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Dissertation Title: Corporate Social Responsibility: An empirical study of Stakeholders and Environmental Disclosure in the Service Industry in Australia

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo.

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Abstract

During recent decades, the local, national, and global effects of human activities on the physical environment have increased immensely. Consequently, comprehensive policies have been developed and implemented to ensure that companies outlay a high level of social responsibility to the environment. Equally, research literature and international policies have subjected a full angle of interest in the provision that corporations should disclose their annual activities that have an impact on the wellbeing of the physical environment. According to research, companies have increased their environmental responsibility by providing voluntary yearly ecological reports that outlay the company’s financial and non-financial, quantitative and qualitative social activities on an annual base.

For a long time, scholars have addressed environmental disclosure as a broad topic; it is seen as encompassing the evolution of the responsible nature of these companies. However, the study aims to identify the extent to which the annual report coincides with the actual responsibility that these companies deliver. Without a doubt, companies around the globe may provide clear and consistent environmental disclosures; however recent analytical interest in the area has suggested that these revelations are only delivered to suit the wellbeing of the company. For instance, mining companies are profoundly scrutinised and thus affected by the social environment, other primary, secondary and service industries are also under public social scrutiny. This is especially motivated by the fact that; mining companies form a substantial basis of the Australian economy.

The study aims at performing content analysis on 75 annual reports on companies from different industry groups in the country. The purpose of the study is to identify whether environment disclosures serve as social or financial rehabilitation attempts by these companies, or they fulfil the required function. The study analyses the consequence of the environmental disclosure
requirement in the corporate field of the country and will look to evaluate how companies have integrated the condition either as self-beneficial or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

This research identified that all the publicly listed service companies are disclosing environmental issues in their annual reports. However, when a company’s operation is directly involved with environmental issue then they provide significant environmental disclosure in their annual report. According to the findings of this research, a key exception is revealed. Ironically universities who are not in-fact directly involved in activities that cause interaction with the natural environment they none the less overtly express their environmental concerns. They do this via environmental reports and by setting up courses and topics within discrete courses which analyse and investigate environmental issues. In this way, they educate and raise awareness through vigorous academic methodology, and importantly they set an exemplary standard and benchmark.

This research found that companies are disclosing Environmental Disclosure (ED) due to CSR and Stakeholders pressure. However, they do have a legislative requirement to disclose this information in the annual report (Chuang and Huang, 2018). In Australia, companies are disclosing CSR information according to their business nature; when they are heavily involved with environmental issues, they do provide adequate disclosed information. In contrast, where companies are having less interaction with the environmental issue at that time due to legitimacy issues they provide ED to have better acceptance in the society.
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