A WEB EXAMINATION OF CSR ENGAGEMENT BY GEOGRAPHICALLY BOUNDED CREDITS UNIONS IN AUSTRALIA

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ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility Reporting (CSR Reporting) is the term used to represent the process of recording and communicating the social and environmental impacts resulting from the organisation's economic actions, along with the financial performance, to particular interest groups in society (Gray, Owen, & Maunders, 1987; Mathews, 1985).

An assumption is made that a CSR strategy has been adopted by Credit Unions by virtue of the implicit goals of the credit union movement. The project discussed in this paper reports on trends over the past five years, post the global financial crisis, in respect to the adoption and reporting within the context of a sample of geographical focused credit unions.

INTRODUCTION

There is no one, commonly accepted mechanism to report on the social and environmental impacts of an organisation, and what is evident in the approaches is that there are significant overlaps in the categories of information to be included. Further, the extent of information is not restricted to measures of output, but also requires reporting on the processes by which the decision to adopt a policy is made and implemented.

Credit unions have clearly defined social goals embedded into the fabric of their creation. Despite the explicit requirement to ensure decision making recognises the interests of both members and the wider community, there is no uniform framework to ensure that impacts on the community are integrated into the decision-making process and, in particular, there is no framework whereby the impacts of decisions made by credit unions on the community are reported.

The literature review established that there exists a variety of reporting practices, but no clear consensus as to how reporting should be enacted. For the purposes of this paper, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is used as the umbrella term to represent all actions undertaken and reported which seek to capture all the dimensions of a firm's activities. The term sustainability is used to represent the goal of an organisation to operate financially with minimal detrimental impact on society and the environment. This goal is thus the hoped-for consequence of the actions captured under the concept of CSR. Corporate Social Responsibility Reporting (CSR Reporting) is the term used to represent the process of recording and communicating the social and environmental impacts resulting from the organisation's economic actions, along with the financial performance, to particular interest groups in society (Gray, et al., 1987; Mathews, 1985).

It is this latter dimension that is the particular focus of this paper. The assumption is made that a CSR strategy has been adopted by virtue of the implicit goals of credit unions, and the project seeks to examine trends over the past five years post the global financial crisis in respect to the adoption and reporting within the context of geographical focused credit unions. Regionally based credit unions provide an avenue to explore direct links to the communities within which they operate.

CSR REPORTING

CSR Reporting is the process of communicating the internal and external social and environmental effects of the organisation's economic actions to particular interest groups in society at large (Gray, et al., 1987; Mathews, 1985). Unerman (2007, p. 100) strongly advocates the importance of the communication aspects of the above definition of CSR:

> "If we are to achieve an improvement in the sustainability of business then stakeholder dialogue mechanisms which give greater empowerment to a broad range of stakeholders will need to be developed and employed".

There is an array of terms in the literature used to describe the activities and the reports used by firms to reflect the adoption of a CSR strategy. The common element, however, is that each term consists of "statements about the extent to which corporations are reducing (or increasing) the options available to future generations" (Gray, Bebbington, & Walters, 1993, p. 291).

Despite the complexity of measurement and the findings in Frost *et al*. (2005), organisations are increasingly pressured to include disclosures of a social and environmental nature, as well as financial reports (Ballou, Heitger, & Landes, 2006). Demand for information in annual financial reports (Hackston & Milne, 1996) or in other corporate reports has become as necessary as the need to meet strategic business objectives (Ballou, et al., 2006).

Two clear approaches are evident in the activities captured, and thus reported, by virtue of the various terms. One approach focuses on the social dimensions, including environmental impacts, but excludes the financial performance of the organisation. Alternatively, a broader view is adopted that incorporates all three aspects of performance – social, environmental and financial performance. Also evident is that increasingly reports are being voluntarily prepared which detail large firms compliance with expectations of social and environmental in accordance with commonly adopted frameworks (KPMG, 2008).

SOCIAL PERFORMANCE AND GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS CREDIT UNIONS

Social performance dimensions seek to identify "socially relevant behaviour, the determination of those to whom the company is accountable for its social performance and the development of appropriate measures and reporting techniques" (Crowther, 2000, p. 20).

These social performance goals are considered to be more easily articulated by the organisation when the organisation has embedded links to the community. Such an immersion into the local community reflects an understanding of the community expectations and are articulated through management structures such as the Board of Directors whom are drawn from the geographic region that remains as the primary membership base. Industry or special interest based groups and geographically dispersed organisations in the credit union sector, while having the same social goals embedded in their organisational philosophies, do not have the same level of focus to a geographically defined community. Thus this paper concentrates on those organisations that have developed within a bounded geographic community.

Geographically based credit unions play an important role within the communities in which they are located. This responsibility is clearly articulated in the mission statement of the overarching credit union industry body, requiring these organisations to serve the community (Credit Union Foundation Australia, 2012). One would thus expect some report of performance against the goal and mission to be articulated.

WHAT ARE CREDIT UNIONS

While Credit Unions provide many of the same financial services that commercial banks provide, such as savings and cheque accounts, youth and senior accounts, loans and insurance, the focus of their mission is on serving the community in which they operate, whether it is a town or suburb, or a workplace or industry (WOCCU, 2012).

Three features typify credit unions – a democratic structure, service to members, and social goals. The democratic structure of the organisation is reflected in both its membership base and control. Membership is open to all within the common bond of association (in this paper geographic region) with equal rights to voting. Fundamental to membership, voting and elected office bearers is the requirement that there be no discrimination based on age, sex, religion, race, nationality or politics (WOCCU, 2012).

Service to members requires that activities should be directed to improving the economic and social well-being of all members. Members are encouraged to be ‘thrifty’, fostered by the provision of a fair interest rate on savings. Any surpluses arising from operations are applied for the benefit of all members, ensuring no member group is benefited to the detriment of another group. Critical to ensuring members’ services for the future is the acknowledged need to “build the financial strength, including resources and internal controls, that will ensure continued service to its members” (Australasian Mutuals Institute, 2007, p. 6).

Social goals are addressed in three ways – on-going education, co-operation among co-operatives, and social responsibility. The education of members and the public about the self-help principles of credit unions is the central theme of educational strategies. Such a strategy recognises the duality of social and economic characteristics through the encouragement of thrift and wise use of credit, along with the rights and responsibilities of members. The effectiveness of a co-operative group of credit unions at the national and international level is considered to provide the best means to achieve service and social goals enacted for the members and their communities (Australasian Mutuals Institute, 2007).

The remaining feature of social goals particularly encapsulates the role credit unions play in the broader community. Social responsibility captures themes around human and social development and social justice and weaves together the needs of members and the community. The Australasian Mutuals Institute (2007, p. 7) notes that “decisions should be taken with full regard for the interest of the broader community within which the credit union and its members reside”. The potential power to contribute to securing a sustainable future for regional communities by the adoption of social and environmental strategies was identified by Rogers and Ryan (2001). This observation provides an argument for the important role credit unions can play in geographically defined regions of Australia.

Three types of credit unions were identified as operating within Australia. The first group are those that have an industry base and operate nationally. Included in the second group are those that are non-industry specific, identifying instead with a geographically defined area but which have been amalgamated with other geographically based credit unions and are administered by a central board of directors, often from a metropolitan base. The final group are those credit unions that are geographically based, but with a local board of management. It is the third type that were the subject of interest in the current study.

Prior studies (see for example Hackston & Milne (1996) and Adams, Hill and Roberts (1998) examining the reporting of CSR have identified drivers of reporting to be the characteristics of a firm, in particular size and industry sector, A number of the studies indicated that the larger the firm, the more likely it was to report and to have a higher level of disclosure than a firm of a relatively smaller size. However, the dominant firms investigated were publicly listed, and often the larger of the publicly listed firms. Very little work has been undertaken which examines the characteristics and CSR reporting behaviours of small to medium scale organisations, or for organisations in sectors where profit is not the primary goal. For the selected group of credit unions, the stakeholders are generally contained within geographic boundaries and the credit unions maintain close community links and connections to the discrete stakeholder groups of individuals and organisations within their operating area.

FINANCIAL SECTOR REPORTING AND REGULATORY CHANGES

CSR Reporting, while not mandatory in Australia, is being adopted by Australian banks and credit unions. The approach commonly used in the commercial banking sector tends to be a formal statement included as part of the prescribed end of year reporting, with the key placement of comments in respect to social performance on the web-site of the organisation (McGrath, 2003), whilst the credit union sector adopts a less structured approach.

Few credit unions were reporting their social and environmental impacts utilising a comprehensive discrete social or sustainability report, instead preferring a less structured approach to reporting (McGrath, 2011). Those credit unions that did formally report tended to have an inclusive report, incorporating both social and financial information. However, all had a strong web presence. This trend continued over the timeframe of the study from 2003 to 2009 (McGrath, 2010). Credit unions have been well placed to respond to the perceived negative actions of commercial banks by moving into the gaps left by these actions, including regional bank closures (Decker, 2004). By nature of their underlying philosophy of serving the community, credit unions have integrated the extended notion of accountability that is largely yet to be embedded into commercial banks.

DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURE OF CREDIT UNIONS IN AUSTRALIA

Originating from the self help movement in eighteenth century England, the first member based organisation formed was a building society founded in Birmingham in 1775 (Australasian Mutuals Institute, 2007). The cooperative movement spread and was introduced into Australia by Kevin Yates who was exposed to the credit union movement during his air force training in Canada. In 1946 the first Australian credit union was established by Yates and a group of Catholic laymen (Australasian Mutuals Institute, 2007).

Strong foundations had been established by the mid 1950's with state-based associations formed to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and to monitor and inform the development of legislation impacting on the operations of the credit unions. A national body was established in the early 1990's known today as the Credit Union Services Corporation (Australia) Ltd (CUSCAL).

The credit union sector today is influenced and regulated by a number of key bodies, including CUSCAL (Figure 1). The organisations play two broad functions. Regulatory roles are provided by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) and the National Credit Union Association Inc. (NCUA). Operational and strategic support at a local and international level is provided by the World Council of Credit Unions Inc. (WOCCU), CUSCAL, Association of Building Societies & Credit Unions (ABACUS) and Credit Union Foundation Australia (CUFA).

Operationally, the WOCCU is the international advocate, providing a platform for knowledge exchange and a development agency for credit unions. The Australian member organisation is CUSCAL (WOCCU, 2007). CUSCAL adopts a partnering approach in its provision of wholesale and transactional banking services to credit unions (CUSCAL, 2006).

ABACUS is the industry body for Australian credit unions and mutual building societies. Working with an institutional membership of 150 (ABACUS, 2012), its role is to promote the role of mutuals, building societies and credit unions domestically.

CUFA is the development agency for the Australian Credit Union Movement. The Australian Credit Union Movement is part of a worldwide credit union movement, which is aligned under the International Credit Union Operating Principles. CUFA's primary function is to support Australian credit unions to achieve and promote the international principles of sustainable corporate, economic, social and environmental practice (Credit Union Foundation Australia, 2012). Internationally, CUFA plays a key role in the growth of community access to affordable financial services for developing nations in the Asia Pacific region. The support to credit unions is provided by a number of programs and services.

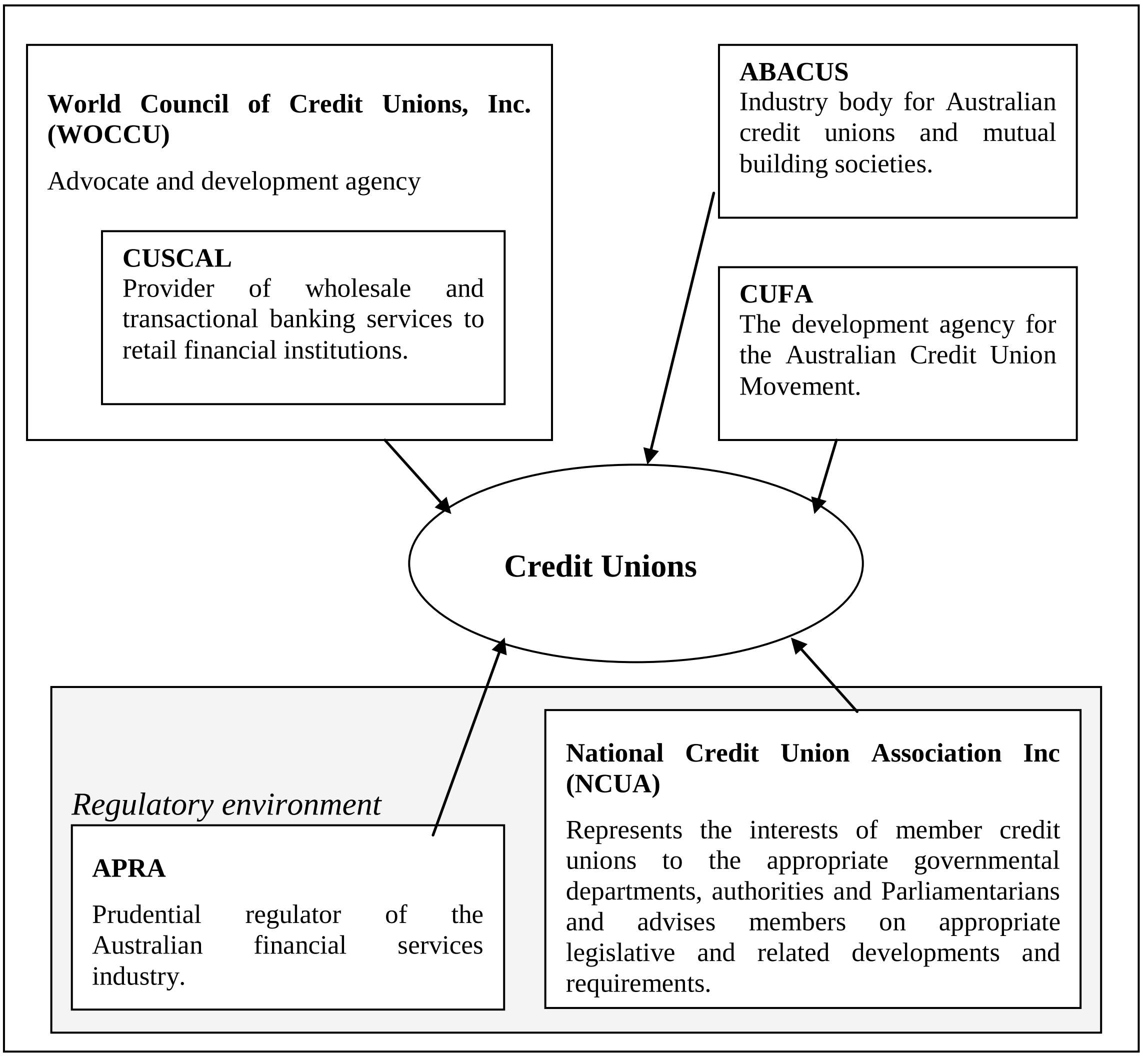

Figure 1: Structure of the Australian Credit Union Sector

These include: programs which seek to add value to their member communities by providing financial literacy and educational material for their use; developing access to affordable financial services for communities in poorer Asia Pacific nations; and supporting the credit union movement with direct and in-principle support of industry and professional development programs such as Development Education and Insight (Credit Union Foundation Australia, 2012).

The first of the regulatory support bodies is the National Credit Union Association Inc. (NCUA) which is responsible for representing the interests of its member credit unions to the appropriate governmental departments, authorities and members of parliament (National Credit Union Associations, nd). The organisation also has a communicative role taking on the task of advising members of appropriate legislative and related developments and requirements. Specific activities undertaken include provision of guidance and compliance manuals/procedures on all major legislative requirements; legislative monitoring; provision of key information through bulletins and briefings; lobby action; industry representation to government authorities/departments (for example to APRA and ASIC); treasury; public affairs and media relations activities; and providing access to an external dispute resolution scheme (National Credit Union Associations, nd).

The Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) is the prudential regulator of the Australian financial services industry. Its role is to oversee credit unions, banks, building societies, general insurance and reinsurance companies, life insurance, friendly societies, and most members of the superannuation industry (Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, nd). APRA is an industry funded organisation established on 1 July 1998 in order to bring together the prudential supervision functions of the Reserve Bank of Australia, the Insurance and Superannuation Commission and the Financial Institutions Scheme (Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, nd). The powers of APRA are drawn from five Commonwealth Acts – the *APRA Act 1998, Banking Act 1959*, *Financial Sector (Shareholdings) Act 1998, Financial Sector (Transfer of Business) Act 1999,* and *Financial Sector (Collection of Data) Act 2001*. The establishment of APRA was a response to the Wallis Report (Wallis, 1997) which recommended a single regulator across all classes of organisations that conducted the business of banking. Currently APRA supervises institutions holding approximately $3.4 trillion in assets for 21 million Australian depositors, policyholders and superannuation fund members (Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, nd).

REGULATION OF SECTOR

Responsibility for the regulation of credit unions was transferred from Australian states and territories to the Commonwealth on 1 July 1999. The regulatory authority for the sector now lies with the *Banking Act* and the *Corporations Act*. Significant changes have continued to be a feature of the sector. In recent times the driver of change has been corporate collapses in Australia and internationally and the focus on terrorism, in particular the financing of terrorist activities. This has led to the introduction of more expansive audit and disclosure requirements for commercial entities. Subsequent to the more general changes to the *Corporations Act* have been reforms within the banking sector with the introduction of Basel II and III and the *Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terrorism Financing Act*. The following sections briefly outline the changes that have occurred and the impacts on the credit union sector.

The Corporations Law Economic Reform Program (*Audit Reform and Corporate Disclosure Act)* was enacted in response to a review of corporate regulation and to the findings and recommendations of the Wallis Report. The Wallis Report into the structure and regulation of the Australian financial system found that it was fragmented and varied, driven by the particular industry sector and products being provided (Wallis, 1997). The major recommendations from the Report provide the underpinning objectives to the changes in corporate regulation with respect to the financial services sector. The four factors are a single licensing regime, standard competencies for financial sales, advice and dealings, consistent and comparable financial product disclosure, and a single authorisation procedure for financial exchanges and clearing and settlement facilities.

Implementation of the changes was introduced over a two-year transitional period commencing on 11 March 2002. While it is not the purpose of this overview to detail the implications of the changes, it is noted that during what has been previously identified as a growth period for disclosure of social and environmental reporting generally, that the credit union sector, primarily managed under voluntary directorships, was subject to significant changes. These changes included elements of licensing of the credit union as an Australian Financial Services Licensee, provision of appropriate training of staff and authorised representatives, establishment of internal and external dispute resolution processes, and disclosure and conduct requirements. The significance of the reforms did not just arise from the changes to regulations and how credit unions undertook compliance requirements, but also in the retraining and education of staff and directors and the subsequent impact on the prioritisation of non-mandatory activities such as reporting on social and environmental impacts.

BASEL II & III

Prudential supervision within the banking sector is centred on the identification and management of risk. The prudential regime adhered to in Australia is based upon the standards established by the Basel Committee of the Bank for International Settlements. The Basel Committee on banking supervision was established by the Central Bank Governors of the Group of Ten countries in 1975 (Bank for International Settlements, 2009). The Committee consisted of senior representatives of bank supervising authorities and central banks from Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the US.

The measure of prudential adequacy is based on the concept of the maintenance of sufficient capital as measured against risk-weighted assets, control of liquidity risk, credit risk, market risk and operations risk (Bank for International Settlements, 2006). The 1988 Basel Capital accord prescribed a minimum of 8% to be the benchmark of sufficient capital across all deposit taking institutions (Bank for International Settlements, 2006). To assist organisations to meet prudential requirements a set of 16 standards have been in place. The standards cover areas including, but not restricted to, capital adequacy, liquidity, credit quality, risk management across services offered, business continuity, audit and governance (Bank for International Settlements, 2006).

A review of the Basel Capital Accord led to the adoption of the Basel II Capital Accord on 1 January 2008 and Basel III currently being implemented. A significant change arising from the revision is the removal of the prescribed minimum holding level of capital of 8% (Basel Committee on Banking Supervision, 2009). This new approach is based on three pillars – a base for assessing minimum capital adequacy, a supervisory review process, and market monitoring. The first pillar has required the preparation of new prudential standards on credit risk and operational risk. The new standards were prepared with a view to providing a robust and relevant assessment of the risk of each individual institution. The second pillar requires institutions to have processes and plans in place for assessing and maintaining capital levels. The final pillar promotes a market based review by requiring appropriate disclosure to the market in order to create an environment of peer assessment of capital and risk profiles (Basel Committee on Banking Supervision, 2009).

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING AND COUNTER TERRORISM FINANCING ACT

Immediately prior to the introduction of Basel II in January 2008 the sector had seen the introduction of the *Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006* (AMLA). The introduction of the Act was staggered over two years, commencing 12 December 2006. The purpose of introducing legislation of this nature was to bring Australia into line with international best practices to deter money laundering activities and the financing of terrorism.

The significant difference between the previous *Financial Transaction Reports Act 1988* (FTRA) and the new AMLA lies in the focus of the legislation. The FTRA imposed regulations on particular types of institutions whereas the AMLA regulates particular types of activities. Thus the AMLA captures a larger range of institutions. The core obligations arising from the AMLA include verifying customers' identity, reporting suspicious matters and high value transactions, maintaining internal processes to identify and adhere to anti-money laundering and counter terrorism financing, and to produce and retain appropriate records.

IMPACTS ON CREDIT UNIONS

The enacting of changes to the *Corporations Act*, and the introduction of Basel II and III and the AMLA have had implications for the operation and management of credit unions. As could be expected, these changes have required the need for modification to systems and processes, education of staff and directors, and alteration to reporting practices. Credit unions have limited resources and rely on members to volunteer for positions on their Boards of Directors. The implication of enacting the new legislative requirements in a resource restricted environment is a need to prioritise actions. While there has been a move towards greater reporting of social and environmental impacts in the banking and finance sector, and generally across organisations, the pressure of enacting statutory changes would take priority over non-mandatory reporting practices. The impact of the additional regulatory impost have yet to be examined. One could expect that the revision and subsequent adoption of this new approach to prudential supervision has had an impost on entity resources. This would include additional time devoted to regulatory requirements to be provided by the voluntary directors of institutions in the credit union sector in order to gain an understanding of these modifications and for preparation to implement these changes. Specifically this paper reports on trends over the past five years, post the global financial crisis and enactment of regulatory changes, in respect to the adoption and reporting within the context of geographical focused credit unions.

METHODOLOGY

In exploring the development of social and environmental reporting activities in the credit union sector in Australia, the relationships of the various stakeholders to the organisation and the sector, such as members, suppliers, community are acknowledged.

In this paper the findings of the study reflect an analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. The decision to examine the issue using both qualitative and quantitative approaches stems, in part, from the complexity of the social interactions which are an explicit dimension of the social and environmental strategy which calls for organisations to act within community's expectations (Deegan, 1999). The nature of qualitative research derives from the researcher being intrigued by the complexity of social interactions and this takes the researcher into the natural settings of organisations, rather than laboratories, and further fosters the use of multiple methods for exploring a topic (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 2).

Marshall and Rossman (2006) argue that qualitative research has value, particularly in five domains of which two are relevant to this study. The fourth circumstance identified by Marshal and Rosssman (2006), where qualitative methods are useful, is when a study seeks to explore where and why policy and local knowledge and practices are at odds with each other. Despite the literature indicating a growth in the reporting of social and environmental information, the development of some reporting formats, and a clear demand for information about social and environmental impacts, the practice at the credit union level does not indicate the cohesive development of a reporting framework within the sector. The final situation, applicable to the case in this project, is where research has informal and unstructured linkages and processes in organisations and thus does not lend itself to experimentation for practical or ethical reasons (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Three distinct strategies are identified for designing qualitative research projects – those strategies that focus on individual lived experiences, those that focus on a group or society, and those with a focus on language (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Studies focusing on the individual’s lived experience typically rely on in-depth interview strategies, while those seeking to focus on society, be it in a group, program or organisational setting, typically adopt a case study approach, and studies focusing on language or communication usually require the involvement of microanalysis or textual analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 55). The research presented in this paper is focused on society and the expectations of members concerning the reporting of CSR and thus a case study approach examining the textual reporting was deemed appropriate.

Irrespective of the label, a key characteristic of the case study/field work approach is that, unlike purely survey or experimental work, the subject matter is studied within its natural environment (Yin, 1989). Consequently, the researcher has a greater depth of understanding as a result of increased time spent within the environment and with respondents (Punch, 2005; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Yin, 1989). This greater depth of understanding arises from the multiple sources and types of data collected, providing a wider perspective, having the additional benefit of overcoming potential limitations of specific data collection and analysis techniques.

Case studies allow the selection of a case or cases to illustrate an issue and to analytically study the issue in detail and in context (Neuman, 2003; Yin, 1989). In undertaking case study research two approaches are commonly found. The first involves a single case study and the second, multiple case studies (Punch, 2005). Single case study approaches can be categorised as ‘intrinsic’, where the research aims to better understand a particular case, or ‘instrumental’ when the purpose is to study an issue or theory and the particular case can provide insight (Punch, 2005). The second approach aims to extend knowledge of an issue or theory, but in this approach the case study plays an instrumental role and the focus moves across other cases. The second approach was adopted for this study. Given the absence of a universally accepted model to report CSR, complicated by the multitude of drivers for reporting, further research adopting the case study approach had clear potential to enhance the understanding of what is both possible and desirable for business adoption.

Document analysis of print materials from the case study organisation, websites of the organisation and regulatory bodies in the credit union sector was undertaken. The documents included published financial and other reports, regulatory documents, other publicly available information including newsletters and websites. Thematic analysis of the documents was used to draw out matters relevant to the study. The purpose was to gain an understanding of the stage of development, or lack of development or acknowledgement of CSR in the case study credit unions.

The web pages, reports and other documents were analysed using content analysis, a technique for examining written material objectively and systematically (Liu & Chen, 2005) and considered to be useful for exploring and explaining research (Neuman, 2003). The content analysis technique identified common themes in the understanding of social and environmental impacts, methods of current reporting, categories to be reported, and the effectiveness of the proposed model to meet the needs of the organisation to report. A phrase (rather than a word) was used as the unit of analysis for the purposes of the content analysis in order to identify themes and to best capture the concepts of CSR.

CSR is a multidimensional construct with an array of terms used to define the concept. As the construct does not have a universal definition, it was important to consider an array of terms and phrases that could be used by participants from a diverse knowledge base. Thus, in the analysis of the transcripts, a phrase was chosen as the unit of measure. A phrase or sentence rather than a single word has also been adopted in other studies to ensure depth of understanding (Hackston & Milne, 1996).

For this paper a subset of credit unions in Australia was examined. Using the ABACUS list of credit unions (ABACUS, 2012) a set of credit unions was drawn from within New South Wales (81), a state within Australia that expands had two features, it is one of the largest in land area as well as one of the largest in terms of population. Credit unions were then identified which satisfied the criteria of being regionally based and had publically available annual reports. This reduced the sample to 12 credit unions (see Table 1).

FINDINGS

The websites of the geographically based credit unions were examined and the annual reports, where available, from 2008 to 2012 were examined. While financial reports were available no credit union published a discrete CSR report. A ‘discrete report’ was defined as either a stand-alone report. Paragraphs devoted to issues concerning CSR included in sections of the annual report, such as the report prepared by the CEO or Chairman, were not considered to be a discrete report.

Further as can be noted in Table 1 none of the examined organisations had a section or indeed more than a passing mention of CSR strategies. Governance sections were contained to reporting only on the finance and organisation structure as required by APRA prudential standard APS S10. The majority of the information contained in the annual reports pertained to notes supporting the accounts. Two credit unions provided a list of organisations who received financial support through philanthropic foundations of the individual credit union, however only one consistently presented this information in the annual report.

	Year	Total information pages	Highlights/Introduction	Director reports	Financial statements, reports & auditor reports	Financial notes	Governance	Social/Environment	Product & service information	Other
A	2012	48	-	11%	11%	32%	5%	-	-	-
	2011	45	-	9%	12%	43%	5%	-	-	-
	2010	46	-	11%	11%	45%	5%	-	-	-
	2009	50	-	11%	12%	49%	5%	-	-	-
	2008	50	-	11%	12%	49%	5%	-	-	-
B	2012	66	-	8%	11%	83%	-	-	-	-
	2011	64	-	8%	17%	74%	-	-	-	-
	2010	61	-	8%	11%	75%	-	-	-	-
	2009	60	-	8%	17%	68%	-	-	-	-
	2008	37	-	6%	11%	38%	-	-	-	2%
C	2012	67	-	12%	11%	74%	6%	-	-	-
	2011	65	-	12%	9%	71%	8%	-	-	-
	2010	62	-	12%	11%	72%	-	-	-	-
	2009	53	-	9%	11%	62%	-	-	-	-
	2008	51	-	11%	11%	57%	-	-	-	-
D	2012	47	-	11%	11%	49%	-	-	-	2%
	2011	44	-	11%	11%	45%	-	-	-	2%
	2010	45	-	11%	11%	46%	-	-	-	2%

	2009	43	-	11%	11%	43%	-	-	-	2%
E	2012	48	-	6%	9%	58%	-	-	-	-
	2011	47	-	6%	8%	58%	-	-	-	-
	2010	46	-	3%	9%	58%	-	-	-	-
	2009	46	-	5%	8%	58%	-	-	-	-
	2008	52	-	5%	8%	68%	-	-	-	-
F	2012	61	5%	14%	9%	65%	2%	-	-	-
	2011	57	5%	11%	9%	62%	2%	-	-	-
	2010	61	5%	12%	9%	66%	2%	-	-	-
	2009	60	5%	12%	11%	62%	3%	-	-	-
	2008	70	5%	12%	11%	72%	8%	-	-	-
G	2012	40	2%	11%	5%	43%	-	-	-	2%
H	2012	44	3%	11%	9%	45%	-	-	-	-
	2011	42	-	6%	9%	49%	-	-	-	-
	2010	45	3%	6%	12%	48%	-	-	-	-
	2009	45	3%	6%	11%	49%	-	-	-	-
	2008	45	3%	8%	20%	38%	-	-	-	
I	2012	63	5%	9%	9%	68%	5%	-	-	2%
	2011	64	3%	9%	9%	71%	5%	-	-	2%
	2010	66	6%	25%	12%	54%	5%	-	-	-
	2009	59	5%	9%	11%	63%	3%	-	-	-
	2008	46	3%	9%	11%	45%	3%	-	-	-
J	2012	49	3%	8%	9%	55%	-	-	-	-
	2011	60	3%	11%	9%	69%	-	-	-	-
K	2012	64	-	9%	11%	78%	-	-	-	-
L	2012	47	-	14%	8%	51%	-	-	-	-
	2011	45	-	11%	8%	51%	-	-	-	-
	2010	51	-	15%	9%	54%	-	-	-	-

	2009	60	-	8%	9%	75%	-	-	-	-

Table 1: Information categories contained within annual reports as percentage of total pages

Where an Introduction of Highlight section was included there was a short section referring to activities within the community. Again this was in respect to philanthropic support to local community and sporting organisations.

An examination of the website revealed a consistent provision of information via a devoted web page or integrated into a periodic newsletter for all but one of the credit unions. The nature of the information was predominantly in respect to activities of 'foundations' established to administer grants to community and community groups. Three credit unions also provided use of a marquee for community and sporting days.

The value of the philanthropic support was seldom broken down, rather showing a preference for a total figure. This was not expressed as a proportion of the profit. No credit union included returns to members of benefits such as offset to account or transaction fees which are a feature of credit unions through the mutuality principle.

It was also noted when extracting the sample of credit unions that there had been a significant reduction in the number of geographical based credit unions with eight having ceased or merged since 2007. This is a significant proportion of this subset of credit unions.

CONCLUSION

The study reported in this paper found that there was not a significant increased reporting of CSR within this subset of the credit union movement. Based on annual reports the focus has been on satisfying regulatory requirements despite credit unions having a multiple goals that include financial and community benefits. This leads to a question of the role that Credit Unions play within society and their relevance in a developed economy such as Australia.

It is acknowledged that the findings are limited by the availability of data, the search skills of the researcher and the search tools within the individual credit unions. Further they only represent a sample of geographically based credit unions in Australia. Further research which examines a larger set of credit unions and which seeks greater depth of understanding from the perspective of the management and directors of credit unions is to be pursued. This future research will seek to explore the views of the management and directors of the relevance of the social goals as set out in the mission of Credit Unions in the contemporary Australia financial sector.

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