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POLITICISED TECHNICAL ADVICE ... THE DEATH OF PROFESSIONAL CREDIBILITY?

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ABSTRACT

With various forms of communication and an increased opportunity to travel to other places to experience other forms of urban development, an increasingly aware if not informed community is more interested in decisions being made which impact on local and regional livability. Previously regarded as only a local response aiming to achieve rejection of unwanted development, increasingly community groups challenge project proposals to meet adopted government policies and regulations.

Community consultation processes which aim to increase opportunities for community groups and individuals to "have your say" provide opportunities for the projects to be scrutinised, often by well-informed if not expert members of the community. Increasingly, community consultation raises questions about the role of professionals and in particular their role with respect to both their clients interests and the public interest. When informed and expert professionals form part of or advise the community groups challenging the professional advice given to project proponents, the extent to which professional technical advice has become politicised becomes explicit.

This paper argues that the continued and perhaps increasing politicisation of professional and technical advice cannot avoid bringing the professional role into increasing disrepute, arguably to the point where professional advice is no longer valued for its credibility and integrity. Is it the professionals who are therefore contributing to the death of professional credibility?

INTRODUCTION

Whether by way of the many and various forms of communication which convey illustrations of other opportunities and solutions or by way of increased opportunities to travel to other places to experience other forms of urban development, communities and the people who comprise them are increasingly much more aware if not informed. Many such communities and some or all of their various constituencies and members are also increasingly more interested in decisions being made which impact on their local and regional livability.

Frequently such interest is described as a "Nimby", that is "Not in my back yard" response, but this view assumes community interest is primarily a local response aiming to achieve rejection of unwanted development. However, community groups are increasingly challenging project proposals and proponents to meet adopted government policies and regulations, not so much as a means of rejecting proposals, but more as a means of ensuring, should the proposals proceed, that they do in fact achieve what their proponents purport and that the outcomes are in fact in accordance with and do achieve what the relevant government policies and regulations aim to achieve or require.

While many with relevant expertise may feel threatened by such interest and in many cases seek to avoid or discourage such interest, it is increasingly becoming more clear that the heightened community interest and knowledge performs a very useful and relevant role, not least being a form of scrutiny of the knowledge, experience and vested interests which inform the proposals and supporting documents of the proponents and their advisers and consultants.

Thus, many forms of community consultation processes which aim to increase opportunities for community groups and individuals to "have your say" provide opportunities for projects or proposals to be scrutinised, often by well-informed if not expert members of the community, and in an increasing number of cases, communities advised by experts as well informed as the proponents. Therefore, community consultation increasingly raises questions about the role, credibility and independence of professionals and in particular their role with respect to conflicts between both their clients interests and the public interest and the extent to which the interests of the proponents and their team conflict with the interests of local communities, regional and other interests and the public interest.

Derived from one component of research in progress, this paper suggests that the extent to which professional technical advice has become politicised, ie not independent, becomes explicit when informed and expert professionals form part of or advise the community groups challenging the professional advice given to project proponents. It is argued that the continued and perhaps increasing politicisation of professional and technical advice cannot avoid increasingly bringing the professional role into greater disrepute, arguably to the point where professional advice is no longer valued for its credibility and integrity. Is it therefore the professionals who are contributing to the death of professional credibility? Can community consultation assist in maintaining independence by making politicising pressures explicit?

By way of exploring these issues and becoming more aware of their implications, those seeking to maintain the integrity and independence of professional advice may be encouraged to utilise forms of community consultation which encourage increased understanding and investigation of proposals such that both the proponents and the communities benefit. In this way, rather than being politicised, the decision process will reflect outcomes from the political processes inherent in consultation rather than those of the proponent or professionals.

THE ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONAL

Before exploring the theme of this paper further, it is important to develop a common comprehension if not acceptance of the various views of the role of those who purport to practice a profession, the professionals. Reference to dictionary meanings often provides good guidance to common meanings and understandings of words and phrases in common usage. According to the Macquarie (1982), a profession is "a vocation requiring knowledge of some department of learning or science" or more generally "any vocation, occupation etc". However embedded within the first meaning are several other meanings including "the body of persons engaged in an occupation or calling" and the idea of commitment to expertise as in one of the meanings of profess, that is, "to declare oneself skilled or expert in; claim to have expert knowledge of; make (a thing) one's profession or business". Meanings of professional include "following an occupation as a means of livelihood or for gain; pertaining or appropriate to a profession; making a business of something not properly to be regarded as a business; one belonging to one of the learned or skilled professions" (Macquarie 1982).

The last two meanings encapsulate to some extent the difference between a business and a profession. It seems that a profession is a business but not the reverse. What is it that makes a profession different to, or more than, a business? Whether justified or not, it appears that it is expected that those engaged in a profession provide a different service to those in a non-professional business. Amongst those differences are those described in the codes of ethics of the various professional bodies and in particular, the idea that the business of professionals benefits not only the professionals and their clients but, unlike the non-professional business whose business is normally only between their business and their client, in the case of the professional, it is expected that the business will also benefit, or if not benefit, not impact in an unsatisfactory way upon, the community at large, notionally described but rarely defined as the public interest.

It is this expectation which has encouraged the various forms of community consultation which expose the professionals business to potential community scrutiny in a manner not expected of non-professional businesses whose activities normally are controlled by regulation or legislation rather than by ethical or other expectations. It is this uncertainty as to the relative importance of the client-professional relationship as compared to the obligations to the general public which increasingly creates the difficulties in discerning the extent and importance of the public interest in the professionals role. This is further exacerbated by the frequently applied description of consultants and professionals as being "independent" which of course professionals rarely, if ever, are. Their principal contract is with their client and it requires achieving the clients goals. Arguably, other interests will be addressed but are inevitably subservient to meeting the principal proponent's needs.

Identifying the public interest would be difficult enough to achieve in a relatively static setting even assuming that the notion of "public interest" could be adequately defined and measures developed and utilised for determining "the public interest". However, in a rapidly changing setting where different community values are changing, conflict would seem inherently inevitable and unavoidable in any attempt to determine "the public interest". Arguably this process of negotiation and conflict is what brings about changes in "the public interest". Although public interest debates and conflicts will usually result in resolution and a new, albeit continually changing, set of values, it takes much longer for the new "public interest" to be accepted, in particular by those for whom the changes raise new and in particular, challenging or unresolved potential difficulties. An easy solution is much more attractive.

The role of professionals becomes even more potentially difficult for those working either for or in government agencies or authorities where government decisions are inevitably supported by claims of an electoral mandate or support to govern ie make decisions, if necessary, even when controversial or fiercely opposed. In these circumstances, "the public interest" is highly contested and conflict between professional codes of ethics, the role of the "independent" professional and the requirement to meet the clients needs, inevitable. While codes of practice have been developed in an attempt to provide guidelines for resolution of such conflicts and they may appear adequate, they appear to have failed to provide an adequate means for resolving claims of alleged conflicts of interest and breaches of the codes of practice as they apply to dealing with public interest issues and the community in general.

In practice, many of these claims appear to be justifiable. They inevitably arise from responses by professionals who feel or claim they are unable or disempowered to act in an independent professional or ethical manner. Examples include being unable to make adequate or all information available or to undertake any additional studies or research necessary to ensure studies have credibility. One of the more interesting examples is from Brisbane where, contrary to the increasingly accepted world view that new roads induce new traffic and bigger roads allow more traffic and hence new and bigger roads induce more air pollution, it has been claimed that "in response to community concerns, additional investigations were carried out into air quality implications, ... The results of this extra work found that, on balance, the (Brisbane Inner City) Bypass would itself improve health in Brisbane as it is affected by vehicle emissions"(*Inner City Bypass newsletter no 4*, BCC,1998). Is this advice to the public correct, credible or misleading? Who was its author? Who is responsible for it? The "independent" consultants whose name appears on it with BCC? BCC's technical professional advisers? Are these technical advisers "independent", "professional" or "politicised"?

It seems unlikely that a major new road at congested capacity could improve air quality, yet, quite reasonably, it might be argued that it will never be congested. But is that credible? It is often suggested that those with opposing views should be able to demonstrate their views, ie the "put up or shut up" model. It is equally valid to suggest that it is up to proponents and their "independent" professional consultants to address issues raised by the community in the public interest by responses which are sufficiently comprehensive and credible to withstand robust critical review while also accepting full responsibility should their advice later be found to be flawed. Only then is the responsibility to the community and the public interest made explicit. Only then is independent professional advice likely to be regarded as credible.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND ONGOING DEVELOPMENT

As it appears increasingly to be the case that the professionals will be dealing with an increasingly informed community, it follows that the professionals should become more expert in this arguably new field if only to ensure that the results of their professional activities are respected by those communities. This is rather more complex than it first appears as it makes any conflict between the clients interests and those of the community and the public interest inevitable. Paradoxically, this may be in the best interests of professionals and proponents.

However, undergraduate tertiary education programs have become more demanding as the tasks of professionals have become increasingly more complex. Not only does tomorrows professional have to know enough about that which the previous generation knows, the new generation is required to be able to know what the previous generation is now exploring in an ever increasing knowledge field involving evolutions in practice and in the profession's scope. Professionals are doing what they used to but much more in addition.

Many professionals overcome this requirement by seeking others to do the additional work. For example, people from behavioural sciences are increasingly being engaged to undertake forms of consultation. However, it is the mainstream professionals that need to demonstrate that they themselves comprehend the diverse needs of the various communities and ensure that proposals best meet those needs and those of the public interest. This of course raises the issue of "who decides?" which proposals best meet those needs and on what basis. New "buzz words" such as "integration", "integrated" and "sustainable" emerge but lack clarification or definition. Who decides what they mean? The community or professionals?

By way of an example, recent examples of "integration" include proposals for the Brisbane Light Rail which potentially emulate the Sydney Light Rail and result in exclusion or much reduced levels-of-service for what are ostensibly preferred modes of transport eg walking and cycling. As this occurs despite strategies and policies purporting to support more cycling and walking and after extensive consultation, the questions "who decides?" and "on what basis?" are both relevant and informative. Thus it may be submitted that professionals either need broader understanding of the context in which they operate or an ability to be independent technical advisers whose role is both to make explicit all constraints and to open proposals to public and peer review and critique. Arguably this is a different and perhaps seemingly threatening role and status for professionals. Despite apparent reluctance to make constraints explicit and to subject proposals to public critique, what other alternatives will better preserve or increase community confidence in the independence and credibility of professionals?

If undergraduate courses are already overloaded, ongoing professional development schemes may provide an option. However, to be effective in practice, the professional undertaking work with communities rather than with the client but for the community may well require a different initial education and approach to practice, differentiated by a broader scope and a commitment to being both receptive to and supportive of conflicting, diverse and often unresolved requirements originating from diverse sources as in consultation. Accordingly, while postgraduate or continuing professional development may appear the optimum location, it may equally be argued that a modification of undergraduate training to include recognition of such work should be included in all professional courses. However, in addition, increased specialisation in this field should be a course unit option early in all courses for those inclined to pursue this field.

PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Although current practice seems to produce conflict at the later stages of proposals (eg the Gold Coast Motorway that influenced the defeat of the Goss Government in Queensland and perhaps similarly in Victoria with the Kennett government), consultation aims to make conflict more explicit earlier in the decision process. However, this is in itself not enough if it results in little if any change to, or influence on, proposals. In fact, such consultation may only serve to raise expectations that changes or influence may be an outcome when, demonstrably, this is rarely the case, or when it is, the changes are minor, and often tokenistic. The same outcome is likely when "research" is utilised to justify proposals. The idea of an "independent" researcher or research project undertaken in the context of a particular proposal is inevitably and perhaps inherently flawed by claims of bias or preselection of relevant issues. It is, for example, very rare to see a "no action" or "other" alternative included in an unbiased manner in typical research projects associated with major proposals. Providing a dual track *Citytrain* service from Brisbane to the Gold Coast was not an option during debate over the proposed new motorway or the only "alternative", the upgrade, currently almost complete.

Under such circumstances, professionals may be better placed to be more explicit about the constraints thereby informing the public with integrity rather than defending the client with guile. For example, in one exchange during the debate over the proposed eastern tollway, the response "we weren't asked" from one of the consultants, while perhaps politically risky, accurately described the contractual obligations and relationship between the client and the consultant and between them and those interests opposing the proposal. If that question was to be answered, it is the client who must ask it.

However as this exchange took place in a much less consultative environment, it should be noted that the same question asked in a consultative process sets up an ethical obligation to respond to those raising the issues or asking the questions (1) in a manner satisfactory to their understanding. Otherwise, if the issue or response is defined or addressed in the technical terms of the professionals own discipline, the public can easily be deliberately or inadvertently excluded if they are unable to comprehend the language of the professionals (2). As Yankelovich notes, "the present dominance of the expert point of view means that the working through the public needs to do is likely to be postponed indefinitely, either until the problem grows more severe or some dramatic event ... causes the public to assert some ownership" (3). The ethical dilemma is for the professional to decide whether, and to what extent, to be an independent professional in practice, for it is in practice, not in ethical rhetoric or codes of professional conduct or practice, where the challenges exist. Arguably, the challenge for professionals is whether to regard their role as "independent" technical advisers to their clients or to what extent they should also include the various communities and the public interest in their professional considerations and deliberations in practice.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR

It has been argued above that by ignoring community concerns and avoiding the raising of community awareness, communities are or can be effectively disabled through control by experts, politicians and bureaucrats. However, should the public decide to assert ownership, these powerful elites can similarly be disabled. Examples include the loss of credibility in the medical profession (4) and arguably the defeat of the Goss and Kennett governments. However traditional leadership elites such as those in the professions can be viewed as very conservative with regard to change (5) and yet major attitudinal changes are occurring at an increasing rate. Who would have thought, say 10 years ago, that Australia would have a National Cycling Strategy, *Australia Cycling* (6) committed to promoting cycling and reducing car use for economic, health, amenity and environmental reasons? However, of equal interest, how many of the professions or professionals are sufficiently committed or skilled to bring such changes about? Similarly, as governments increasingly urge the community to not use their cars, are the relevant professionals sufficiently independent of both their clients and their own values and beliefs to be able to begin to address the new needs of aware communities (eg those opposing road projects) or of informed advocacy groups seeking higher priority for their needs in accordance with new policies such as South East Queensland's *Integrated Regional Transport Plan* which endorse greater use of the other than car modes?

Many community and advocacy groups are reporting frustration and conflict arising directly or indirectly from the reluctance of professionals to actually implement what the various communities of interest (and frequently government policies and plans) appear to want implemented. Recent analysis of consultation suggests that, exactly as stated by Yankelovich (2) above, professionals do in fact resort to defining problems in their own language, they do delay consultation until the proposals have a developed form (3), they do exclude options, and they act in every way as if to ensure that proposals proceed according to the clients needs.

Recent studies have shown such strategies are akin to bullying, that is, abuse of power and/or of privilege (7)(8). Despite the perceived benefits of consultation and its apparent policy support (9)(10), consultation processes have been subject to continuing charges of bullying and abuse. They include (7) manipulation and duplicity (people posing as participants but using consultation processes to manipulate acceptance of proposals), exclusion (overt and covert leading to people being excluded eg by membership criteria or by the promotion or selection of more compliant interests over those proposing alternative solutions), verbal abuse (blaming, labelling, stereotyping, sarcasm, bad-mouthing), threats and intimidation (threats of retribution and implied or perceived threats to careers or from legal processes to those seeking better outcomes or providing factual information), unethical behaviours (failing to treat members of the public equitably and professionally, with integrity and dignity), rejection of injurious affection compensation (inequitable and selective compensation) and selecting of victim-geographies (targeting projects to areas that are less politically sensitive or more poorly resourced and so more likely to be compliant) (7).

Other identified bullying or unethical behaviours during consultation processes include the failure to provide sufficient and/or accurate information, limiting of scope of consultation thus excluding other options or greater integration, failure to set policy positions for goals and targets of projects, very compressed time scales for responses, programs designed to suit the project proponents rather than the community needs and lack of a "referee" or impartial facilitator to help resolve the inevitable disputes. Clearly, while such complaints represent dissatisfaction with the way current consultation is carried out, they also indicate the concern and support for consultation to be carried out well. Thus these concerns listed above should be considered as accurate responses to a process which still presents arguably unresolved challenges. Thus it is essential to recognise that it is the commitment to ethical, independent professional behaviour which, in practice, is challenged by consultation when those in public service feel constrained about sensitive material, those in private practice feel constrained by consultancy briefs and client agreements, those with financial interests wish to be protected by confidentiality agreements, yet the community is offered consultation as a means of improving decision making in the public sphere. Again, the questions "who decides?" and "on what basis?" suggest that currently, professionals are not independent in that they are so closely aligned with their clients interests, that it seems inevitable that professional credibility is at risk, if any restrictions or confidentiality are placed on consultation. As the following cases illustrate, these are challenging issues for professionals seeking to operate ethically.

SOME CASE STUDIES

1. Regional Transport Reference Group (RTRG)

The RTRG was a fundamental component of the consultation framework of the South East Queensland *Integrated Regional Transport Plan* (IRTP) and its location within the overall IRTP strategy and implementation clearly documented (pp91-95). Despite being implemented early in the IRTP process, the status of the RTRG was always insecure as it was only ever given "possible" status (p94). Despite this, an exhaustive process of selection of interest group representatives from both government and non-government interests and the selection of an independent chair and alternate chair was undertaken successfully by Queensland Transport. To ensure that all interests were recorded, a process of addressing minority views was implemented. It required that those disagreeing with any decisions were obligated to formally advise of such disagreement and the RTRG was then obligated to formally address that concern, the intention being that, having agreed to the process, all interests would then follow this process thus ensuring disagreements were both recorded and addressed.

Given the goals of the IRTP include increases in other-than-car transport and trip reduction, there were unrecorded claims that the RTRG was too oriented towards public transport and cycling for some of the "members" although no disagreement was ever presented to the RTRG using the agreed protocol. Subsequently, the RTRG was disbanded by the current Minister for Transport and replaced recently by a smaller group invited by the Minister. As illustrated by the RTRG case, consultation groups such as the RTRG are rarely free from the threat of coercion. Despite the extensive processes and protocols developed and implemented by Queensland Transport and itself being a "member", the question remains as to why the RTRG was disbanded without any formal communication between its members, the chairs or the Minister as to the reasons for its activities being curtailed. Whichever "member" or "members" of the RTRG advised the Minister clearly breached the agreed RTRG protocols yet Queensland Transport took no action to preserve the credibility of the processes which it implemented to avoid this problem. Further questions remain as to why some interests were invited to continue in the new Minister's group yet other interests were excluded and whether, and if not why, the RTRG process was defended by those from the RTRG who joined the Minister's new group. Are the "members" of the new group seen as more compliant or alternatively if there is more confidence that the new group will be or is more effective than the RTRG, how that might be justified?

2. More roads or better public transport?

One of the key unresolved issues in the IRTP and one which continually challenged the RTRG was the question of the extent to which traffic and trip growth should be constrained and the extent that other-than-car alternatives should be implemented and how and when. In many places, and Sydney's Harbour Bridge is one example, converting existing road space to public transport (or cycling) priority lanes is well established. This was recommended by early consultancy reports promoting "a busway strategy for Brisbane" as a "precursor" by restricting or prohibiting car access to lanes to benefit buses to ensure "the bus level of service is not prejudiced" (11). Implementation of "high priority bus lanes which support the (bus) network concept" was also suggested as an immediate (0-2 years) project (12). This simply means providing bus lanes on existing roads on the basis that buses carry many more passengers more efficiently while providing a network wide public transport alternative to car use.

However when this was promoted in the findings of the Public Works Committee review of the South East Transit and busways concept, the then Transport Minister, Mr Johnson responded in Parliament that "The responsible way to do this is to provide new capacity, not convert existing lanes. This type of jackboot approach would succeed only in creating enormous disruption and delays to existing commuters" (Hansard p3090 and 3234 on) despite the IRTP recommending "initial bus connections running either in mixed traffic or on bus lanes or transit lanes"(p39).

Clearly if public transport cannot be given the priority on existing roads sought by McCormick Rankin, buses are either trapped in traffic and therefore much slower than cars for most trips or can only be provided with priority on new road space thus making public transport expensive despite equity suggesting that people in buses should at least be equated with people in cars. Paradoxically or deliberately, given the IRTP goals, requiring new space for public transport ensures a cheap capacity increase for cars once buses operate in their new lanes or busways. Despite the IRTP, consultants reports and demonstrated success elsewhere, it was primarily community and advocacy groups, not professionals, who sought compliance with the IRTP, the governments own transport master plan. Is it the role of community groups or is it the role of professionals to inform the broader community and to ensure public funds are allocated in a credible manner, conforming with stated goals, targets and principles?

3. Walking and cycling ... or more cars?

Following much the same inevitable but unavoidable route to a conflict requiring resolution, the IRTP aims to increase walking and cycling which, arising from anti-discrimination and human rights obligations, also includes equitable access for people of all ages and abilities. And in much the same way, the conflict is about priority. Whether to make room for cyclists on the road and to give pedestrians safe and convenient access across roads inherently challenge current and previous professional expertise and values. In essence, for example, the acknowledged role of traffic engineers is to ensure traffic flows as fast, safely and efficiently as practically possible. A similar goal applies to improving walking and cycling participation but what is the outcome when people walking or cycling are required to be considered as part of the traffic? Are separated footpaths and bikepaths the answer? What happens wherever they intersect with roads and even side streets? Which modes have priority? Why? Which are the modes preferred by the IRTP? Can the IRTP mode share targets be achieved without changing the priority to more favour people walking, cycling or using public transport? How? Which professionals have the expertise to achieve these goals?

Consultation suggests at the moment that these are no more than goals, that no measuring protocols are in place, and that implementation remains highly adversarial. In many ways, advocates knowledge exceeds that of the acknowledged professional experts, a form of temporal delay while practitioners catch up yet this very lag ensures that most current projects exhibit those characteristics which the IRTP seeks to change. Is it the role of the community and advocates to educate the professionals? Or should the community and advocacy groups be treated as experts and with respect in partnerships which reflect the rhetoric of consultation and professional ethics and concern for meeting community needs and the public interest?

4. SEQ 50km/h speed limit

The final case study raises issues of professional integrity and arguably, deliberate restriction of options and withholding of material information from consideration during consultation. Early in the SEQ50 project, interests associated with cycling advocacy sought admittance to a reference group formed by Queensland Transport for this project and related issues, given both the expertise and the obvious concern that cyclists as well as non- and would-be cyclists express about speeding traffic too close to cyclists. This request was rejected on the basis that community groups would be consulted later despite the fact that the RACQ, arguably also a community or advocacy group, was already a member of the reference group.

When the consultation process was initiated, 40km/h was excluded from public debate despite many areas seeking 40km/h and general awareness of the safety and amenity benefits of 40 speed limits in residential, shopping and school precincts. Only when it emerged as an issue much later did it become obvious that, rather than tell the community during the consultation phase that 40km/h was not allowed, Queensland Transport always intended to increase the speed limit in 40km/h zones to 50km/h unless traffic calming was provided.

It also emerged much later that part of the SEQ50 process initiated a series of traffic speed limit reviews. Concerned that speed limit increases on roads frequently used by cyclists might result, the State Cycle Committee of Queensland Transport sought an undertaking from Queensland Transport that speed limits would not be increased on roads which were inadequate for cycling. Although agreed, a number of major roads have had speed limits increased despite being of substandard width to allow adequate clearance between cyclists and vehicles overtaking them. This is despite Queensland Transport promoting more cycling through the IRTP and being responsible for road safety standards.

Should Queensland Transport have included its intention to increase the 40 limit to 50 and should 40 have been included in the consultation? Should the community be able to rely on being adequately informed by government agencies especially during consultation processes? What is the ethical position of professionals in government agencies who deliberately misinform or withhold information? What is the ethical position of such professionals in regard to the code of practice of their government agency and their professional body's code of ethics? Does such behaviour constitute grounds for complaint of bullying or abuse?

CONCLUSIONS

Consultation is a relatively new and arguably still controversial approach to decision making in complex situations. However, increasingly, consultation processes expose those giving supposedly independent technical professional advice and their advice to scrutiny, including by those with similar expertise. This paper suggests that many of the complaints of unethical and unprofessional behaviour by professionals arise from professionals not making their constraints explicit and thus adopting defensive roles and thus fail to address community concerns and public interest issues in a manner which meets community expectations of professionals, contributing to reduced credibility and integrity of professionals.

If professionals adopt ethical behaviours and utilise consultation processes to address community concerns to the satisfaction of the community, both the independence and the professionalism purported by codes of ethics and codes of practice can be maintained and protected from threats of politicisation and lack of credibility. Increasingly, as the community becomes more aware and professionals more skilled, the political processes of consultation offer both a means of producing better and more accepted outcomes and a means of reducing adversarial and unethical behaviours promoting consultation as a problem resolution process.

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