in the field of

sustainable development, pushing further and further a global imperative for the *greening* of consumers, the market and businesses alike.[2] Elkington ".has been described as a world authority on corporate responsibility and sustainable development and is credited with coining the 'triple bottom line' concept for business." (Volans 2016) Elkington is also well-known for the creation of his business, SustainAbility. Founded in 1987 by Elkington and activist Julia Hailes, after the Brundtland Report was published, the company's ".early work on green consumerism soon expanded to emerging issues from genetic modification to human rights, and evolving the concept of the 'triple bottom line', coined by.Elkington in 1994s Cannibals with Forks." (SustainAbility—'Our Story' 2016) In addition, as a consultancy firm, SustainAbility pledges to ".help clients make better decisions, integrate sustainability into their business and create innovative solutions." (SustainAbility—'What We Do' 2016) Whilst Elkington's work within SustainAbility could also be analysed in terms of his contribution to, not only the TBL, but also sustainable development, an exploration and critique of these endeavours are best explored within the scope of another paper. As such, this chapter will be focusing solely on Elkington's original construction of the TBL as its launch into the field of sustainable development through two of his prominent texts. The first of these texts was an article published in 1994, titled: 'Towards the Sustainable Corporation: Win- Win-Win Business Strategies for Sustainable Development.' Whilst the 'Win-Win-Win' mention here may be an interpreted as an unintended prophetic allusion to Elkington's PPP aphorism, the specifics of the TBL are not overtly explored within this article. What makes this article important to explore though within the context of critiquing the TBL are some of his earlier positions on the role of business to lead the way in the journey towards global sustainable development.

For context, this first article explored the increasing global emergence of "green consumers", whom, in turn, began to place greater pressures on business to take steps to allow for an overall "greening" of the market. With reference to a study on environmental attitudes by the George H. Gallup International Institute in 1992,[3] Elkington situates that this phenomenon referred to, generally speaking, businesses and consumers demonstrating greater concerns for environmental stability and the need to ensure products and services were as least harmful to the environment as possible (Elkington 1994, 92). In exploring this, however, Elkington observed that the majority of countries were still far off from any clear transition towards the sustainable development cause, let alone any effective transition towards the embrace of sustainability as a "national priority" (1994, 91). Quite alarmingly, more

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[2]*See Elkington and Hailes (1988).* The Green Consumer Guide: From Shampoo to Champagne: High—Street Shopping for a Better Environment. *London: Victor Gollancz.*

[3]This study interviewed over 20,000 people in 22 nation states with the aim of examining opinions and perceptions on the topic of environmental concerns. See Riley E. Dunlap, George H. Gallup, and Alec M. Gallup, 'The Health of the Planet Survey: A Preliminary Report on Attitudes to the Environment and Economic Growth Measured by Surveys of Citizens in 22 Nations' (Princeton, NJ: The George H. Gallup International Institute, May 1992).

than 10 years later, this is still arguably the case considering a general global malaise towards climate change, economic stability and forethought for future generations. Despite this, however, the impression that is arguably given within Elkington's (1994) article concerns a strong emphasis for business to *lead the way* for the world's journey towards sustainable development. Elkington posits that we all must "hope" that those in the business community will enthusiastically involve themselves in implementing projects related to the sustainable development cause, noting that "[i]n contrast to the anti-industry, anti-profit, and anti-growth orientation of much early environmentalism…", it is now evident that the business world is obliged to undertake a principal position in delivering the achievements required for sustainable development (1994, 91). In addition, Elkington further stressed that not only business, but business leaders, should also be purposely concerned with how communications concerning the environment took place (1994, 97). Further, Elkington argued that if business leaders failed to be involved in this part of the process that they would be risking the present and future success for their businesses, the value of said businesses would also be questioned, along with their standing as a "responsible corporate citizen", and, lastly, their ".competitive advantage.as customers and consumer turn to others who are—or are *seen* to be—more environmentally responsible." (1994, 97)

Whilst these arguments—along with Elkington's overall desire—for business to play a "central role" in the development of more sustainable strategies for the world is not being challenged here, what is however curious to the author is the lack of a mention to governments, policy or even politics worldwide that could potentially interfere—or, ideally, work alongside, business in this endeavour towards sustainable development. In saying this, Elkington does, however, acknowledge the important influence of society. He acknowledges that unsurprisingly, a noteworthy trend in recent years was the "greening of the marketplace" as motivated by the manifestation of the "green consumer" (1994, 92). Whilst it had been previously presumed that consumers were uninterested in environmental concerns, this degree of apathy was no longer being observed; Elkington also stated that this was a key observation to take into consideration, because ".citizens voters, consumers, employees, and so on." would be critical to any future global movement towards sustainable development (1994, 92). What is particularly curious about this statement is that Elkington has made a direct mention to "voters" here, however, similar to before, there is no subsequent mention to governments, policy or politics. To what extent then would Elkington support, or contest, as such, that the "political" plays an influential role on businesses and societies in their transition to becoming more *green?* As mentioned earlier, whilst a hardcopy of this study is not available within the author's accessible libraries in Australia, the study undertaken by the George H. Gallup International Institute in 1992, contained, even just within its abstract, the following statement concerning the results of their study: "Respondents tended to actively promote environmental protection in their consumer behaviour, political action, and group membership." (Popline—K4 Health 2016) Whilst the specifics of this mention would need further evaluation, given that at least some of the respondents in this study did make mention the need for

"political action", why have the political concerns of even Elkington's mention to the "green consumer" (1994, 92) gone unmentioned and unexplored? Even if businesses are sceptical on the capacity of political parties and policymakers to achieve any substantial progress in the areas of environmental concerns (or even sustainable development) this does not mean that members of a society, in question, do not expect their political leaders to take action on the matter. Further, and even more crucially, Elkington's article also refers back the Brundtland Report, a document overseen by, as mentioned earlier, the former Minister for the Environment and former Norway Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland. In her foreward to this report, Brundtland made the following observations (United Nations 1987):

> We live in an era in the history of nations when there is greater need than ever for co-ordinated political action and responsibility.

> After a decade and a half of a standstill or even deterioration in global co-operation, I believe the time has come for higher expectations, for common goals pursued together, for an increased political will to address our common future.

> We needed people with wide experience, and from all political fields, not only from environment or development and political disciplines, but from all areas of vital decision making that influence economic and social progress, nationally and internationally.

Brundtland, however, has not been the only one to emphasise the need to include politics into the mix of national and international decision-making. Aristides Katoppo, an Indonesian environmentalist, journalist and political activist, argued the following, which was also published within the Brundtland Report (United Nations 1987):

> I think this Commission should give attention on how to look into the question of more participation for those people who are the object of development. Their basic needs include the right to preserve their cultural identity, and their right not to be alienated from their own society, and their own community. So the point I want to make is that we cannot discuss environment or development without discussing political development. And you cannot eradicate poverty, at least not only by redistributing wealth or income, but there must be more redistribution of power.

At the core of understanding the role that politics plays in any given scenario is the necessity to understand the dynamics that power plays in any given situation. Any political scientist will assure of this. Importantly, though, and as also emphasised by Brundtland herself, with any issue of power comes with it the issue of who to assign to deal with it. Lastly, and as also referenced within the Brundtland Report, is a quote by the speaker from the floor during a World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) Public Hearing on the 26 March 1985. They stated that (United Nations 1987):

> In the case of environmental problems, it is obvious that the problems cannot be solved by one group, one group working in separation. You cannot say because people are dying of poisoning, it is the Ministry of Health that will solve it. Or to say because it comes from factories, it is the Ministry of Industry. That is impossible.

All of the aforementioned statements are, arguably, quite powerful in their assertion for "political action", "political will" and "political disciplines", to be involved in national and international decision-making endeavours. This chapter supports and shares these very same assertions, acknowledging as well, just as Brundtland herself and these other contributors have, the need for a multitude of disciplines, including those from business and society, to contribute to crucial decision-making processes, and not just in the area of sustainable development, but especially so. Given the emphasis of the political, as well as society, within the Brundtland Report, it is, arguably, problematic for Elkington to not have acknowledged the same, alongside his reference to this very report, within his 1994 article. It becomes quite problematic to "pick-and-choose" which sectors or elements to take into consideration when sustainable development deserves no less than a multidisciplinary, multi-faceted, all-round approach. In saying this, it is also quite problematic in nature that the Bruntland Report makes fewer references to business than politics throughout the document.[4] For further evaluation, what has and has not been explored within this report should be further investigated in a further paper. As such, this issue of *collaboration* is not only an issue to be raised within the framework of the TBL, or even within Elkington's writing in isolation, as this is very possibly an issue endemic to both politics, business, society and perhaps even those organisations not nicely categorised in any of these, including the United Nations.

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In 1997, the release of Elkington's *Cannibals With Forks,* introduced the framework of the TBL. On its specific creation of the TBL, Elkington stated that (Elkington in Henriques and Richardson 2004, 1):

> …in 1994 we had been looking for a new language to express what we saw as an inevitable expansion of the environmental agenda that SustainAbility… had mainly focused upon to that point. We felt that the social and economic dimensions of the agenda—which had already been flagged in 1987s Brundtland Report (UNWCED, 1987)—would have to be addressed in a more integrated way if real environmental progress was to be made. Because SustainAbility mainly works, by choice, with business, we felt that the language would have to resonate with business brains.

As mentioned before, what is also curious about this statement, three years on after his previous article, is that, despite the Brundtland Report, to an extensive extent, acknowledging the role of politics, Elkington's mention of said report continues to avoid this fact. Elkington makes his stance clear though; with reference to a move towards a "global cultural revolution", he supported that "[b]usiness, much more than governments or non-governmental organizations, will be in the driving seat." (Elkington 1997, 3). Furthermore, Elkington supported that whilst there was an interest in the "central" position of governments, the imperative was to place more of a focus upon ".the emergence of a new breed of a

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[4]See United Nations. 1987. 'Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future'. Available Online: http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm.

'green capitalist'." (1997, ix-x) This notion also previous explored in an earlier collaboration with Julia Hailes, a colleague of Elkington's, when they created *The Green Consumer Guide* (1988). Elkington claimed that by supporting a change within our daily consumer choices, without even being consciously aware, that we could convey a commanding message to not only retailers but the entirety of the business world (1997, x).

Whilst the importance of reaching society and business with this guide goes very much undisputed, an unnerving question needs to be asked; why was it not a key aim of this guide to also reach politics and policymakers around the world as well? In saying this, later within *Cannibals With Forks,* Elkington does provide a clearer stance on his positioning concerning policymakers. He notes that whilst "[politicians count.short electoral timescales mean that they are often extremely short-sighted." (1997, 344) Elkington admits, however, that the core issues concerning sustainability are often asked within ".questions of power: who controls, who decides." (1997, 344) As such, he supports that the 'win-win-win' balance that his TBL framework requires, therefore, is this very discussion needing to combine considerations surrounding environmental and development concerns and in a way with which they are not both seen as one or the other, but rather "both/and" (1997, 344).

To achieve this, Elkington acknowledges that if concerns regarding sustainable development turn out to be accurate, that a new set of "leaders" will materialise, all of which will require a timely identification, as well as nurturing and backing as they manifest (1997, 344). These two comments are very interesting and insightful on the part of Elkington, especially as they are both somewhat removed from his previous statements on the role of policymakers and even the concept of power. Few would challenge his views with regards to politicians only operating in the timeframes awarded to them by the various electoral systems, and even fewer would challenge his degree of scepticism and cynicism over their capacities to lead, particularly in the area of sustainable development. In saying this, Elkington has acknowledged the influence that power has on the decision-making and planning process, and, not-to-mention, the high-likelihood of new leaders emerging to finally respond to the necessity of embracing sustainable development. Even if, as Elkington supports, these leaders require a degree of nurturing and support by businesses, and perhaps even society here as well, Elkington's TBL framework may be further encompassing of these challenges ahead if he also incorporated an element specifically acknowledging the role that these politicians, and politics, does in fact play.

2.4 'Perception Politics': The Fourth and Fifth 'P'?

So far, the aim of this chapter has not been formed to criticise Elkington's TBL framework or viewpoints on sustainable development, as they were expressed in his 1994 article and 1997 book, *Cannibals With Forks.* Instead, however, it supports the re-evaluation of this framework as was initially expressed in the mid-to-late

1990s, with the aim of considering an addition to the TBL, acknowledging in a more direct way the contribution to, and impact upon, by politics on this particular framework. If, as just previously explored, Elkington does acknowledge the impact that politics and politicians can have on power relations then surely this has awarded this group a greater *seat at the table,* cynicism aside? It would be foolish to presume that businesses and members of society would never conduct themselves in sceptical or cynical ways when it came to their embrace and implementation of sustainable development measures; as such, it seems problematic to exclude politics out of the 'People, Planet and Profits' aphorism, potentially on these grounds. Whilst only Elkington himself could really explain why politics was not given a greater role within the TBL framework during its initial conception, his insights into the roles of politics and business and particular, come across as businesses being vital in their leadership towards greater sustainable development (via their implementation of the TBL), with politics and politicians being influential on the process but not really needing too much acknowledgement of analysis on their roles. This chapter finds this alleged assertion problematic, prompting therefore a re-evaluation of this decision. Politics and politicians even start with the letter 'P', as such, whilst this is a quip and highly un-academic point of reasoning to make, the irony of it is far too good to also go unaddressed.

This chapter purports 'Perception Politics' instead of just 'Politics' as a way of emphasising the perceptive nature with which politics operates. Just adding 'Politics' to the mix, arguably, does not necessarily convey this idea *perception* idea immediately, and the need to understand politics within a perception lens is becoming a vital phenomenon for businesses and society to understand. In saying this, the notion that politics in many ways comes down to manners of *perception,* is in no way a *new* idea. This particular concept should continue to be explored in order to evolve with ever-changing political circumstances, however, what is crucial to understand about the concept of perception in the context of politics is that what society, businesses—and even politicians—think, feel and argue, does not need to have *truth* as its foundational base. What the "truth" actually is, at its fundamental core, can also be argued on a philosophical or even existential basis; however, when it comes to an area as specific as sustainable development, researchers may be quick to turn to scientific data supporting the ever-growing environmental concerns in relation to exploitation, climate change, renewable resources, to name but a few, as indicators of the "truth". The overwhelming consensus, worldwide, which should no longer need a supporting reference for validation, is that the environmental concerns that we are being confronted with are *measureable* and *quantifiable* factors. Where this becomes problematic, as explored earlier in the chapter, is when said measureable and quantifiable factors are identified to be measured optionally and via a qualitative basis. Al Gore's documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), even via its title alone, really speaks to the heart of this concern. The "truth", in the instance of sustainable development as this may not be the same for other areas for which this concept is applied, *should* be located within what research and science can be quantifiably measured and tested for reliance. Where the truth becomes hazy then for policies concerning sustainable

development is when politicians and political parties deem its application *optional* or to be promoted via a particular *lens* or *ideological viewpoint.* The truth is then transformed into a perception-based fact, as businesses and members of society have to work harder to ascertain the original truth, if they are able to, look past their own biases or judgements on the matter.

This all sounds very subjective and almost too philosophical in nature; however, Elkington, and especially those within the business community, need to keep in mind that if they are to reach and convince members of society to embrace and integrate more environmentally sustainable measures into their lives, they need to be able to identify the way with which politics can enhance or obscure society's capacity to determine the truth verse its perception. Consider as well, why would politicians and businesses invest into Public Relations (PR) or marketing and advertising strategists, or image consultants, or even advisers in and of themselves, if this concept of perception was not in fact, a vital variable for influential success?

Similar to the 'People' and 'Planet' elements of the '3P' aphorism, the concept of 'Perception Politics' does not necessarily have a clear quantitative measurement with which to track it. The challenge then becomes to create a platform with which to measure this suggested variable. For example, can we track the progress of Perception Politics by comparing the actions of politicians and political parties versus what they, or their parties, allege to achieve? At the very least, this could act as a benchmark to determine to what degree a particular politician and political party act after their words or various discourses. Alternatively, could we track the progress of Perception Politics via political engagement on the part of society? If it is in fact the voters who shape, at least some, of the policies that politicians and policymakers endeavour towards, can we gauge public opinion to determine where the next policy move will come from? Such political engagement, can, arguably, be measured in quantitative and qualitative means, e.g. voting turnouts and online interactions (for instance on social media) concerning politics. The online journal, *The Conversation,* released an article trying to understand this very phenomenon. The article stated (2016):

> We're quite accustomed to thinking that Australians are a deeply cynical, disillusioned bunch; that we are all switching off from politics; and that there is a deep rot setting into the fragile connections between our vital democratic institutions and the citizens they purport to represent.In order to find out how engaged (or disengaged) we are, we first need to tackle a tricky question: how would we tell?

Outside of an alleged "talk vs action" and engagement factor, what will ultimately allow, in particular businesses, to understand the powerful influence that perception has when utilised by the political sector? Perhaps in application, however, the parameters of this concept may become clearer.

2.5   Why Examine the Great Barrier Reef (GBR)

Environmentally, socially, politically and economically, for those businesses and members of society who have active interests in the Great Barrier Reef (GBR), the protection of this remarkable ecosystem is of enormous importance for all key groups involved. Some media outlets, in Australia and worldwide, almost daily, publish new and highly concerning articles detailing the latest scientific research regarding damage to the GBR, or the fears held by the scientific community on its survival into the future. Alongside a number of Australian news outlets, even *The Washington Post* (Mooney 2016) published a story with regards to the suggested death of certain parts of the reef. Considering the attention that this remarkable reef attracts, via tourism, businesses and even scientifically, its survival is dependent on what policies are enforced to not only protect what's left of the GBR, but to sustain its survival as long as possible into the future.

The GBR is located "…south from the northern tip of Queensland in north-eastern Australia to just north of Bundaberg." (GBRMPA 2016) According to the Australian Government's Department of the Environment and Energy (2016c), the GBR ".attracts more than 1.6 million visitors each year, contributes more than \$5 billion to the Australian economy, and generates about 63,000 jobs." (Australian Government—Department of the Environment and Energy 2016c) The GBR has also been labelled as one of the world's seven natural wonders for reasons including that it is ".the largest coral reef in the world.and.the only wonder of nature that may be.recognized from outer space." (Seven Natural Wonders 2014) Further, and quite remarkably, within the GBR can be found (GBRMPA 2016):

> …600 types of soft and hard corals, more than 100 species of jellyfish, 3000 varieties of molluscs, 500 species of worms, 1625 types of fish, 133 varieties of sharks and rays, and more than 30 species of whales and dolphins.Within this vast expanse are a unique range of ecological communities, habitats and species—all of which make the Reef one of the most complex ecosystems in the world.

To Australia, the GBR is not just a natural wonder, but also an important symbol of the nation state's willingness to preserve its landscape's natural beauty. In 1981, the GBR was placed on the World Heritage List (Australian Government—Department of the Environment and Energy 2016b) and Australia's National Heritage List in 2007 (Australian Government—Department of the Environment and Energy 2016c). Specifically, however, the coral reefs "…only comprise about seven per cent of the Marine Park and the World Heritage Area." (GBRMPA 2016) Despite this, the Australian Government, irrespective of who is in power at the time, is expected, by its society and businesses, as well as those interested in the reef externally, to implement sustainable measures to protect the GBR. Whilst the GBR's World Heritage Listing has been threatened to be labelled as "in danger", in 2015 the World Heritage Committee came to the following conclusion (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 2015):

Considering that the first set of targets of the [Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan—2050 LTSP] are expected to be reached by 2020, it is recommended that the World Heritage Committee requests a report on the state of conservation of the property for review at its 44th session in 2020. The report should detail the results achieved for each target and link progress to the scientific findings of the anticipated 2019 GBR Outlook. It is essential that the 2050 LTSP delivers its anticipated results in order to confirm that the property does not face ascertained or potential danger to its [Outstanding Universal Value OUV].

In response to this recommendation, a joint media release by the then Hon. Greg Hunt, MP Federal Minister for the Environment (Liberal-National Coalition), the Hon. Jackie Trad (Australian Labor Party), MP Deputy Premier of Queensland and the Hon. Dr Steven Miles, MP Queensland Minister for the Environment, (Australian Labor Party), was announced, including the below statements (Hunt, G., Trad, J. and Miles, S. 2015):

Australia and Queensland strongly welcome the final and unanimous decision of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee to not place the Great Barrier Reef on its world heritage in-danger list.In fact, all references to 'in-danger' have been completely removed. The world's umpire has declared the Great Barrier Reef is not in danger.

Whilst it is tempting to analyse the above statements as misrepresenting *exactly* what this recommendation by UNESCO had said, what these MPs' technically argued was correct; the "in-danger" listing was removed, however, what the MPs' did not mention was that if adequate measures were not taken to ensure—as best as possible—the ongoing survival of the GBR, that this danger-listing could be officially instated. Further, the MPs' overwhelmingly positive portrayal of this recommendation, is in keeping, to an extent, with the nature of the original report by UNESCO, however, the report also emphasised the highly concerning evidence that it had also been presented with by the Australian government. It explained that:

The Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2014 (2014 GBR Outlook Report) and the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan (2050 LTSP) were submitted… The 2014 GBR Outlook Report concludes that climate change, poor water quality from land-based run off, impacts from coastal development and some remaining impacts of fishing are the major threats to the property's future health.The report further concludes that the overall outlook for the Great Barrier Reef is "poor, has worsened since 2009 and is expected to further deteriorate in the future" and that substantial reductions of pressures are required to prevent the projected declines and improve the property's capacity to recover from the effects of climate change.

The consequence of the aforementioned press release is that whilst it is somewhat in keeping with the tone and recommendation of UNESCO's report, the press release, on the part of those mentioned MPs, did not convey what the report had explored and suggested in completion. This, in and of itself, gives insight into the nature with which politics can be used to encourage a certain perception; to members of society, even businesses themselves, this press release demonstrates nothing but praise and trust in the Australian Government's handling of the GBR at the time. What the press release did not include was any mention to the scientifically backed concerns held by not only UNESCO, but also the Australian Government itself, given that it had also provided this Committee with some of the

very facts used to justify its listing recommendation for the GBR. Provided with some of the scientific findings, the overarching truth used to justify this listing and future planning for the GBR, members of society and businesses in this matter were not presented with the *whole* truth in order to really determine if adequate investments and responses were being undertaken to protect the GBR. Ultimately, whilst this listing may be seen as nothing more than a symbolic gesture, the removal of said gesture would be a monumental setback in Australia's capacity to demonstrate its willingness to protect its natural landscape, which, horrifyingly enough, has already come under an understandable amount of criticism to date. Furthermore, without the role of Australian Government here, a large amount of possible investment into protecting the GBR would disappear, and in order for the GBR to be fully protected under any sustainable development measures, businesses and society cannot ignore the vital impact that policymakers can have on this natural wonder, considering as well the acknowledgement that policymakers have had on the need to work alongside society and businesses to protect the GBR.

2.6   In Greater Detail: Policy Responses to the GBR—the Australian Liberal Party (Liberal-National Coalition, LNC)

In addition to the above statements included from the provided press release, the following statements were also included (Hunt, G., Trad, J. and Miles, S. 2015):

(1) [The GBR is] Australia's greatest natural icon and remains the world's Great Barrier Reef.
(2) We have already begun implementing our Reef 2050 Plan. It is supported by an Independent Expert Panel, chaired by Australia's chief scientist, and a Reef Advisory Panel chaired by the Chairman of the Australian Institute of Marine Science—a former Governor of Queensland and Australian Ambassador for the Environment. Civil society will have an ongoing role on the Advisory Panel.
(3) [The future protection of the Reef]… is backed by substantial financial resources with over $2 billion dollars projected to be invested in managing and protecting the reef over the coming decade. The Investment Baseline released today illustrates the substantial investment coming from all tiers of government and the private and philanthropic sectors—with over $485 million in 2014/15 alone.

Each of these statements suggest a particular position as held by the LNC with regards to the GBR. The first statement asserts that the GBR is seen as Australia's "greatest national icon", by the LNC at the very least, suggesting its vital inclusion within the nation state's public policy. To what extent the inclusion of the GBR into public policy measures are in fact successful, is a whole other matter in and of itself. The second statement emphasises that not only have public policy measures been

suggested, they have also since been implemented, and are also being overseen by an alleged external panel, suggesting the LNC's willingness to collaborate with other concerned parties. This second statement also acknowledges the desire for civil society to contribute to this "Advisory Panel", however, no further details are provided on how this would be the case. The final statement, includes a mention to the "private" (business) as well as "philanthropic" sector (arguably a group representing the combined interests of business and society), investing into ongoing protection of the GBR; however, no further mention of any other kind of collaboration with these sectors in included. On the one hand, this statement alleges a kind of collaboration with businesses and society in the journey towards protecting the GBR, however, on the other hand, the specifics of this collaboration have not been thoroughly detailed and require additional investigation to determine if said *teamwork* has actually been successfully implemented.

Whilst the Australian Labor Party and The Greens party, the two other key political parties in Australia, have, on their websites, specifically designated links to their proposed policies to protect the GBR, considering that the Liberal Party of Australia currently comprise the federal government, and are currently overseeing their own specific policy to protect the GBR, it was assessed that their achievements, or lack therof on this front, be assessed within the scope of this chapter. When looking at the policy responses/promises to protect the GBR on the part of the Liberal Party of Australia, also known as the Liberal-National Coalition (LNC), two key questions were considered:

(1) Based on the party's website, what policy responses/promises have been put forth and/or already implemented to address issues concerning the longevity of the GBR? Even if in rhetoric alone, do these policy responses/promises have the potential for impact upon the GBR in terms of its sustainable development?

(2) Based on the party's website, what policy responses/promises have been put forth and/or already implemented which directly note a desire for direct collaboration with businesses and society to address issues concerning the sustainable development of the GBR?

The website for the Liberal Party of Australia, contains a specified, dedicated link under the tab "Our Plan", phrased simply as: "Environment" (Liberal Party of Australia 2016a). Clicking on this link leads to a web page detailing a number of key points proposed to protect the environment in general on a variety of fronts, including environmental projects to climate change. The first point on the list, however, is 'Protecting the Great Barrier Reef'. The GBR's first position on this list may infer something about its priority as a policy concern, however, this is too subjective a point to make without further evidence. Problematically, however, there is not, as of the date the website was viewed,[5] however, a link on this page that explores in specific, minute detail the outlined 'Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan'. Ideally, businesses and members of society should not need to

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[5] 16 September 2016. See also final reference list for this source.

actively search for the specific details of policies external to the LNC's party website. What is provided on the website, however, under the title of 'Protecting the Great Barrier Reef' (Liberal Party of Australia 2016b), the Liberal Party allege that the ".Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan is the most comprehensive plan ever developed to protect the Great Barrier Reef for future generations." To what extent this is actually the case would be difficult to determine if one wasn't an expert in the measures needed to protect the GBR to begin with. Financially speaking, the Liberal Party have projected $2 billion of investment funds, including a ".$1 billion Reef Fund focussed on the two biggest threats facing the Great Barrier Reef: climate change and improving water quality." (Liberal Party of Australia 2016b) In addition, the Reef Fund is again referred to, with an explanation that it ".will mobilise up to $1 billion in investment finance over 10 years for clean energy projects that help tackle these two key threats." (Liberal Party of Australia 2016b) What is curious about this second statement is that it is not clear if this mention to $1 billion here is in addition to the first mention, or an extended explanation on the first. Given that both statements refer to tackling climate change and water quality, it's difficult to determine how much money is actually being discussed here. Further, the Reef Fund receives a third mention, emphasising that it ".builds on the $210 million Reef Trust." (Liberal Party of Australia 2016b) what is even more unclear here is whether or not this $210 million was originally included in the initially alleged $2 billion, or whether this is in addition to the alleged $2 billion of investment. This lack of clarity is concerning because, even put simply, the funds are not quite matching up. If more than $2 billion of investment was being put into the GBR, surely the tag line for the LNC would be "more than $2 billion" rather than simply "$2 billion is being invested." (Liberal Party of Australia 2016b) Ultimately, governments thrive on bragging about their intended investment amounts and even if the investment into the GBR was only slightly above the alleged $2 billion, it would be expected that the LNC, or any other political party for that matter, would make that fact known. What can only comfortably be accounted for here then is a little over $1.2 billion of investment into the GBR on the part of the LNC, according to what has been presented on this particular website.

An additional search did yield a document, however, that provided more specific details on *The Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan* In its Foreword, it emphasises that the Plan "…is based on science and the lessons learnt from managing the Reef over the past four decades." (Australian Government/ Queensland Government 2015, iii). In saying this, the expectation of this Plan, therefore, will be for the overwhelming scientific consensus to support its findings, depending of course *who's* science is being utilised and under what methodological and testing conditions. This chapter cannot attest to the appropriateness of the experts needed to support this claim, but rather, suggests that those relevant experts in the field support or attest to the appropriateness of this statement. In addition, also in the Foreword, and in keeping with previous statements made by the aforementioned press release on the GBR's World Heritage listing, is the following assertion that (Australian Government/Queensland Government 2015, iv):

> In developing the Plan, we acknowledge the significant contributions of Traditional Owners, environmental groups, community organisations, peak industry groups, scientists and other interested people who committed time and effort as members of the Partnership Group and during stakeholder consultation.

Lastly, and as also situated Foreword, are a number of given financial figures, that are, allegedly, to give insight into how the $2 billion will be comprised. It includes the following figures (Australian Government/Queensland Government 2015, iii):

> …$200 million over five years.the new $40 million Reef Trust.In addition to maintaining its $35 million a year expenditure.the Queensland Government has committed an additional $100 million over five years.Government investment in the Reef over the next 10 years is projected to be more than $2 billion.

The figures above equate to a total of $375 million, with the final statement alleging that this figure will amount to $2 billion over ten years. Whilst this figure may very well be reached, less than 20 percent has been accounted for out of this alleged $2 billion figure. Further, the mention to the Reef Trust is not in keeping with the 210 million provided earlier in accordance with the Liberal Party's website. Upon reviewing the remainder of the report, there is no designated section for which a clear and precise breakdown of even just an estimate of where and how this alleged $2 billion will come from. Further, whilst financial figures are scattered throughout the report, it is difficult to determine what exactly has been invested and what investments remain pending. Throughout the document can be found multiple tables that explain, in great detail, specific plans for protecting the GBR from "Incorporating] and prioritising] Traditional Owners' planning into existing and future ecosystem policy and programs." figures (Australian Government/Queensland Government 2015, 37) to specific measures to improve sustainability, such as by "Supporting] the uptake of sustainable practices by Reef-dependent and Reef-associated industries to limit impacts on the Reef's Outstanding Universal Value." (Australian Government/Queensland Government 2015, 47) Whilst these goals within this Plan may very well be the most comprehensive of the time, the Plan's overall financial projections are not readily feasible upon initial assessment. This chapter does not wish to purport any kind of misconception or wrongdoing on the part of the Liberal Party, but rather, suggest that this report be reassessed in terms of the financial figures it claims to project with regards to the GBR. If the Australian Government expects business and society to collaborate with its endeavour in protecting the GBR, then the figures it provides to these sectors, at the very least, need to be accessible and not so easily contested.

Referring back to Elkington and his TBL framework, he is correct in his assertion that there are problems in working with politicians, or those linked to the politics sector, when it comes to implementing greater strategies to ensure sustainable development into the future. The brief assessment of the Liberal Party's Plan to protect the GBR demonstrates this, considering that if the financial figures can be so easily contested, can the goals themselves be any more relied upon? The Liberal Party's conveyed perception of this plan, and their willingness to protect

and preserve the GBR, seems readily achievable and well thought-out; their Plan, on the other hand does not clearly support this same enthusiasm, presenting us with an interesting, yet highly consequential, instance of Perception Politics at play, one that society, business and, importantly, the natural environment, won't be able to afford to ignore. Until the Australian Government reports back to UNESCO in 2017, further information on the development and success of the Plan may not be known until then. Despite these issues, however, what needs to be emphasised is a greater collaboration between all of these sectors, even if business needs to lead the way in jump-starting a more viable, working-relationship, noting that Perception Politics will always be at play, and there will always be a number of real and *perceived* hurdles for society, business and the natural environment to navigate through.

2.7   Conclusion

Whilst in the mid-1990s Elkington acknowledged that a significant number of countries were far away from demonstrating any clear dedication to the need for sustainable development (1994, 91), sadly, 10 years on, this is still arguably the case considering a general global malaise towards climate change, economic stability and forethought for future generations. In saying this, it would be a premature presumption to simply state that the TBL or, endeavours towards a balanced '3P' framework, are too idealistic in their efforts. This is a common misconception of the current state of world affairs with which idealism automatically equates to the carrot that the donkey will never reach. This is not to suggest though that the idealism with which the TBL advocate should not be critically analysed, but rather, analysed in terms of what it can currently offer, and where it could be improved to better facilitate the developing needs and concerns of sustainable development. Whilst this chapter has supported the inclusion of society, business and politics into the decision-making process for sustainable development, it also acknowledges the roles that other organisations, such as the United Nations and its various committees, have also had on the journey towards sustainable development, with particular emphasis on the Brundtland Report (1987). Whilst organisations like the United Nations may also warrant a place in the TBL framework, none are more deserving than the role of politics considering the power that it undeniably has over the world's journey towards sustainable development.

What the example of the GBR demonstrates is that whilst political parties and policymakers may acknowledge the role that business and society play in the protection of the natural environment, their execution of said policies do not necessarily enforce the degree of confidence on the part of other sectors that, in an ideal world, would go without saying. On the other hand, the business and society sectors need to ensure that they are also taking responsibility for their engagement with not only the GBR, but also the policies and policymakers responsible for its protection at the time. Given the electoral cycle in Australia, and potential changes between

political parties (and their leaders) this could be a difficult endeavour; however, there currently remains no alternate option. The Australian Government is largely responsible for the amount of funding awarded to the protection of the GBR, even if its figures do not quite add up, and this natural environment cannot afford a lack of proper protection and planning for its sustainable development.

Regardless of whether one is a fan or critic of the TBL, never has the journey towards sustainable development been more important, because never has the impact of politics and policy on this journey been so treacherous. Consider, therefore, the following: 'People', 'Planet', 'Profits', 'Perception Politics', the Five P's and the Quintuple Bottom Line (QBL); it has a similar ring to its former, with the added acknowledgement of politics and the power of perception.

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