Prosaics of interagency human service delivery

The potentialities of peopled, practised and caring states

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Signed Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted 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 in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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States are contingently formed, enacting modes of governing in diverse and prosaic ways. States’ roles in social governing are shaped by the specificities of institutional contexts and peopled practices. Yet much recent analysis of social governing ignores the influence of state institutions and workers. In such analyses, social governing is taken to be largely driven by an overarching mode of governance—neoliberalism. Indeed for many researchers, techniques of social governing such as interagency working represent practices through which to trace neoliberalism’s enactments, variabilities, co-options and resistances. In obscuring the prosaics of peopled states, our understandings centre on ‘the state’ as a coherent and cogent entity, one that increasingly governs the social in neoliberalised ways.

The premise of this thesis is that interagency practices of social governing need to be examined from prosaic perspectives. Such an attention to everyday practice widens the analytical lens on social governing; allowing for disjunctive possibilities of everyday governing rather than focusing on over-determined discoveries of neoliberal rule. Indeed, a prosaics of state institutions relocates interagency workers and institutions from their positioning at the end-points of neoliberal rule and, instead, welcomes their diverse political and social actions as the very foundations on which governing is shaped. In so doing, it reveals practices of state institutions and interagency workers that can be creative, emotive and, as I assert, caring. In accessing everyday spaces through my research, I utilise a case study interagency programme of the New South Wales Government entitled Families First, which attempts to better facilitate the support of families with young children. It is an examination of the spaces of Families First that reveals the multiple ideological framings, congested institutional histories, changeable politics and everyday practices of workers that characterise state institutions and form the foundations of social governing. Rather than rehearse or raze understandings of neoliberal governing, the inclusiveness of a prosaic approach allows neoliberalism to co-exist as a potential practice of diverse interagency contexts; supporting hopeful perspectives on interagency working and nurturing a mutual language of prosaic politics, governing and ethics.
## Abbreviations

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<td>DADHC</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>New South Wales (NSW) Government Department of Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoCS</td>
<td>New South Wales (NSW) Government Department of Community Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoH</td>
<td>New South Wales (NSW) Government Department of Housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>MC</td>
<td>Management Committee for School as Community Centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SaCC</td>
<td>Schools as Community Centres</td>
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<td>SSC</td>
<td>State Steering Committee for Schools as Community Centres</td>
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Chapter One

Introduction
Chapter One

Introduction: weak theory and assemblages of social governing

Most theories of neoliberal rationality assume a certainty and a sufficiency that blinds us to the potential failures or faltering moments of this new governmental technology ... If our goal is the proliferation of different economies, what we most need is an open and hospitable orientation toward the objects of our thought. We need to foster a “love of the world” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 6).

This project examines contemporary social governing through practices of interagency working. Theories of contemporary social governing tend to be guided by the apparent certainties and sufficiencies of a new governmental technology—neoliberalism. Indeed for many researchers, practices of social governing such as interagency working¹ represent objects through which to trace neoliberalism’s enactments, variabilities and resistances (e.g. Lowndes and Skelcher 1998; Miller and Ahmad 2000; Clarke and Glendinning 2002). These accounts portray social governing practices as co-opted by the ‘commonsense’ of neoliberalism (Peck and Tickell 2002: 381): the economic priorities, privatising projects, and moralising agendas of current neoliberal rationalities. The project of this thesis suggests that such visions of social governing are largely myopic, blind not only to the ‘failures and falterings’ of neoliberalism, but to the generous and diverse practices of everyday social governing.

¹ Interagency working is one example of the diverse partnerships engaged in social governing (e.g. informal, contracted, programme-based; see Larner and Butler 2004). I frame interagency as a partnership-based approach that encourages collaborative work across and within government and non-government agencies.
Social governing is contingently formed and diversely performed, particularly as part of state institutions. In order to uncover the diversity of social governing, I argue for a prosaic research approach that examines social governing practices as part of state contexts. The contingent performances and congested histories of state contexts teem with shifting ideologies, recurrent election cycles, discordant politics, tactics of political leadership, institutional traditions, and people—all of which act to shape the very foundations of social governing and interagency working. Accounts of social governing which obscure prosaic contexts centre on ‘the state’ as a coherent and cogent entity, one that increasingly governs the social in neoliberalised ways. Alternatively, a prosaic examination widens the analytical lens on interagency working; allowing for disjunctive possibilities of everyday social governing rather than focusing on discoveries of neoliberal rule (Isin 2000).

In examining prosaic contexts of interagency working, the project draws on a case study approach. Families First, an interagency strategy of the New South Wales (NSW) Government, provides an entry point for the analysis. Families First operates as an umbrella strategy which attempts to better coordinate and facilitate community-based programmes to support families with young children. Schools as Community Centres (SaCC) is one community-based interagency programme positioned as part of Families First. SaCC is utilised as an ethnographic foundation for the research, to further ground the analysis in everyday interagency spaces. Indeed, the research focuses on four particular

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2 I utilise the term ‘state institutions’ to characterise institutions situated in government settings. In my ethnographic research, ‘state institutions’ delineate the human service agencies of Australian Governments active in social governing practices and programmes.

3 Families First forms the basis of the case study approach as a partial contributor to an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant funding the project. Whilst researchers often express a fear of co-option or collusion in this type of funded research (e.g. Bradshaw 2001; MacMillan and Scott 2003), I argue that it is this very “mucking around” in state institutions, social governing and power which provides the ethnographic level of detail necessary for prosaic research projects (Gibson-Graham 2006: 6).
SaCC locations across NSW to infuse the analysis with the institutional and individual variabilities of interagency practice that occur ‘in place’ (Appendix A). It is the spaces of Families First and SaCC that reveal the congested institutional histories, changeable politics and everyday ‘peopled’ practices that characterise state institutions and shape social governing. By examining interagency working ‘on-the-ground’, the innate contradictions, differences and variations of social governing are allowed to co-exist, foregrounding “the effort more than the effects … not whether certain strategies win or lose but, literally, how they play” (Rose, M. 2002: 397).

Examining the efforts of governing does not negate the influential interjections of neoliberalism in social governing, but rather denies neoliberalism any fundamental nature or universal reality (Larner and Butler 2007; Peck and Tickell 2007). Such an approach avoids the current proclivity to absorb diversity through post facto rationalisations in which neoliberal rationalities are used to redefine and reterritorialise all other existing and possible governing practices (Larner and Butler 2007). Diversity and contingency sketch the very scope of social governing possibilities and practices (O’Neill and Argent 2005). If we are to value the diversity of practice then it is necessary to widen the analytical lens and welcome ‘others’. A prosaic approach relocates interagency workers and state institutions from their positioning at the end-points of neoliberal rule and, instead, values their diverse political and social actions: the tactics and manouevres of politics; the ad hoc changes of state institutions; the sedimentations of institutional traditions and pride; and the people who infuse these everyday actions with vitality, emotion and care (Heyman and Smart 1999; Painter 2006).

Commanding theories of a ‘neoliberal commonsense’ cannot ever fully capture the ways in which social governing is practised as part of the diverse assemblages of governing ideologies, political priorities and people that embody
state institutions (O'Neill and Argent 2005). Thus, reductionist accounts of neoliberal effects need to be replaced with open and inclusive examinations of governing actions as the “contingent outcomes of ethical decisions, political projects and sedimented localised practices” (Gibson-Graham 2006: xxxi). For Ong (2007), this approach to examining governing actions requires an ‘analytics of assemblage’, instead of an ‘analytics of structure’, or for Gibson-Graham (2006), the nurturing of ‘weak’ rather than ‘strong’ theory. In the thesis, I adopt a weak theory approach. Weak theory draws together understandings hospitable to contingency and diversity, and establishes the foundations from which to introduce and unfold the theories and methodologies of the research.

1.1 Unfolding weak theories of social governing

Weak theory describes an approach to research that reads contexts for difference rather than dominance. In its outlook, weak theory entertains hope, welcomes co-existence, and nurtures care of the possible. The work of Gibson-Graham (2006) provides a foundation for the weak theory approach of this research, offering a valuable contribution not only to understandings of weak theory but also to its practise. For Gibson-Graham (2006: 8) practising weak theory “requires acting as a beginner, refusing to know too much … refusing to extend diagnoses too deeply or widely”. A weak theory approach also exercises active and productive ways of thinking in which theory and practice are fundamentally co-constitutive. This enables us to be attentive not merely to “what is” but to what our research “does” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 4). Through open, inclusive and assembled analytical framings, weak theory supports a hospitable way of thinking that values the contingency and diversity of everyday peopled practice, allowing events and actions to unfold devoid of strong diagnostic framings. Thinking for possibility thus nurtures a politics of possibility, one in which diverse and ethical practices are both possible and prevalent (Gibson-Graham 2006; see also Foucault 1980a).
Ushering in the practices of weak theorising enables hospitable orientations toward contingency and diversity. Yet weak theorising as a fundamental approach needs to be informed and guided by the contexts and subjects of the research: the practices of social governing, state institutions and the workers enrolled in these settings. In particular, the weak theorising of this project is guided by ethnographic attention to interagency working. Interagency working is a key technique of contemporary social governing settings, framed as a means of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of human service delivery (Larner and Butler 2007). The current prevalence and policy framings of interagency working are most often positioned in research as yet another convincing example of neoliberalism’s co-opting effects in the spaces of social governing (e.g. Lowndes and Skelcher 1998; Miller and Ahmad 2000; Clarke and Glendinning 2002). Yet I argue that it is possible to view the ways in which neoliberal agendas are played out together with a diversity of political projects, ethical decisions and sedimenting practices of interagency working, many of which represent the now forgotten and shadowy obscurations of neoliberal post facto rationalisations (Larner and Butler 2007).

Rather than rehearse or raze dominant neoliberal rationalisations, a weak theory approach frames neoliberalism as a potential and co-existing practice of diversely formed and performed governing contexts. By adopting weak theory, I am able to remain open to the divergent analytics and ethical possibilities of governing. Thus it is possible to enrich a mutual language of state institutions, politics and ethics; a language that supports vibrant and hopeful accounts of social governing.

In the subsequent chapters, I unfold my weak theory approach progressively across, between and into the contexts of social governing and interagency working. Weak theorising is not merely confined to theoretical framings, but continually plays out through the methodologies and analyses, thinkings and actions of the research process. Maintaining the vitality and activity of the
research process is fundamental to *actually practising* weak theorising. In the following diagram (Figure 1.1), I progressively build and widen an analytical lens on social governing which exhibits the ongoing iterations between the practices of weak theorising, the details of the research settings, and the organisation of the thesis. I commence by building a theoretical framework to nurture an open and hospitable orientation to the everyday practices of social governing.

The theoretical framework for the research draws on key Foucauldian analytics of governmentality that attend to what I describe as ‘spacious’ and ‘specified’ concepts of governing. A governmentality approach, firstly, provides spacious attention to productive, non-hierarchical and diverse modalities of power and governing and, secondly, demands scrutiny of specified historic manifestations of governing such as neoliberalism (Chapter 2). The inclusiveness of spacious governmental perspectives allows specified neoliberalism to co-exist as a potential practice of diverse governing contexts. In the theoretical framework, these governmental perspectives are supplemented by an analytics which frames states as prosaic formations that are practised and peopled in everyday ways. Such a framing re-politicises markedly persistent notions of a reified, centralised and neoliberalised ‘state’, valuing the everyday ‘peopled practice’ of state institutions. This theoretical framing is then layered with genealogical (Chapter 4) and ethnographic (Chapter 5 and 6) methodologies and analyses. Together, genealogy and ethnography provide the foundations for an in-depth analysis of interagency practices—the contingent interagency practices of states and social governing intimated in the congestions encircled at one end of the diagram (Figure 1.1).

While the trajectories that I trace in the diagram are presented as phased analytics and methodologies, they developed through the disordered, reiterative and co-constitutive research process of re-framing and re-reading; a process continually informed by the everyday practices and contexts of social governing.
Figure 1.1 – Reiterations of weak theories, methodologies and ethnographic findings

Weak theorising
Chapter 1

Spacious/specifed
governmentality,
power and states
Chapters 2 and 3

Genealogies of social
governing: change and
sedimentation
Chapter 4

Genealogies of
interagencies:
Families First & SaCC
Chapter 4

States, people
and care
Chapter 3

Genealogies of
social governing
in Australia
Chapter 4

States, institutions and
politics
Chapter 3

Governing, power
and subjects
Chapter 2

Re-politicising
and re-animating
interagency
spaces
Chapter 5

Re-peopling and
re-affecting
interagency
spaces
Chapter 6

Ethnographies of
interagencies: the how of
governing
Chapters 5 and 6

Neoliberalism,
relationality and
etho-politics
Chapter 2

Friendships
prosaic states

election cycles
peopled practice
congested institutions

commitment to social support
caring states
political tactics

ethical working
institutional beliefs

etho-politics
economic efficiency
self-responsibilisation

ad hoc governing
political expediency
caring workers

institutional habits
leadership

enduring change
Always lingering with a weak theory perspective, my analysis hones in on ‘the how’ of social governing—the everyday possibilities and sticky sedimentations of institutional practice, politics and individual action (Mountz 2003). It is these prosaic events and actions of social governing which evade reduction to overarching laws yet are the foundations on which “everything ultimately depends” (Morson and Emerson 1990; quoted in Painter 2006: 762).

1.2 Assembling the thesis: an overview

Weak theory supports open and inclusive research yet requires the insight and abundant detail of the research context—state institutions, interagency working and social governing. In Chapter 2, I begin to assemble theoretical understandings of social governing which I argue offer the conceptual framings attuned to both the contingency of governing power and the hospitality of weak theory. Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality is a particularly prevalent framing device for research on governing (e.g. Larner 2000; Raco and Imrie 2000; Flint 2003). Governmentality draws together a range of key Foucauldian analytics centred on productive and non-hierarchical practices of power and subjection (‘the conduct of conduct’), the prosaic performances or the ‘how’ of governing, and the historically-specified manifestations of governing such as neoliberalism (Foucault 1991a).

I utilise the terms ‘spacious’ and ‘specified’ to mark the conceptual distinctions in the governmentality approach between the spaciousness of Foucault’s

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Foucault employed the term government in referring to diffuse networks of power relations, or the ‘conduct of conduct’, as part of challenging traditional notions of government as a formal, centralised and materialised structure (Foucault 1983). In my own analysis, I distinguish between the term governing, which I use in referring to these diffuse and deterritorialised networks of power, and the term government, which I deploy as a basic structural term to denote specific and sedimented parliamentary traditions, institutional procedures, and organisational structures. I settle upon these distinctly defined terms so as to limit confusion between Foucauldian notions of government and the contexts of my research undertaken in, and through, the (G)overnments of defined state-territories.
questioning on how governing power is practised, and the specificities of historically-situated governmentalities such as neoliberalism. I argue that a predominant disregard for spacious governmental concepts (see Valverde 1996; O’Malley et al. 1997; Lemke 2002), has led to specified framings of neoliberalism that assume a commanding position in accounts of interagency working. Unaccompanied by the spacious questioning of how governing is practised, specified governmental accounts of interagency working can foster notions of unyielding neoliberal co-option. These accounts position interagency work and workers as conduits that translate neoliberal agendas through partnering practices founded on relational rationalities (e.g. partnerships promoting mutual obligation between governments and citizens) and ethopolitical rationalities (e.g. partnerships encouraging self-responsibility in citizens) (Larner and Butler 2004). I argue that governmental analyses need to attend to both spacious and specified governmental framings simultaneously. Such an approach views the interjections of neoliberalism in interagency working only through its contingent practice, such that neoliberalism is never wholly present, nor always and everywhere co-opting.

In Chapter 3, I build upon understandings of social governing by further contextualising the research in the settings of state institutions. As with social governing, the academic literature concerning states is manifold. In order to support weak theorising, I assemble an analytics of prosaic states, centred on understandings of states as practiced and peopled in everyday ways (e.g. Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Mountz 2003; Jones et al. 2004; Painter 2006). Such a framing challenges markedly persistent notions of a unified, reified and centralised state structure—‘the state’; notions that are particularly problematic

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3 Prosaics is a notion based on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and adopted by Painter (2006) in framing states as the everyday, mundane and ordinary aspects of state effects. Prosaics emphasise the heterogeneity and openness of events and performances that "elude reduction to 'underlying' laws or systems" (Morson and Emerson 1990: 33). A prosaic framing of states thus fundamentally interconnects with spacious Foucauldian concepts that prioritise the contingency of everyday practice (see Chapter 2).
when integrated with strong accounts of an oppressive neoliberal state (Foucault 1986a; Gordon 1991; Mitchell 1991; Steinmetz 1999; Sparke 2005).

Valuing the ‘peopled practice’ of states allows for a view of social governing and interagency working that remains open to diverse practices rather than restricted by the reified control of a centralised and neoliberalised state. It is through these analytics that it is possible to re-politicise and re-people conventional understandings of states, revealing the possibilities and sedimentations of politics, institutional practice and the actions of individuals. Assembled theories of prosaic states most importantly allow space for ‘other’ state practices often subsumed under strong framings of ‘the state’ and neoliberalism. These other practices of states, institutions and workers can be creative, emotive, and as I assert, caring.

Together, both bodies of literature provide a widened analytical lens capable of acknowledging diversity, otherness and everyday practice in social governing. Yet theoretically acknowledging the possibilities of disjunctive governing does not create the methodological means by which to actually reveal its everyday practice. Research on states and governing seldom engages the types of methodological techniques utilised in other social settings. Instead, research on governing is often undertaken as an overarching investigation of governing power and authority seemingly dissociated from the social (Barnett 2005; Painter 2006).

In challenging these foreclosures, I undertake genealogical and ethnographic investigations of states that respectively offer the methodological capabilities to examine the contingent histories of social governing and its everyday practice. I approach these methodologies as a fusion of theory and practice (“the ‘ology’ of method”) (Shurmer-Smith 2002: 95). Thus, rather than presenting an analytically separate methodological chapter, I discuss these methods and the
ways in which I practise them as an introduction to the findings they have helped to produce (see Chapters 4 and 5). I frame genealogy and ethnography as nurturing the openness of weak theory through particular methods oriented to the everyday (i.e. case studies, policy analysis, semi-structured interviews and observation). These prosaic methods mingle and 'muck around' in the everyday bricolage of governing, states and politics; exposing what Painter (2006: 770) describes as the “internal workings” of state institutions.

It is in attending to the internal workings of state institutions, that I begin to deepen the focus of my research from that of social governing and interagency working, to the enactments of interagency working as part of particular case study programmes: Families First and Schools as Community Centres (SaCCs). I undertake a progressive contextualisation which gradually builds ‘thick’ descriptions of social governing from government policies, to interagency programmes, institutional structures and the everyday practices of the case study settings (see Geertz 1973; Walker et al. 2007).

I commence this contextualisation process with the genealogical investigations of Chapter 4. Genealogical methods allow for a contingent, historicised and indeterminate unfolding of governing and state practices (Foucault 1986b; Gibson-Graham 2006; see Chapter 4 for discussion of methods). Undertaken primarily through an analysis of Australian governments’ engagements with social policies and interagency programmes, genealogical investigations reveal the particular historic, geographic and social settings of Australian governments which have had a forming influence on social governing. The Australian state institutions of my research do indeed engage with neoliberalism. However, these same institutions simultaneously maintain enduring traditions of social support atypical of neoliberalism (e.g. universal provision of public goods at public expense and the retention of the social safety-net; O’Neill and Moore 2005). The work of O’Neill and Moore (2005) and O’Neill and Fagan (2006) are especially drawn on in building these Antipodean genealogies of endurance,
sedimentation and reform in Australian state institutions; genealogies that challenge any residing notions of inexorably unfolding and co-opting neoliberalisms.

The genealogies of social governing and fledgling questions of its practice provide the foundations for in-depth ethnographies (Chapters 5 and 6). The ethnographic analysis is founded on interviews with interagency workers and observations of the internal workings of Families First and SaCC (see Chapter 5 for discussion of methods). I commence this in-depth analysis in Chapter 5 with an attention to the everyday politics and institutional practice of interagency working and how these interconnect, or not, with neoliberal rationalities of relational working. I aim to re-politicise and re-animate stagnant accounts of governing with an attention to the ‘peopled practices’ of states. Examining state spaces from this prosaic perspective provides a means of uncovering the diversity and contingency of practice which necessarily shapes interagency working. Workers in Families First and SaCC describe interagency practice as often inflected with relational rationalities, yet grounded in the persistently variable and ad hoc practices (or ‘enduring change’) of politics and state institutions. Moreover, such political and institutional practices are most often recounted as the products of long genealogies of social governing, sticky institutional practices and short-term political manoeuvres, rather than the ever-strategic efficiencies of neoliberalism.

In Chapter 6, I extend discussions of the everyday politics and institutional performances of states by drawing out three particular features of these practised workspaces: namely, people, relationships and care. The actions and narratives of Families First and SaCC workers may enrol neoliberal priorities yet, perhaps more influentially, reveal ethical actions, respectful relationships (both with fellow workers and communities), and caring practices—not just in the performances of ‘well-meaning’ individuals but also in the sedimented practices of state institutions. Such features are not always valued in strongly
theorised and overly specified accounts of state institutions and human service practice. My intention in drawing out these features is explicit and twofold: first, to acknowledge the often overlooked yet rich empirics of human service workers, their relationships, and caring practices as part of state institutions; and second, to support what Gibson-Graham (2006: xxx) refer to as a “politics of possibility”—a politics in which thinking, talking and writing about state institutions in these ‘other’ ways may support ethical and engaged human service actions⁶. In this way, I aim to decentre oppressive etho-political framings by introducing a diverse ethics of human service work; an ethics that can also promote caring, sharing, support and co-existence in human service work rather than an exclusively etho-political project of individualisation and moralisation.

A weak theory approach nurtures an open and hospitable orientation to thinking about the objects of our research (Gibson-Graham 2006). Yet widening the myopic hold of strong theories of governing requires persistent effort. I argue that an attentive and unrelenting practice of weak theory offers one, although by no means the only, approach by which the diversity of everyday governing practices can be acknowledged and nurtured. Weak theory unmasks any residing notions of all-conquering (accomplished) and ever-subjugating (oppressive) neoliberalisms (Argent 2005). In engaging ethnographic and genealogical investigations of state institutions, the complexities of actually enacting social governing, instituting policy and practicing programmes are revealed. The congested gaps between governmental rule and peopled practice emerge throughout my accounts of interagency working, exposing the rich diversities of social governing as part of state institutions. In weak theory,

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⁶ The explicit focus on ethical actions and care in human service practices has an obvious implication for the research; that is, my discussions only allude to the ways in which state institutions are also spaces infused with laziness, ignorance, bullying etc. These types of actions are undoubtedly part of human service spaces however my intention, as part of assembling a politics of possibility (see Gibson-Graham 2006 above), is to consciously foreground and nurture the often overlooked contingencies of human service practices that can be ethical, caring and supportive.
neoliberalism forms one part of the diverse political and institutional contexts of state institutions and enactments of social governing. Social governing then is never wholly determined or innately oppressive, but instead constitutively unfolded and contingently practised.
Chapter Two

Assembling weak theories of social governing (I)
Governing incorporates an assemblage of rationalities and technologies that are historically produced, geographically situated, and politically practised (Larner and Butler 2007). Academic thought on governing has persistently drawn upon Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality as a popular framing device for research across diverse fields of social enquiry (Dean 1999). Governmentality offers a viewpoint on the productive and diverse practices of power that constitute governing, or 'the conduct of conduct'. Foucault's understandings of power are enabled by his explicit disregard for traditional notions of a centralised, hierarchical and territorial governing power (Foucault 1991a). In my own research, I have found Foucault's re-framings of power and governing particularly useful for approaching the social governing settings of states in open and contingent ways that avoid any sense of a strongly determining and reified state power (Sparke 2005). Governmentality provides a valuable array of tools to examine governing, drawing together Foucault's analytical attention to the 'how' of governing, productive forms of power and subjection, and historically-specified modes of governing such as neoliberalism.

Despite the diverse analytics that inform governmentality, the concept is too commonly employed in research in an overly specified and already determined sense. The lack of simultaneous attention to spacious modes of questioning induces research which seeks to identify and trace a contemporary governmentality—neoliberalism (e.g. Miller and Rose 1990; McDonald and Marston 2005). Neoliberalism has assumed a demanding focus in recent
studies, positioned as the dominant form of governmentality which is decisively reshaping all forms of governing (Rose and Miller 1992). Neoliberal governing is most broadly characterised by traditional priorities of market-based efficiencies (e.g. deregulated and privatised governing). Yet most recently, neoliberal governing incorporates social rationalities of effectiveness (e.g. participatory and partnered governing)\(^7\) (Peck and Tickell 2002). Many governmental studies have drawn attention to the ways in which these recent socialised concerns are merely ostensible, cursory and compensatory attempts to address earlier neoliberal failures (e.g. Jessop 2002; Porter and Craig 2004; McDonald and Marston 2005). From this perspective, genuine commitments to social issues are largely viewed as succumbing to, or at best resisting, the domineering and ‘self-actualising’ forces of neoliberal governing (O'Neill and McGuirk 2005).

The utility of specified concepts of governmentality in understanding practices of governing can be fundamentally problematic when unaccompanied by the broader (spacious) questioning of Foucauldian research. Investigating governing as neoliberal, reproduces circular processes of naming and discovering that make real the very subject of critique (Lemke 2002). Analytics

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7 Recent modes of neoliberalism have been the subject of various labels assembled from diverse academic sources and fields of study. From governmental fields, I engage understandings based on Nikolas Rose’s concept of ‘advanced liberalism’. This term denotes the historical foundations of neoliberalism and marks recent reformulations of liberalism founded on a pluralisation of social technologies, new relations between expertise and politics, and new specifications of the subjects of governing (Rose 1993). Political-economic research also offers foundations for understanding recent forms of neoliberalism. Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell, for example, develop the concepts of ‘roll-back’ and ‘roll-out’ neoliberalism to describe recent shifts in neoliberal governing away from market-based agendas to a more socially-mediated capitalism (Peck and Tickell 2002). Wendy Larner provides valuable input into these debates with the concept of ‘After Neoliberalism’, a term used to highlight the ad hoc and contingent conjunctions of various political projects with neoliberalism; representing neither a complete rupture from older forms, nor a definitively new governmental formation (Larner and Butler 2007). I draw on multiple understandings of recent forms of neoliberalism, yet avoid the anxieties reproduced in many debates on the ‘appropriate’ label for this revised political-economic formulation (see Ling 2000; Loopmans 2004; Castree 2006). I argue instead for an approach, similar to Larner and Butler (2007: 74), which weakens strong and reductionist framings of an ideal type of neoliberalism, to re-position neoliberalism as a situated process involving contingent political formulations as part of particular contexts.
can become constrained and afflicted by such strong framings of neoliberalism, paradoxically promoting notions of an ‘all-conquering’ and globally dominating governmentality which regulates all domains of governing (Valverde 1996; O'Malley et al. 1997; Lemke 2002; Argent 2005). Strong theories of a commanding neoliberal governmentality subsume the valuable Foucauldian predilection for questioning the diverse, productive and everyday practice, or ‘how’ of governing. Valverde (1996: 367) explains:

The Foucauldian project … is not a new Theory to be applied and circularly confirmed through finding of ‘instances’. It is a set of tools, an approach that can be the prelude or the accompaniment to a number of different projects.

Governmentality then, is not to be used as a ‘Theory’ to be systematically applied across geographical locations, but a broad set of tools for examining the diverse political practices and social relations fundamental to enacting governing (Valverde 1996; O'Malley et al. 1997). Governmentality, in this way, allows for disjunctive possibilities of governing rather than its already determined discoveries (Isin 2000).

There are a growing number of critical conversations around governing which demand attention to the ways that even dominant governmentalities are subject to, and constituted by, the contingent practices of political projects. In assembling an analytics of governing, I commence with academic accounts that recognise the engrained variability and multiplicity of neoliberalism (e.g. Brenner and Theodore 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002). From this perspective, neoliberalism is viewed as a practised and historically formed project involving conflicts, resistances, appropriations and ultimately various configurations—“more Hydra than Goliath” (Peck and Tickell 2007: 27). While drawing on research from this tradition, I particularly engage the work of Wendy Larner who extends recognitions of neoliberal variation and multiplicity with empirical
studies of the actual contingent practices of governing as part of particular historical and geographical contexts. The recent research of Larner and Butler (2007: 87) especially aims to historicise and politicise the spaces of governing, recognising that governing is indeed “always and everywhere a political accomplishment”.

In promoting an open and diversified perspective on governing practice, I also actively engage in an open and diversified language of governing, inspired by the work of Gibson-Graham (2006). This inclusive, differentiated and hopeful language disrupts the sometimes routine and tedious circulations around neoliberalism. Accounts of neoliberalism commonly reintegrate diverse practices of social governing through what Larner and Butler (2007) describe as post facto rationalisations; rationalisations that absorb the diversity of enactments involved in social governing. Yet I aim to value an assemblage of often ‘qualitatively different’ political rationalities (e.g. social democracy), practices (e.g. caring and ethical working) and performances (e.g. expedient political tactics) in the everyday contexts of governing (see Castree 2006).

This is not to deny the sedimentations and political expressions of neoliberal governmentalities, nor to engage in the consoling process of creating and destructing a neoliberal ‘straw person’ (see Barnett 2005). Instead I seek to build an analytical assemblage for approaching the ‘how’ of governing (not just the ‘how’ of neoliberal governing), acknowledging neoliberalism as one governmentality or “logic of governing … selectively taken up in diverse political contexts” (Ong 2007: 3). As Gibson-Graham (2006: xxx) argue, thinking about governing needs to be undertaken as an open and inclusive project which fundamentally widens the analytics of assemblage and produces the ground of governing possibilities; “opening the field from which the unexpected can emerge”.

In the remainder of this chapter, I construct an assemblage of governmental concepts for thinking about social governing and techniques of interagency working. Firstly, I discuss what I refer to as *spacious* concepts of governmentality. I use the term spacious to distinguish those Foucauldian notions that are open and hospitable to diverse practices of governing; the everyday ‘how’ of governing (Foucault 1991a). In particular, I focus on spacious concepts of governmentality developed through Foucault’s attention to power and subjection. Foucault sought to challenge notions of a centralised, dominating, and co-opting governmental project by drawing out prosaic and productive practices of power and subjection. Such an approach views governmental power and subjection as multiply and actively exercised as part of the everyday, ‘micro’ relations of governing.

Secondly, and simultaneous with a spacious orientation, I discuss the historically-*specified* governmentality of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is indeed complexly shaping contemporary governing practices, most recently through the promotion of relational priorities (e.g. interagency partnerships and community participation in governing) and etho-political agendas (e.g. moralised self-conduct and active citizenship). Partnership-based modes of governing, such as interagency working, are popularly enrolled in these newly socialised agendas of governing, and thus often viewed in geographical research as subject to the co-opting forces of neoliberalism (Larner and Butler 2004). I argue that it is important to understand these specified rationalities and techniques of neoliberal governing, but only as part of open, diverse and contingent (spacious) framings. Critically, I draw in the more spacious questions of *how* governing is enacted in order to extend overly specified frameworks of neoliberal governing and avoid any strong sense of governing power. This weak

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8 I address spacious and specified concepts of governmentality separately but emphasise that these two concepts crucially overlap in the analytics of governmentality, and in the genealogies and ethnographies I undertake.
theory approach prioritises the practice of openly re-thinking governing. It allows for diverse and co-existing understandings, actions and materialisations of social governing that do not always assemble in the forms expected, or with the effects predicted.

2.1 Spacious governmentality: power, subjection and the ‘how’ of governing

Spacious governmentality is a concept I deploy to describe a valuable assemblage of Foucauldian tools used for weakly theorising, understanding, and questioning practices of governing. Spacious governmental concepts answer many of the dilemmas and extensive academic criticisms directed at Foucauldian research. Commonly, both Foucault and Foucauldian-inspired research are accused of a lack of emphasis on politics, social practice and agency (O’Malley et al. 1997; Larner and Walters 2004), and a problematic separation of rationalities from governing practice—dilemmas arising from systematised and specified notions of disciplinary rule (Valverde 1996; Painter 2006). These criticisms of Foucauldian research generally suggest that issues of everyday practice—“the unsystematic, the indeterminate and the unintended” (Painter 2006: 763)—are subsumed under strong theoretical framings which seek to establish where rationalities conform to practice. As discussed previously, much research on neoliberal governing presents a pertinent example of the ways in which governmentality can become strongly theorised as a naturally unfolding and unified project (Peck and Tickell 2002; Larner 2005).

While these criticisms of governmentality are often justified, I suggest that such shortcomings are more a product of the ‘strong’ use of governmental (T)heory, rather than the inherent fallibilities in Foucauldian analytical frameworks
themselves⁹ (Valverde 1996; O’Malley et al. 1997; Lemke 2001). For Foucault, rationalities represent historical practices and social relations, rather than a perfect neutral knowledge of governed reality (Lemke 2002). Governing is a practiced process, one which does not systematically derive from abstract and external factors, but develops contingently through actors, institutions and practices (Loopmans 2004). Examining governmentalities then, is not a process of confirming where practices, programmes and technologies conform to rationalities. Instead, governmental analyses need to examine “how forms of rationality inscribe themselves in practices, and what role they play within them” (Foucault 1991b: 79)—a process of recognising ‘the effort’ of governing more than ‘the effects’ (Rose M. 2002: 397).

An assemblage of Foucauldian tools forms a foundation for my understandings of social governing and the ways in which people actively engage in governing spaces. In the following section, I focus on the key concepts of a spacious governmentality that help to ground, contextualise and personalise historically-specified examinations of governing. Firstly, I outline the central concepts of power and subjection which are, at least implicitly, fundamental to studies of governing. Foucault introduced a productive language of power and subjection in which power is diversely practised, rather than determinately possessed (Lemke 2001; Sparke 2005). Foucault’s analytics of power allow me to extend notions of a dominant and co-opting neoliberal project by considering the everyday enactments of governing and the ways in which worker-subjects are

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⁹ Foucauldian research has been subject to extensive criticisms as described here. Yet Foucault sought to challenge abstracted research by explicitly promoting the links between theory and practice, acknowledging the potential of political practice to intensify thought and vice versa (Gane and Johnston 1993; O’Malley et al. 1997; Lemke 2003). Foucault himself did not always practise his own ‘spacious’ analytics, often concluding at the point of acknowledging, rather than enacting an attention to detail and difference (see Said 1988; Philo 1992; Moss 1998). In the following discussions, I do not engage in debates on whether Foucault succeeded in actually applying his analytical framework. Instead, I aim to draw on a valuable assemblage of Foucauldian tools which assist in investigating the practices, detail and difference that constitute the very contexts and possibilities of governing.
created and help to create the very circumstances in which governing is practised (O’Neill and Argent 2005). Secondly, I discuss Foucault’s analytical questioning of governing which provides the spaciousness, or “breathing space” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 51), for the contingencies of enactment and possibilities of practice overshadowed by strong theories of governing. Together, these spacious governmental concepts enable a more open perspective on specified neoliberal governmentalities; tolerating co-existences, acknowledging contingency, and welcoming possibility.

2.1.1 Diverse power and active subjects

Analytical framings of power and subjection fundamentally influence understandings of governing. In hierarchical models of power, governing assumes an unyielding and unidirectional position which obscures the everyday productive practices of governing (Allen 2003; Sparke 2005). Moreover, subjects are positioned in hierarchical framings as repressed and co-opted by descending enactments of power in which people and practices are silenced by dominating ideological projects (Butler 1997; Powell and Gilbert 2007). These types of hierarchical framings of power formed the focus of Foucault’s extensive critiques and social enquiries. Foucault initiated a conscious move away from governing power as centralised in state-territories, challenging notions of hierarchical, dominating, and determinately repressive enactments of power (Lemke 2002). Instead, he developed concepts of governing as the ‘conduct of conduct’, an open and everyday practice rather than a prevailing and centralised ideology (Foucault 1983; Foucault 1991a). While Foucault’s focus was to promote a contemporaneous opposition to notions of state-territorial power (see Chapter 3), the analytics of power he gradually pieced together provide a valuable perspective on current governing practices.

Foucault undertook a process of re-framing power and subjection as productive practices that are intrinsically performed in diverse and contingent ways. The
productivity and diversity of practising power necessarily yields varied consequences, none of which can be simply determined from dominant ideology to obedient enactment, or from centres of government to local practice. Foucault (1986a) draws together a range of concepts or methods for investigating the productivity of power, creating an analytical framework for understanding practices of governing which I summarise below:

- power in everyday practices not in the centres formed by governments and institutions;
- power not as a conscious intention but where an intention is practically enacted;
- power not as homogeneous domination but as employed and exercised through net-like structures with individuals undergoing and exercising power rather than holding it;
- power as ascending through agents, institutions, mechanisms etc. at given moments;
- power not as prescribed ideology but as productive instruments for the creation and accumulation of knowledge.

The common link between these individual concepts of power is an emphasis on enactment and possibility. Power, then, cannot be trusted as an abstracted and predetermined phenomenon, but instead explored through its persistent practice (Rose M. 2002). Thus it is vital to avoid narrow explorations of macro rationalities of power, such as the specified governmentality of neoliberalism. The purpose of spacious investigation is to examine how diverse governing power is practised in prosaic ways by the very people and institutions who shape the contexts and actions of governing (Dean 2001; O'Neill and Argent 2005).

Active and practiced understandings of power present an open and hospitable framework for researching contexts of governing. The focus of analysis is “the effort more than the effects … not whether certain strategies win or lose but, literally, how they play” (Rose M. 2002: 397). From this spacious perspective,
neoliberalism is repositioned as a fundamental strategy of contemporary governing that is rendered real only when actually practised. Therefore, neoliberalism is not a dominant governmentality to be studied for its intrinsic effects, conflicts and resistances, but one logic of governing that can play out in different ways as part of complexly assembled contexts (Ong 2007). Active political and social practice is at the forefront of Foucauldian frameworks of power, operating as an everyday habit of governing rather than an exceptional challenge or resistance to stabilised performances of power (Rose M. 2002). Denaturalising systematised notions of governing power opens up possibilities for practising social governing that are not always recognised in strong theories of power.

In re-activating notions of power, governmental understandings also challenge assumptions about the ways in which subjects are formed. Spacious governmental analytics oppose traditional concepts of power as the conscious domination and repression of subjects (Lemke 2002). Foucault utilises the term ‘conduct’ to describe practices of power as it implies notions of both leading, and following, certain ways of behaving (Foucault 1983). Governing is subsequently understood as the “conduct of conduct” not in a “fixed and closed regime, but rather an endless and open strategic game” (Gordon 1991: 5). Individuals then, are not subject to a homogeneous domination under an ideologically structured and centralised state power, but are themselves simultaneously undergoing and performing power (Foucault 1986a). Subjection, as with power more generally, is essentially productive, processual and temporal (Powell and Gilbert 2007). Subjection involves not only what “unilaterally acts on a given individual as a form of domination, but also [what] activates or forms the subject” (Butler 1997: 84). This productive notion of subjection shifts governmental analyses from following trajectories of repression and co-option to viewing enactments of subjects, or as Gibson (2001) suggests, ‘how subjects become’.
Research on governing often silences the voice of the subject under the weight of dominant neoliberal governmentalities. At best, subjects are offered the voice of resistance. Yet as M. Rose (2002: 384) notes, in performative and productive networks of power, notions of resistance are rendered redundant as “the only thing that defines resistance as resistance is that it is deemed to be in opposition to a pre-established system of power”. The actual practices of power are decidedly more complex and changing than the simplified dichotomy of co-option or resistance. For spacious governmental research, social practice and the becoming of subjects (both imposed and produced) are the focus of analysis, and indeed the very context in which governing is enacted. Moreover, it is this open context which allows for diverse possibilities and subjectivities to emerge, exposing “the potentiality that remains unexhausted” (Butler 1997: 131). From an open perspective, dominant governmentalities of neoliberalism appear less controlling and strategic, instead co-existing through the diverse activities of people and the possibilities of creative, ethical and caring practices of governing.

By valuing productive trajectories of power and subjection, I do not mask or deny the effects of specified forms of neoliberal governmentality. Rather, I suggest that spacious perspectives assist in building an assemblage of weak theories which frame governing settings in open and hospitable ways. I allow practices of governing associated with neoliberalism to co-exist with divergent enactments of power which may be decidedly less individualistic, privatised and economistic. Moreover, acknowledging diversity introduces practices of power that are not necessarily strategic—power that may not always travel in the directions assumed or with the intentions predicted (Larner and Butler 2007). Indeed, diverse enactments of power can represent *ad hoc* and variable
performances. Subjects then, are not merely faced with the choice of resisting or being co-opted in the face of strategic, centralised and controlling neoliberal projects. Instead, subjects ‘become’ in productive and creative ways, interjecting diverse actions and affects which are co-constitutive of the contexts and practices of governing. It is how power is practised and subjects become that is central to understanding the contexts and actions of social governing.

2.1.2 Governmental questions of practice

Foucault’s predilection for questioning how governing is enacted assumes a central position in spacious governmental framings. As in the case of power and subjection, an emphasis on enactment opens up a range of possibilities and potentialities often obscured by overarching epistemological frameworks of governing. For Foucault (1980a: 80), a perspective on enactment requires attention to:

Discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise, and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects.

Rather than proceeding unproblematically from rationalities to enactments, these questioning frameworks provide an opportunity to inclusively engage two important dynamics of governing: first, the contingencies and possibilities of practice and second, the formalisations and sedimentations that form through practice.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{10} Practice and sedimentation are valued individually in my terminology but I continually highlight the analytical and ethnographic interconnections between these actions, with sedimentations occurring through continual practice.
First, Foucauldian analytics of governing offer some breathing space for possibility and change. The concept of contingency, in particular, is useful in capturing the shifting dynamics of practice in governing spaces which dispels “any sense of necessary unfolding” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 49). The rationalities, technologies, and subjections of any one governmental project may be enacted, or not. Indeed, contingency necessitates an acknowledgment that events and practices may not occur (O’Neill and Argent 2005); a process Bourdieu (1999: 57) describes as “retrieving the possibility that things could have been otherwise”. Most importantly, the ‘otherwise’ that Bourdieu describes is not merely resistant or contradictory, as there is no overarching rule of unfolding with which to conflict (Rose M. 2002). Seemingly dominant governmental projects emerge as less controlling and hegemonic from contingent perspectives. The focus of analysis shifts from the effects to the enactments, or efforts of governing themselves—the historical, geographical and political contingencies which “determine the scope of what is possible” (O’Neill and Argent 2005: 5; see also Rose M. 2002).

Second, Foucault’s analytics encompass endurances, materialisations and sedimentations that necessarily occur through governing practices. Avoiding a relativity of contingency, Foucault examines ‘systems of dispersion’, or regimes of practices, whereby phenomena proliferate through relatively organised ways of doing things (Foucault 1972; Foucault 1991a). The order Foucault describes is not strategically and coherently imposed from above, but representative of transient or ‘local changing rules’ (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983). For Gibson-Graham (2006: 50), the processes of sedimentation are enacted through “the performativity of discourse, the materiality of subjection, [and] the sedimenting practices that leave indelible marks on the landscape and its inhabitants”. Regimes or sedimentations of practice cannot be solely understood through programmes and policies. Rather, regimes need to be examined for the ways in which they come into being, are maintained, transformed and enacted … or not (Gordon 1991; Dean 1999).
The spaciousness of Foucault’s analytics of governing allows for sedimentation and possibility to co-exist, interconnecting and conversing in diverse ways in the everyday spaces of governing. In acknowledging this co-existence, I seek to challenge common assumptions about the ‘nature’ of the formal and informal practices of governing. Formal and sedimenting processes are not inherently oppressive—to be resisted and challenged. Indeed, sedimentations of ethical and caring practices are also possible in the contexts of governing. Conversely, the contingency of possibility and change is not essentially radical and progressive, but can pose ad hoc, variable and individualistic interjections into ethical practices of governing (Barnett and Land 2007). Contingent dynamics of sedimentation and possibility oppose notions of a perfect translation between rationality and enactment, policy and performance. Indeed, the sedimentations and possibilities of governing are formed by historical, geographical and political circumstances, and the people who actively practise governing. The questions for researchers then are: how do governing practices sediment and who is involved in their sedimentation?

Foucault prioritised the practices and productivities of power and subjects in order to support a contingent analysis of governing unencumbered by strong theories. In the remainder of this chapter, I aim to maintain the questioning of a spacious governmental framing while discussing the historically-specified governmentalities of neoliberalism and their interarticulations with contemporary modes of governing. The actual practice of such a spacious governmental approach necessitates considerable effort, activity and care in order to sustain the openness of contingent perspectives as part of historically-specified circumstances. The possibility of things being ‘otherwise’ (Bourdieu 1999) is vulnerable to obfuscation and reintegration into domineering governmentalities of neoliberalism (‘post facto rationalisations’) (Larner and Butler 2007). In such approaches, diversity is continually defined in relation to an overarching neoliberal epistemology as hybridity, resistance or failure. Thinking and
practising possibility requires continual work and attention to the details and contingencies of practice. Such attention to practice enables the repositioning of neoliberalism from that of ‘dominating governmental project’ to ‘possible practice’, one that becomes sedimented only through continual activity and performance (O’Neill and Argent 2005).

2.2 Specified governmentality: neoliberalism and interagency working

Thinking about how social governing is enacted requires attention not only to possibility, but to the practices that become formalised, the ways in which practices materialise, and the people involved in these processes. Foucault himself undertook wide-ranging analyses of the ways in which specified practices of governing formalise in particular historical and geographical circumstances, as ‘regime of practices’ (Foucault 1991b). In this section, I consider Foucauldian understandings of neoliberalism as one such regime of practices, or governmental project, that is commonly positioned as pervasive in current modes of governing. Governmental understandings of neoliberalism have assumed a dominating position in recent studies of governing, utilised in identifying and particularising instances of neoliberal governing (e.g. Beeson and Firth 1998; Higgins 2001; McDonald and Marston 2005). It is this tendency to specify instances of neoliberalism that I suggest may be problematic in governmental accounts when unaccompanied by more spacious Foucauldian approaches. So how can historically-specified governmental understandings

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11 Foucault's analyses of specific regimes of practices, and governmentailities, most often appear in geographical research as solely concerned with neoliberalism (e.g. MacKinnon 2000; Higgins 2001; Raco 2003). Yet Foucault's analysis can be broadly positioned in four historical domains: the theme of 'pastoral power' in concepts of governing across both Greek philosophy and early Christianity; government in early modern Europe associated with reason of state or the 'police state'; the beginnings of liberalism as an art of government in the 18th century; and lastly, post-war forms of neoliberalism in Germany, USA and France (Gordon 1991). To recognise the diversity of Foucault's analyses is to draw attention to the innate multiplicity of governing regimes and the importance of historical and geographical circumstances in undertaking governmental analysis.
help in analysing current practices of governing? Why is it important to understand the framings and practices of neoliberal modes of governing? Why should spacious theoretical framings attend to neoliberalism at all? And how might spacious understandings of governing include, but not succumb to, neoliberal modes of governing?

I suggest it is important to understand neoliberalism as it is complexly engaged in contemporary spaces of social governing, not as an imperative but as a possibility (O’Neill and Argent 2005). In the following discussions, I avoid partaking in the seemingly more significant and powerful conversations of an abstracted ‘all-conquering’ neoliberal phenomenon (Barnett 2005). Moreover, I attempt to refrain from the resistant, yet paradoxically reinforcing, process of creating a neoliberal ‘straw person’ as the target of critique. Instead, I discuss neoliberalism as one possible practice of governing. Neoliberalism, then, is a practice that is selectively and often unsystematically performed as part of complex historical and geographical contexts (O’Neill and Argent 2005; Castree 2006; Ong 2007). Thus my ensuing ethnographic research is not concerned with the variable enactments, translations and resistances of neoliberalism—‘actually existing neoliberalism’ (Brenner and Theodore 2002)—but with the enactments of interagency as part of ‘actually existing governing’ involving policies, people, institutions and practices.

Throughout this section, I aim to assemble weak theories of neoliberalism as a specified governmentality with various tendencies and possibilities across contemporary social governing contexts. Firstly, I examine neoliberalism and the ways in which it might engage with current practices of social governing. Research approaches the relationship between neoliberalism and social governing in diverse ways. Yet I suggest that studies of everyday political and social practice have contributed the most to understandings of social governing (e.g. Larner and Butler 2007). Secondly, I focus the discussion on interagency
working as a currently prevalent technique of social governing. Governing techniques such as interagency working are increasingly rescripted in policy through the neoliberal rhetoric of efficiency (e.g. pooling of multiple agency resources) and effectiveness (e.g. ‘joined-up’ working for ‘joined-up’ problems). For most strongly theorised analyses, these rescriptions are positioned as indicators of the broader co-options of neoliberalism (e.g. Porter and Craig; McDonald and Marston 2005). While governmental researchers may be rightly wary of neoliberal rescriptions of social governing, I suggest that it is also vital to retain a spacious governmental perspective on practice. Such a spacious perspective avoids the limitations and encumbrances of epistemological assumptions around the ways in which neoliberalism travels, subjectifies and dominates.

2.2.1 Social governing and the interarticulations of neoliberalism

Neoliberalism emerges as a key focus for studies of social governing due to its strong positioning in accounts of contemporary governing, described as nothing less than the “commonsense of the times” (Peck and Tickell 2002: 381). The concept of neoliberalism has a long genealogy but commonly refers to a preference for market mechanisms across all domains of governing and a subsequent rescription of the relationships between market, state and citizen. This rescription process marks a reorganisation of states through informal and devolved networks of governing (‘government at a distance’; Rose 1993; Clarke and Newman 1997; Lemke 2002), and a refiguring of citizens around the responsibilised behaviours of economically-rational actors (Lemke 2001). Most

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12 Genealogical investigations of neoliberalism suggest that the term has significantly shifted in meaning and use over its recent history. A very brief overview of these genealogies reveals broad variations in understandings of neoliberalism from a concept originating in early 20th century political philosophy (based on writings of Hayek and Friedman), to a market-based political-economic project, and most recently, a form of economic and social rule. Analysts now variously frame neoliberalism across these understandings, as “a set of political ideas, a hegemonic ideology and a governmentality” (Larner 2005: 3).
recently, neoliberalism has been used to describe a form of economic and social rule characterised by a sustained attention to traditional market-based mechanisms, yet with a simultaneous incorporation of socially-framed rationalities—a mode of governing that pursues market-based efficiencies together with socialised notions of effectiveness (Larner and Butler 2004). Variously described as ‘roll-out’ neoliberalism (Peck and Tickell 2002), the ‘Third Way’ (Giddens 1998), ‘social neoliberalism’ (Cerny 2004), and ‘after neoliberalism’ (Larner and Craig 2002), this most recent form of neoliberalism engages the social in particular ways and has introduced a range of rationalities and technologies into the framings of social governing.

Indeed, from a governmental perspective, the recent rescriptions of neoliberalism involve two interconnected rationalities of particular importance to my research: namely, relational and etho-political rationalities. Firstly, relational rationalities of governing expand traditional neoliberal provisions for the individualised and economically-rational behaviour of citizens to include expectations that people will work together (as part of families, communities, workplaces) to activate market opportunities (Rose 2000; McDonald and Marston 2005). Relational agendas are generally utilised in social governing settings as a means of framing partnership working within government (e.g. interagencies), and setting-up reciprocal relationships between government and citizens (e.g. community participation). Relational rationalities are increasingly employed as a fundamental foundation for changing the culture and practices of governing. Indeed partnership-based modes of working, such as interagencies, are positioned as creating considerable efficiencies in government resourcing

13 The term ‘relational’ is adopted from Wendy Larner’s research (e.g. Larner and Butler 2004; Larner and Craig 2005) where it is used to describe the role of partnerships in current governing. The term is utilised to mark shifts in neoliberal priorities from encouraging people to act solely as market citizens, to new socialised aims encouraging people to act together, or relationally, to support individual economic well-being. Across state institutions and communities, relational rationalities are increasingly central to the policies and programmes of partnership-based working in and between governments and citizens.
and increasing the effectiveness of service delivery (Lowndes and Skelcher 1998; Newman 2000). Partnership modes of working are particularly valued in current social policy framings as a means of overcoming many of the intractable problems of bureaucratic welfare provision (e.g. dependency), as well as the earlier failures of the neoliberal state (e.g. social disintegration). Thus partnership-based modes of governing are viewed as mediating market-based efficiencies with socially responsive and effective services (Smith and Easterlow 2004).

Secondly, specified governmental research highlights the key role of etho-politics in recent socialisations of neoliberalism. Etho-politics is a Foucauldian notion defined by attempts to shape conduct through values and beliefs founded in concepts of self-government (Dean 1999; Rose 2000; Flint 2003). Ethical self-conduct implies a civil behaviour which extends economically-rational actions to include moral undertakings, enacted within the spaces of community and family, and the domains of work and consumption (Flint 2003). The individual is rethought as ‘self-empowered’, an ‘active citizen’ or ‘entrepreneur of the self’ (Rose 1992). An etho-politics of neoliberalism redefines the subjects of social governing as possessing an innate ability to engage, create and sustain their own individual and community well-being (e.g. unemployed people are reconstituted as ‘job seekers’ with an innate responsibility to create their own means of access to the labour market). As a result, etho-political priorities rescript notions of social need; shifting understandings of need as an outcome of impoverished material and cultural resources, to the conscious consequences of citizens choosing not to engage in self-empowered and entrepreneurial activities (Rose 2000). Much governmental analyses have sought to expose the specified ways in which social governing has been determined by neoliberal etho-politics—‘discovering’ the proliferation of etho-
political techniques of governing\textsuperscript{14}; the simultaneous reductions in state support; and, increases in the personal and economic responsibility of service recipients (Lemke 2001; Flint 2003).

In specified governmental framings, relational and etho-political interactions between government and citizens involve states assuming newly inscribed roles as ‘partners’. This shift in roles is described by Amin (2005) as a replacement of the ‘get-on-your-bike’ philosophy of traditional neoliberalism, with a ‘hand-up/on-your-bike’ hybrid. Citizens, families and, most particularly, communities are redrawn in this partnered relationship as responsibilised actors; actors with an obligation to assist government in facilitating effective social service delivery through relational and etho-political behaviours (Bevir and O’Brien 2001). Notions such as social capital are used to describe the capacity of communities to display relational conduct, etho-political activity, and robustness in absorbing the negative impacts of economic changes and supporting the processes of ‘good’ effective governing (Putnam 1993; Harriss and De Renzio 1997; Gibson and Cameron 2005). From specified governmental framings, enrolling subjects in mutually obligatory relationships may create seemingly more socialised neoliberal subjections, yet remains underscored with the governing priorities of neoliberalism and the production of economically-rational actors (e.g. Rose 2000; McDonald and Marston 2005).

\textsuperscript{14} Early intervention and prevention are two techniques of social governing with long genealogies (see Chapter 4), yet are currently framed as indicators of neoliberalism: a means of achieving efficiency (long-term savings in government resources) and effectiveness (solving problems before they become entrenched). In specified governmental framings, these techniques are understood as promoting etho-political responsibilities primarily in children and communities identified as disadvantaged or lacking in responsibility/social capital. The figure of the child is particularly drawn upon as a potentially unifying and redemptive agent (‘a productive investment’), presenting an early opportunity to shape subjects of governing (Prout 2000; Dobrowolsky 2002; Elizabeth and Larner 2003). Etho-political techniques of social policy are thus portrayed as both a natural socialised panacea to achieving economic efficiency, and perhaps more influentially, as an added measure assisting citizens in becoming moral and economically responsible actors early in their lives.
Together, relational and etho-political rationalities form key interconnected features of neoliberalism that reflect attempts to achieve congruence between social/relational/moral behaviours and the economically-rational citizen (Lemke 2002). Partnership-based technologies, such as interagencies, are seen to exemplify and translate these key neoliberal rationalities (Larner and Butler 2007). Indeed, partnership-based programmes are the subject of many research projects seeking to trace the ways in which neoliberal rationalities are reforming governing settings (e.g. Porter and Craig 2004; McDonald and Marston 2005).

Yet I argue that much of this research is persistently plagued by strong theoretical framings. In these framings, partnership-based working is positioned as mirroring the Janus-faced nature of contemporary neoliberalism—reflecting a “new economy of welfare professional power” (Allen 2003: 287). Partnership working is viewed then as a compensatory attempt to address earlier market failures through the “engineering” of moral and active neoliberal subjects (McDonald and Marston 2005: 381), and a superficial incorporation of social concerns into what remains a neoliberalising governmental project (Clarke 2004). Any ethical concerns of partnership are viewed as largely co-opted by relational and etho-political rationalities, concealing the diverse motivations, beliefs and commitments which drive partnered working.

In the following discussion, I approach interagency modes of working from a more spacious perspective, as currently popular technologies of governing which expose engagements with neoliberal rationalities, yet always as “historically produced through place-specific struggles and contestation” (Larner and Butler 2007: 87). Interagency modes of working have long genealogies in the social governing domain and involve a range of understandings, motivations and practices which cannot ever be solely defined and contained by relational and etho-political rationalities.
2.2.2 Social governing and techniques of interagency working

Interagency working has assumed a prominent position in social governing settings, practised and sedimented across diverse procedures of human service delivery as ‘a normal way of doing business’ (Larner and Butler 2007). For governments, interagency working is rhetorically positioned as a foundation for transforming practices of governing; a “seedbed of change for the ethos and culture of the public service” (Vincent 1999: 54). Connecting agencies, workers and services across state institutions is largely represented in policy as a novel approach to the practices of human service delivery which increases the efficiency of service delivery (e.g. pooling of agency funding and resources), and the effectiveness of services (e.g. diverse and connected social services addressing complex needs, or ‘joined-up working for joined-up problems’) (Phelps and Tewdwr-Jones 2000; Larner and Craig 2005). Larner and Butler (2007) suggest that the re-invigorated predilection for partnership-based modes of working has resulted in a considerable shift in interagencies from largely ad hoc and operational activities to the more strategic interventions of government policy, institutional procedures and programmatic practices.

While modes of interagency working are not entirely new (Cochrane 2000), the shift that Larner and Butler (2007) describe is often framed in governmental research as reflecting recent movements in neoliberal governing more generally. Interagency working is viewed in specified governmental accounts as one of the many mediatory techniques of neoliberalism which responds to designated problems of the bureaucratic welfare state and the failures of traditional market reforms (Milbourne et al. 2003; Larner and Butler 2007). Some researchers maintain that the mediatory position of interagency working represents a genuine opportunity to undertake more effective and collaborative social governance (Clarke and Newman 1993; Rhodes 2000b; Clarke and Glendinning 2002). However, much of the literature on governing frames interagency working as one technique of the recreated, or ‘roll-out’ forms of
neoliberalism—one of the many attempts to ostensibly “incorporate social agendas” and “recruit subordinated partners” into the project of neoliberalising government (Clarke and Glendinning 2002: 34, 46). Moreover, interagency working is viewed as a primary means of redefining economically-rational actors through the more recent socialised subjections of relationality and etho-politics. This re-defining process is positioned as a co-opting and moralising one that seeks to “engineer active citizens” (McDonald and Marston 2005: 381) and “reactivate self-motivation, self-responsibility and self-reliance” of social service recipients (Rose 1996: 335).

An overly specified governmental perspective firmly situates interagency working at the nexus of revised market, state and society relations. The positioning of interagency working in this nexus is seen to create considerable tensions for practising interagency working. Indeed interagency workers are understood as, at best, coping with the off-loaded consequences of neoliberal hybridisation; attempting to reconcile traditional market-based demands (e.g. evaluation and accountability) and relational/etho-political approaches (e.g. collaborative working and community participation) (Milbourne et al. 2003; Larner and Butler 2004). Many research projects describe the obstacles of interagency as arising from these broad-ranging shifts in governing, such that they face problems of economistic goals, short-term commitment and funding, evaluation and performance agendas, closer political scrutiny and overlapping institutions and workloads—all factors which challenge and impede genuine commitments to collaborative working and social support (Vincent 1999; Miller and Ahmad 2000; Milbourne et al. 2003; Larner and Butler 2007).

Considering interagency working from strongly theorised neoliberal perspectives may, I suggest, induce analysts to challenge the authenticity of relational working, as well as the intent of relationships inscribed in these modes of social governing. For Dean (1999: 173) then, partnerships in governance form conduits for the transmission of “technologies of agency” (enhancing and
improving our capacities for relational participation and action); and “technologies of performance” (where these relational capacities are compared, evaluated and calculated so that they might be optimised). Further, McDonald and Marston (2005) argue that this transmission of neoliberalising technologies creates dispersed networks of authority whereby workers engaged in partnered forms of working become “tutors in the arts of self-management”—acting to “liberate the subject from self-defeating thoughts and habits that stand in the way of realizing the active [neoliberalised] citizen” (McDonald and Marston 2005: 396; see also Rose 1996). From such strong perspectives, interagency working is understood as a more socially-defined and acceptable means of producing the market citizen, which remains nevertheless infused with underlying neoliberal requirements, relational responsibilities and etho-political subjections of both state workers and social service recipients.

Common frameworks of interagency working and neoliberalism offer understandings of current governing practices. Yet, as Larner and Butler (2007) suggest, much of this analysis has been caught and bound in strong conceptualisations and determinations of neoliberal modes of governing by concluding that:

New subjects and spaces of community are being co-opted into hegemonic projects and that the neoliberal state still controls community processes and outcomes despite the rhetoric of collaboration.

(Larner and Butler 2007: 73)

The innately productive enactments of power and subjects in governing are overlooked and obscured in the overarching desire to name and categorise neoliberal existences (and variabilities) in the social governance practices of states. Interagency working is, and has been, instituted and enacted in diverse ways and contexts that can also represent something “qualitatively different”, rather than “mere temporary variant(s) of something more enduring” (Castree
Moreover, these diverse enactments of interagency working muck around in the “messy actualities” and congested activities of state institutions (Marinetto 2003: 110). Indeed, interagency working exhibits a long genealogy of diverse understandings and practices involving actors and institutions creating, modifying and sustaining this mode of working as part of particular political and historical contexts.

In practising both spacious \textit{and} specified governmental research, I argue for some breathing space: scope for the co-existence of interagency performances which may be ‘qualitatively different’. Firstly, I pose questions on the extent to which practices of partnering work have been revised and determined by neoliberalism. In the Australian context at least, governments maintain strong institutional traditions of social support atypical of neoliberalism, with interagency modes of working themselves emerging from long and varied genealogies of social support (Bevir 2003; Everingham 2003; O’Neill and Moore 2005; see also Chapter 4). Secondly, strong notions of oppressive neoliberal co-option do not fully value people as heterogeneous actors who bring knowledgeable, creative and ethical understandings and practices to their everyday work (Roberts \textit{et al.} 2005). Rather than perpetuate the binary of oppressive neoliberal projects necessitating ethical resistances, I advocate an openness to the diversity of performances that infuse collaborative work. Practices of interagency are not merely created and enacted as part of a unidirectional imposition of dominant governmentalities, but are fundamentally co-constituted as part of complex and changing assemblages of politics, practice and people.

Interagency is a continually practised mode of working, formed by people and institutions as part of historical, geographical and political contexts. Specified governmental framings of neoliberalism, and its interarticulations with social governing, offer valuable viewpoints on current shifts in governing. Yet I suggest
that it is only when these specified understandings are drawn together with spacious governmental thinking and questioning that a framework of weak theory can be formed; a framing capable of appreciating and nurturing the diverse possibilities of practice and people. A strong theoretical stance, relying only and overly on specified governmental understandings, can obscure the diversity of performances that continually interact with, and shape, enactments of interagency work (Larner and Butler 2007). It is my aim throughout subsequent genealogical and ethnographic analysis (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) to maintain these paired governmental perspectives so as to examine the contingent unfolding of interagency working as part of everyday social governing spaces. Thinking for possibility requires us to challenge notions of unidirectional neoliberal rule as necessarily pernicious impositions on localised end-points (Roberts et al. 2005). Instead, these ‘end-points’ are viewed through the institutions and individuals engaged in continual political events and social actions which necessarily complicate, ignore, rework, and impede neoliberal techniques and agendas (O’Neill and Fagan 2006).

2.3 Conclusions on weak theories of spacious and specified governmentality

Spacious and specified concepts of governmentality contribute valuable perspectives to understandings of social governing and fundamentally support the weak theory approach of the research. The actual everyday practices of governing are prioritised as part of an open and contingent governmental framing; shifting traditional perspectives on the specified ‘effects’ of governing, to a curious and attentive examination of the ‘efforts’ (Rose M. 2002). Power and subjection are fundamentally reconceived in Foucauldian accounts; retrieved from centralised, hierarchical and repressive framings, and re-animated as productive and diversified actions. The focus of my analysis is on how governing is undertaken by institutions and individuals as part of the
prosaic performances that form the very scope of governing practice. The ordinary and familiar practices of institutions and individuals, often dismissed as inconsequential clutter, are drawn out, cared for and valued as forming influences in the sedimentations and materialisations of power. Moreover, the diverse dynamics of governing power are allowed to unfold, revealing possibility and change, sedimentation and endurance, and *ad hoc* and variable practice. In a weak theory approach, it is possible to examine people and institutions for how they become, who is involved in these processes, and how they play in everyday ways as part of political, historical and geographical contexts.

To maintain a weak theory approach, I utilise social governing and interagency working as an entry point through which to examine current practices of governing, power and subjection (rather than just different “flavors” of neoliberal governing; see Radcliffe 2005: 328). Neoliberal rationalities do practice, play and sediment in social governing and interagency modes of working. Yet to sediment elements of neoliberalism is not essentially oppressive—to be resisted and challenged. Indeed, defining resistance only in relation to neoliberalism is a necessarily redundant concept in that it assumes there is a pre-established and overarching project to resist (Rose M. 2002). Moreover, resistance is a diverse practice, never entirely progressive and radical in its motivations or intent. Research then needs to extend seemingly unidirectional trajectories of neoliberal imposition, co-option and resistance, to examine the everyday practices of governing.

Governmentality, both spacious and specified, offers a useful starting point for my assembled analytics, or weak theories of governing. However, the contexts of my research, formed by state institutions, government agencies and workers, suggest the importance of further input into these weak theories. The practices and people involved in these contexts need to be drawn out and attended to as part of questioning the ‘how of governing’. Commencing with the Foucauldian
understandings of productive power and subjection, I attempt to reframe understandings of states and governing with priorities of everyday ‘peopled’ practice. State institutions, and the people enrolled in them, are actively and diversely engaged in practising governing in prosaic ways (Painter 2006). A weak theory approach reveals the scope of possibility innate to the peopled practices of governing. It is this perspective that forms a foundation for genealogical and ethnographic re-readings of interagency spaces and exposes state institutions as contexts of diverse, creative and potentially ethical practices of governing.
Chapter Three

Assembling weak theories of social governing (II)
Social governing is fundamentally shaped by the institutional and political practices, processes and people that constitute states. In my research particularly, social governing is viewed through the lens of particular state institutions and the workers enrolled in these spaces. The everyday practices of institutions and people are central both to how we conceive of states as well as to the very real processes, mechanisms and governing actions interpellating such conceptions. Despite attempts to reposition everyday practice as the necessary foundation of states (e.g. Gupta 1995; Mountz 2003; Painter 2006), reified accounts of ‘the state’ as a discrete sovereign realm are markedly persistent in academic and political debate (Painter 2006). Such strong theories typically trace a materially structured and centralised state. From this perspective, ‘the state’ holds power centrally and exercises this power unidirectionally from ‘top’ to ‘bottom’, oppressing and controlling people and practice in largely predetermined and linear ways (Gordon 1991; Mitchell 1991; Foucault 1991a; Steinmetz 1999; Roberts et al. 2005).

Current analyses of states have become substantially intertwined with considerations of neoliberalism and the ways in which states are involved in reproducing neoliberal modes of governing (e.g. Jessop 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002). Importantly, these accounts point to a specified reorganisation of state
powers under neoliberalism\(^{15}\), characterised by increases in the surveillance and regulatory capabilities of states through indirect and devolved forms of state intervention (i.e. ‘government at a distance’) (e.g. Rose 1996; Clarke and Newman 1997; Isin 2000; Peck and Tickell 2002). It is crucial that accounts of these contemporary shifts in state powers and functions avoid any strong theoretical understandings of states, and indeed strong theories of neoliberalism, in which governmental projects are taken to be naturally translated and unfolded. Everyday institutional and individual practices vitally constitute states and governing activities, continually intervening, shaping and forming governing actions and processes in often unpredictable ways.

Drawing on weak theory, I build an assembled analytics of states informed by two key concepts: first, that states are practised and, second, that they are ‘peopled’ in prosaic ways (see Jones et al. 2004; Painter 2006). State institutions and workers form the contexts of my research on social governing and the now prevalent techniques of interagency working. A perspective on the everyday, ‘peopled’ practice of states allows for a view of social governing and interagency working that remains open to possibility rather than bounded by the reified control of a centralised state. Such a framing re-politicises and re-peoples understandings of states, providing valuable attention to the possibilities and sedimentations of power practised through state institutions, political contexts, and most particularly, the actions of individuals. Most significantly, openly reading for possibility and difference reveals ‘other’ state practices most often subsumed under strong framings of ‘the state’; practices which can be creative, emotive, and as I emphasise, caring.

\(^{15}\) For some analysts, states have been subject to a reversal of power under neoliberalism (the ‘hollowing out’ of states; see Jessop 2002), in which state actions are largely supplanted with the market-centred governing practices of neoliberalism. However, the general approach in governmental accounts is that states have undergone a reorganisation of powers, rather than a reversal, as part of broader rescriptings of market-state-citizen relations (see Chapter 2). From this perspective, states are viewed as undertaking reorganised governing practices through ‘government at a distance’ and ‘partnerships’ with citizens which, while devolved and distanced, are nevertheless infused with enhanced powers of state intervention and control (Bevir and O’Brien 2001; Amin 2005).
The chapter commences with a brief review of analytical concepts that call attention to the ongoing significance of states in contemporary practices of governing and the key role of everyday practice and people in constituting states (e.g. Gupta 1995; O’Neill 1997; Mountz 2003; Painter 2006). I then narrow the focus on states to consider two specific components of my assembled analytics: institutional and political practice, and individual agency and care.\footnote{I focus on institutions and individuals in discrete sections of the chapter in order to draw out their respective value in informing understandings of states and governing. In assuming this framing, I do not promote an analytics in which institutions and individuals are entirely separate. Both institutions and individuals feature in my analysis as analytically and empirically co-existent and co-constitutive, with key interconnections and relationships highlighted throughout the analysis.}

Firstly, I discuss the everyday political and institutional practices which infuse the governing contexts of state institutions. Political strategies and expediencies, together with ‘sticky’ and ad hoc institutional practices, act to shape states’ spaces and enactments of governing in fundamentally diverse ways (see Ciborra 2002). Secondly, I draw on analytics which frame states as ‘peopled’ (e.g. Jones et al. 2004). Many accounts of governing exercise strong ways of thinking which smother and silence the voice of those people who actually enact governing policies and programmes. I engage weak analytical framings which draw in people as knowledgeable actors who are always creating, ignoring and reworking policies, ideologies and processes of governing (Roberts et al. 2005). In retrieving people from predetermined trajectories of state power-subjection, the possibilities of ‘other’ governing practices are revealed. These possible and ‘other’ practices are infused with ethical traditions supporting care and co-existence between state institutions individual workers and community people. Rather than ignoring or assimilating difference into established ways of thinking, I suggest that the process of thinking for possibility exposes the ways in which “things could have been
otherwise” (Bourdieu 1999: 57). Such an open perspective nurtures the diverse people, institutions and political performances that shape everyday ways of governing and becoming.

3.1 Prosaic states: the everyday enactments of governing

Analyses of social governing and interagency working require attention to states. Social policy, government institutions, human service agencies and workers are all (inter)acting as part of historical and political contexts to practise social governing. In the following discussion, I develop my weak theory approach to social governing, supplementing Foucauldian understandings of power and governing with an assembled analytics of states. The literature I draw on supports an understanding of states as practised and peopled (e.g. Gupta 1995; Mitchell 1999; Mountz 2003; Jones et al. 2004; Painter 2006). Through this analytical assemblage, it is possible to question the ways in which prosaic practices of states materialise in government, unfold in institutional settings, and perform through the actions of workers. An analytics of prosaic states thus acknowledges the complexity of actually enacting policy, sedimenting practice and playing politics in the everyday settings of governing.

Foucauldian notions of power and governing are particularly influential in shaping contingent and quotidian understandings of states. While Foucault himself rarely considered states explicitly, he developed an understanding of

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17 From Chapter 2, I wish to reiterate my use of the term government as a basic structural term to denote specific and sedimented parliamentary traditions, institutional procedures, and territorial organisations. I utilise the term governing to refer to Foucauldian notions of diffuse and deterritorialised practices of power, or the ‘conduct of conduct’ (Foucault 1983).

18 Foucault is often criticised for a disregard of the state as a “composite reality and mythicized abstraction” (Foucault 1991a: 103; see Poulantzas 1978; Giddens 1985; Mann 1988). However, Foucault advocated the continued importance of questioning the state, just not in and of itself. Foucault’s critique of the state is related to the contemporaneously fervent links between a materially structured state and the centralised and repressive practice of power, sovereignty and law (Dean 1994). For Foucault, a challenge to the state represented a challenge to these deterministic and materialised representations of a centralised sovereign state.
states through his ascending and relational analytics of power (Sparke 2005; see also Chapter 2). Traditional sovereign models of power sustain notions that states hold and enforce power through reified, territorialised and centralised structures; “the state as a singularised anthropomorphic actor capable of strategic action” (Sparke 2005: 11). Foucault’s analytics of power fundamentally challenge such notions, positioning states as the effect of changing practices of governing, rather than the often assumed reverse (Foucault 1991; Gordon 1991). States are viewed as continually unfolding cultural formations with a powerful symbolic presence in everyday life (Bourdieu 1999), the “dynamic form and historic stabilization of societal power relations” (Lemke 2002: 58). From a spacious Foucauldian perspective, it is important to address the historical processes through which these dynamic forms of power are enacted and the ways in which stabilisations occur. Spacious Foucauldian research thus aims to explore the changing practices of states for their possibilities, contingencies and sedimentations (Rose and Miller 1992; Clarke and Newman 1997).

Arising at least partly from Foucauldian perspectives, the analytics of states I present are interconnected through an orientation to prosaics—the everyday contexts and practices of states that are symbolic as well as material and organisational. The weak state theories that I draw on frame states as:

- representations and abstractions, not unified realities (Clark and Dear 1984; Watson 1990; Painter 2006);
- subject to, and part of, productions of meaning (Painter 1995; Hansen and Stepputat 2001; Mountz 2003);
- varying both spatially and historically rather than as a bounded singular territorial power (Mitchell 1991; Mitchell 1999); and,
- multiple, changing and never fully formed (Painter 1995; Steinmetz 1999).
As Mitchell (1991: 89) argues, “we must analyse the state ... not as an actual structure, but as the powerful ... effect of practices”. The purpose then is not to develop a definitive theory of states or the extent of states’ power, boundaries and characteristics. Rather, the aim is to constantly historicise and contextualise the practice of states’ power as part of particular institutional and political contexts (Gupta 1995; O’Neill 1997).

In many current accounts, an assumed convergence on neoliberal modes of governing has created particular understandings and even erasures of states (Clarke and Newman 1997). For some, neoliberalism implies a ‘hollowing out’ (Jessop 2002) or reduction in state power as a result of an extension in market-based modes of governing (e.g. Rhodes 1996; Reddel 2004). O’Neill and Moore (2005) suggest that such perspectives can, rather problematically, generate waning curiosity in researching state spaces. In more critical framings, states are understood as reorganised, rather than hollowed out. Moreover, states are viewed as reorganised in line with specified neoliberal relationships between states, citizen and markets. States assume a role in these rescripted relationships as mediators of relational and etho-political agendas; ‘partners’ in promoting the obligatory, moralised and responsibilised behaviour of citizens (Larner and Butler 2004). From specified governmental perspectives, recent forms of neoliberalism are understood to have actually extended state powers, sustaining more, if less centralised and apparent, interventions and moral regulations of governing (Isin 2000).

The critique of declining analytical interest in states raised by O’Neill and Moore (2005) is not applicable to the immense and sophisticated theoretical work of Jessop’s strategic-relational approach to states (Jessop 1990; 2002). Jessop’s analysis of the modern capitalist state emphasises that structures and institutions never completely constrain action. Yet, following Painter (2006), I argue that Jessop’s approach remains limited in attention to prosaics, with little explicit examination of everyday practice and individual action.
Governmental understandings of states as specifically neoliberalised generate useful understandings of broad shifts in governing power. Yet I suggest, following Foucault (1991), that we should be wary of addressing states through strongly ordered and overly abstracted modes of analysis. As Mountz (2003: 639) argues, “failures to locate” states in contingent and everyday examinations can paradoxically reify a unified ‘state’: the neoliberal state. Undertaking research that solely seeks to evidence the role of states as neoliberalised undermines the cruciality and diversity of everyday practices and people in constituting states. Moreover, such strong theorising of states can act to sediment notions of overarching and repressive powers of ‘the state’ which form the very subject of Foucauldian critique (Foucault 1991). It is my aim to draw upon weak theories of states as a means of challenging reified portraits of ‘the neoliberal state’. To avoid abstract and strong framings of the neoliberal state does not eschew neoliberalism. Instead, weak theories of states are open to and include neoliberalism as one part of the diverse politics, institutional contexts and peopled practices of prosaic states.

In the following discussions, I aim to assemble weak theories of states by attending to the possibilities and sedimentations of governing practices, produced in and through the everyday actions of institutions and people. Practices of governing never unfold in a vacuum but recursively ‘become’ as part of diverse social, political and cultural contexts (Mountz 2003). As such, there can be no strictly defined state and non-state spaces, only a multiply-mediated and changing context involving heterogeneous institutions and actors functioning across diverse scales and geographies. Moreover, state practices involve individuals working with complex mandates and interests, as well as engaging in the broader contexts of their lives (Gupta 1995; O’Neill 1997; Mountz 2003). The processes of enacting policy or ideology then are engaged as part of this mélange, enacted or not amid everyday tensions, differences and creativities. As Heyman (1995: 264) describes:
Bureaucratic work is internally conflictive but appears, in the single-stranded relationship to the exterior, to be definitive ... and rational.

Investigating states from ‘below and within’ draws out the complex processes of actually enacting policies, practising programmes and coordinating agencies (Heyman and Smart 1999: 15). States are created, contested and transformed in everyday spaces through the prosaic practices of ordinary people (Gupta 1995). Geographical research must question ‘the how’ of these everyday contingent practices which form the very contexts of social governing.

3.2 Practised states: institutional and political contexts

The processes of actually enacting social governing engage policies, politics, institutions and people. In this research, state institutions assume a central focus, revealing the institutional practices, political priorities, and people which shape the ways social governing is understood and performed. In attending to state institutions20, I firstly introduce theoretical perspectives which are of value in informing broad understandings of institutional practices and their possible influence, support and impediment to enactments of governing. Secondly, I examine state institutions more particularly, viewing these institutions as both socio-organisational domains and as apparatuses responsible for effective accumulation and redistribution as part of “highly charged political climates” (O’Neill and Moore 2005: 24). State institutions expose a diversity of

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20 The terms bureaucracy and bureaucrat are frequently adopted in geographical literature to describe state institutions and workers. I have deliberately employed the terms state institutions and workers/actors in an attempt to avoid debates around the functioning of bureaucracy, the duties of bureaucrats, and their positioning in neoliberal rhetoric as largely ineffective and inefficient (see du Gay 2000). As discussed previously, the term ‘state institution’ encompasses the formal institutions and structures as well as informal relationships and actions that shape states.
institutionally-informed, and often ‘sticky’ behaviours that are as much a
reflection of state routines and procedures (e.g. government agency traditions
and customs) as an institutional proclivity to rework and change (e.g. agency
restructures and reorganisations). Finally, I discuss the highly charged political
contexts of state institutions and practices of social governing. Politics are
uniquely engaged in state institutions, as part of the strategies of governments
and political parties, the ad hoc movements of portfolio responsibilities and
funding, and the tactics of ministers and representatives attempting to maintain
leadership and political ‘face’.

3.2.1 Institutional perspectives on practising states
The practices and performances of institutions provide a critical perspective on
enactments of social governing as part of historically formed and politically
practiced contexts. I draw on literature which defines institutions as socio-
organisational domains including practices and rules, as well as their material
manifestations in organisational structures (Bouma 1998; Lowndes 2002;
three useful notions with which to frame institutions:

• Institution is a middle-level (or ‘meso’) concept: devised by individuals,
yet also constraining their actions. Institutions are part of the broad
social fabric, but also the medium through which everyday actions and
decisions take place.
• Institutions have formal and informal aspects: enrolling formal rules or
laws, but also informal norms and customs.
• Institutions show stability over time and have legitimacy beyond the
preferences of individual actors.

I discuss state institutions through attention to institutional practices, traditions
and procedures, as well as particular institutional organisations and their
geographical locations. Often described as ‘new’ institutionalism, these
interconnected understandings of institutions seek to reintroduce the people that necessarily co-constitute institutional practices, routines and sedimentations (Clarke and Newman 1997). As Lowndes (2005: 293) suggests, “it is actors rather than institutions who ‘do the work’”. A renewed attention to people and practice, rather than merely organisational structures, supports my broader analytics of states. This peopled perspective enables an expansive view of the constant interplay and co-constitutive becoming of people and institutions. Through this analytics it is possible to value the contexts in which policy is enacted or not, the people and practices involved in these processes, and the political contexts in which such actions occur.

Academic debate continues to question the extent to which the concepts of institutions are of value in critical geographical research. Such critiques point to several ongoing and problematic practices of institutional analysis including persistent definitional abstraction and an inability to engage with individual actions beyond cursory acknowledgement (see Clarke and Newman 1997; Bevir 2003; O'Neill and Moore 2005). Indeed, even institutional analyses that aim to attend to practice frequently continue to establish rules for its enactment, paradoxically disabling the activity and difference they seek to highlight (O'Neill and Gibson-Graham 1999). For example, such strongly theorised framings of institutional practice are evident in the government policies of interagency working. Drawing on currently prevalent framings of institutions as ‘communities of practice’\(^{21}\) (e.g. Lave and Wenger 1991; Easterby-Smith et al. 2000; Seely Brown and Duguid 2001), interagency policies often portray categorised and

\(^{21}\) ‘Communities of practice’ is a concept originally developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) as a way of describing the formal and informal knowledge sharing and learning of institutions. In developing the concept, Lave and Wenger (1991) attempt to categorise the practice of institutions as a continual process of individuals’ learning through shared social activities or ‘learning in working’. While offering a more fluid interpretation of institutional behaviours than strong theories, I suggest that the approach remains limited in its attention to contingency, people and everyday practice.
cleansed institutional practice and interagency sharing, devaluing the centrality of diverse and contingent practice across state institutions.

While certain bodies of institutional literature continue to exhibit strong abstracting tendencies, I suggest that institutional approaches remain critical to understanding the enactments of social governing. Institutions (and people) act structurally and as agents to constrain and impel actions, thus co-constituting the possibilities of governing practices. In prioritising the ‘efforts’ over the ‘effects’, institutional practices are allowed to contingently unfold and diversify through the everyday performances of social governing (Rose, M. 2002); a process that is vital in expanding strong theorised frameworks of hegemonic neoliberalisms. By more weakly theorising our understandings of institutions, neoliberalism is viewed as not simply and wholly displacing existing institutional structures but engaging in a process of contingent and context-dependent resolutions, conflicts and abandonments through institutional and individual practice (Clarke and Newman 1997). The institutional reforms characteristic of neoliberalism are thus never purely technical, but form part of complex assemblages of rationalities, institutional practices, individuals and identities that cannot be confined to any “one period of history” or any one type of governmentality (O’Neill and Moore 2005: 26).

I propose that an open and contingent view of the everyday practices of state institutions and politics can avoid many of the characteristic problems of strong representations of the state as reified, static and, most recently, hegemonically neoliberalised. As Clarke and Newman (1997) suggest, institutional analysis tends to fail when treated as a separate and abstracted level of study, a site from which to view the translation, or at best, resistance between a governing rationality and the actions of institutions (see also Chapter 2). Institutions should not be viewed as representing the ‘reality’ of a political project or the
achievement of a governmental strategy (Mitchell 1999; Lemke 2002). It is thus less valuable to question whether certain policies win or lose in an institution (Rose 2002), and instead ask how do institutions play? What and who are the actions and people involved in these processes? How do practices and people constitute the everyday contexts of what is possible? In the following discussions, I attend to the institutional and political practices which infuse state settings and help to shape the understandings and enactments of social governing.

3.2.2 States, institutions and politics in practising social governing

State institutions engage and enact social governing as part of diversely assembled practices and contexts. Traditionally, state institutions have been theorised as particular types of institution, what Weber (1947) described as ‘bureaucracies’, characterised by hierarchical structures and explicit rules designed to maximise organisational efficiency. However, theories of bureaucracy are often overwrought with ideal types and rigorous categorising which depicts states as bureaucracies, with little attempt to value difference, possibility, practice and people. State institutions and actors can, and do, engage in bureaucratic actions, but not in a predetermined or comprehensive way (O’Neill and Moore 2005). In drawing on an assemblage of weak state theories, I reiterate O’Neill and Moore (2005) in describing state institutions as both socio-organisational domains and political-economic apparatuses responsible for the successful accumulation and redistribution of resources. Moreover, states are innately practised phenomena that can sediment and

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22 Weber’s notion of bureaucracy describes a specific type of institution, yet includes both public and private organisations as part of the typology. Therefore, the concept of bureaucracy I employ does not solely describe government institutions and practices (see O’Neill and Moore 2005).
materialise in certain ways, yet always as part of contingent, enacted and highly politicised circumstances. As Offe (1985) suggests, there can never be anything common about states through time or place. State institutions then, describe both the material organisation and sedimented practice of states in which endurance and change operate as co-existent dynamics—a continuously enacted context which must be studied for its efforts, practices and possibilities.

In strong theories of neoliberal governing, state institutions represent one of the many rescripted and co-opted spaces of neoliberalism. Firstly, strong framings of neoliberalism position state institutions as re-scripted under market-based reforms of government. These market-based reforms are seen to promote a shift from failing, corrupt and inefficient welfare-bureaucracies, to new, efficient and customer-driven networks of governance (Clarke and Newman 1993; Clarke et al. 2000). The mechanisms that ensure the provision of social support are largely viewed as overridden by marketising forces, diminished by neoliberal priorities and the subsequent off-loading of responsibilities onto individual citizens. Secondly, strongly theorised governmental perspectives frame state institutions as enacting, or alternatively resisting, the scourging forces of neoliberal reforms which seek to marketise, privatise and responsibilise state provision of social services (Argent 2005; O’Neill and Moore 2005). The workers enrolled in state institutions are subsequently framed as co-opted subjects, attempting to cope with the demands of neoliberalism (e.g. economic reforms, reporting and evaluation), while maintaining their everyday commitments to providing social support (Larner and Butler 2007).

Neoliberal rationalities are most certainly engaged in social governing and state institutions and have assumed powerful positions in driving institutional change (Larner and Butler 2007). Yet state institutions fundamentally engage with complex assemblages of responsibilities, rationalities and political practices. For example, states’ roles in successful accumulation and redistribution introduce
unending demands for the reallocation of funds, particularly through human service provision. Moreover, these ever-shifting demands are part of political contexts in which attempts to reduce the resourcing of service provision are interminable (Offe 1985; O’Neill and Moore 2005). Governing priorities which seek to increase economic efficiency and diminish publicly funded services are thus not unique to neoliberalism, with state institutions constantly engaging in diverse negotiations and conflicts between economic growth and social redistribution. These negotiations of governing are always undertaken through imperfect mechanisms, a diversity of agents and differing motivations, and as part of political contexts wrought with the demands of responding to constituents, maintaining leadership, and preserving political power. Neoliberalism is incapable of “supplanting all other operational motives” that infuse state institutions (O’Neill and Moore 2005: 21). Diverse rationalities, policies and political representatives continually argue for a place in state institutions, as part of highly charged political conditions, competing narratives and divergent motives.

As part of an assembled analytics of states, I suggest that practices of social governing need to be examined as part of the complex contexts of state institutions. Strong theorisations of neoliberalism have too long relegated state institutional practices to the backstage of stories of governing. As a result, the actions and complexities of enacting policy have been silenced as the mindless bureaucratic clutter of a prevailing governmental project (see Argent 2005). Drawing on weak governmental understandings, I argue that state institutions need to be introduced as the ‘main protagonists’ in an investigation of how social governing is practiced (Calavita 1992).

I particularly aim to draw out two features of states that are central to my own analysis of interagency contexts: (i) political practices involving tactics, strategies and leadership, and (ii) institutionally-framed behaviours, traditions
and possibilities. As part of this discussion, I highlight the dynamics of these contexts which exhibit differential tendencies for endurance and change. Interagency working cannot be examined as a purely technocratic expression and enactment of neoliberal policy and rationality. Instead, interagency working needs to be investigated as part of congested contexts encompassing political leadership and power, long-running institutional traditions, and the interminable demands of managing accumulation and redistribution. A weak theory approach provides the spaciousness necessary to value the types of everyday practices of state institutions often ignored as part of attempts to define and categorise a reified, neoliberal state.

Political practices: the tactics and manoeuvres of governing
Political practices infuse and inform the practices of governing and state institutions. Tactical strategies, reactive manoeuvres, compromise and surrender are all part of the dynamics of practising politics; that which Foucault (in McHoul and Grace 1993: 84) overtly describes as “war pursued by other means”. Political leaders and public service operators are constantly balancing the roles of managing accumulation and redistribution. Moreover, such negotiations are undertaken as part of political contexts permeated with attempts to respond to the ‘latest’ social priorities, public and media pressures, and the demands of constituents (O’Neill and Moore 2005). Specified governmental perspectives often view states as receding from their role in managing redistribution as a result of expanding market-centred priorities of governing. Yet public perceptions, at least in the Australian context, remain grounded in expectations that social support and service delivery are among the primary responsibilities of state institutions and the actors who represent them. I suggest that in these everyday contexts of practising politics, neoliberal priorities are not as instrumental as presumed.
Recurrent short-term election cycles create further instabilities across state spaces, requiring ceaseless effort in maintaining levels of public support and ensuring ongoing political leadership. Ministers representing individual human service portfolios are continually engaging with the expectations and demands of the territories and people they serve, and their own individual and institutional desires to maintain a reputable status and position of leadership. The dynamics of ‘enduring change’ are continually inscribed in political actions seeking to (re)create new policies, agencies and organisational reforms as part of the often highly publicised, immediate and short-term responses of ministers. Moreover, ministers themselves are often the subjects of shifting political responses, moving between portfolios and out of government entirely, as a means of governments’ being seen to take action on the latest political demands and disasters. Often these political shifts can be slow, gradualist and secretive manoeuvres, as well as short-term, public and immediate responses (Alaba 1994). Governments and their political representatives are part of state contexts that involve public servants, academia, non-government organisations, international interests and community groups as much as the individual and political motivations of politicians (Goldfinch 1999).

From prosaic perspectives, it is possible to view governing through the performances conducted as part of prosaic and ever-shifting contexts. These performances are not always rational, systematic and unidirectional subjections of power, but the characteristic ‘tinkering’ and ‘bricolage’ of everyday governing (Ciborra 2002: 47). In my research, I argue that it is crucial to acknowledge the everyday political actions involved in state institutions as formative influences in the practices and sedimentations of governing. Yet, as a proviso to such a prosaic perspective, I suggest it is also important to avoid common framings which tend to position localised political practice as progressive and resistant in relation to the overarching and powerful subjections of politicians and governments (see Dugdale 1998; Nyland 1998). As I noted in more general
discussions of power (Chapter 2), such a framing paradoxically reifies notions of a dominating power (increasingly viewed as neoliberalised) which necessitates localised and ethical resistance. Rather, what is needed is to extend the scope of political action from binaries of subjection or resistance to openly consider how politics are practised and peopled in multiple, complex and often contradictory ways (Rose, M. 2002; Powell and Gilbert 2007).

State institutions, and the people who co-constitute them, act structurally and as agents in shaping the everyday practices of states and governing more generally (O’Neill and Moore 2005). Neoliberal rationalities are never simply imposed on, or translated through, such congested institutional assemblages and political contexts. Diverse institutional traditions and endurances extend and multiply the possibilities of governing beyond any singular hegemonic project. Moreover, the ever-changing contexts of reforming and reorganising institutions acts to complicate the translations and enactments of even prevailing policies of governing. Driven by political tactics, strategies and manoeuvres, practices of governing are often not motivated by the agendas of neoliberalism but the roles and responsibilities of political leaders and the public expectations of government. An analytics of prosaic states is one, although by no means the only, framing which provides the spaciousness necessary to draw out these common and habitual political practices of state institutions (Painter 2006).

**Institutional traditions: endurance and change**

Social governing and interagency working are necessarily enacted in the contexts of state institutions which I argue are infused with two intrinsic dynamics: that of endurance, and that of change. Firstly, I suggest that the institutional contexts for interagency working support endurances related to the roles, responsibilities and traditions of government agencies. Government
agencies are distinguished by their responsibilities for different human service portfolios (e.g. housing, health, education). State institutions’ responsibilities for managing accumulation and redistribution are played out through these individual agencies in battles for frequently changing and diminishing government funding. Such battles are not simple or inherently detrimental processes that can be captured by notions of inefficient and ‘siloed’ bureaucratic behaviour (e.g. Rhodes 2000a). The actions of agencies are fundamentally informed by their own needs and as such, deploy a variety of tactics in ensuring the continuation of their funding, the maintenance of their jurisdictional capabilities and members of staff. Yet agencies do not merely engage in outright and divisive conflicts based on structural divisions of responsibility. Indeed, agency workers often undertake negotiations, surreptitious collaborations and mutually-beneficial arrangements, as part of a ‘shared ethos’ of maintaining comprehensive funding and support of human services overall (Smillie and Hailey 2001).

In addition, government institutions are scored with the individual responsibilities and commitments that arise from discrete human service portfolios. Agencies engaged in domains of health, housing or education are part of enduring and often disparate genealogies arising from the professional backgrounds of their respective fields, the interconnected understandings and traditions of social support formed in each domain, and the policies and procedures that are generated as part of these genealogies. Such institutional behaviour is most often ‘skipped over’ or condemned as the siloed behaviour of agencies which requires remedy through the imposition of collaborative working (e.g. interagency programmes) (Clarke and Newman 1997). Minson (1998) argues that such institutional traditions and endurances should not be immediately ‘written off’ as regressive and limiting, as they can also represent a shared ‘institutional ethos’ which extends the repertoire of ethical institutional actions. Indeed, I suggest that government agencies are active in creating and
sustaining ethical notions of social support and practices of service delivery. Agencies develop notions and practices perhaps more appropriately honed to their particular domain of governing that can promote pride and fulfillment in the everyday actions of agency workers. Institutional traditions need not be dismissed as mere limitations on governing, but contingently explored as an influential dynamic which can potentially sustain ethical practices of social support.

Secondly, state institutions may maintain enduring traditions while also actively engaging in dynamics of change, reform and reorganisation. Clarke and Newman (1997) describe the constant reorganisation of state institutions as a ‘tyranny of transformation’, expressive of a characteristic love of change. I suggest that these enactments of change are so engrained in state institutions that they are best captured by the concept of ‘enduring change’. The seemingly oxymoronic concept of ‘enduring change’ describes the constant interplays and sedimentations of reform across government agencies. These reforms involve election cycles, expedient responses and tactical performances, together with the often institutionally ‘sticky’ traditions of government agencies. As Neville Wran (Labor Premier of New South Wales 1976-86; quoted in Alaba 1994: 261) describes:

The Public Service is a very entrenched creature with enormous powers of resilience and recovery. It is just not capable of being changed in the short term … you take a slice here and a slice there, but the body keeps wriggling on.

(Interview with Neville Wran—1988)

Government agencies are enrolled in processes of change that are constantly reshaping the procedures, policies, organisational settings and workers involved in social governing. Such processes sustain a dynamic of variability which
features as a type of enduring institutional habit and custom of state practices and contexts. A weak theory framing of state institutions values these reforms as significant practices, rather than inconsequential or regressive restructurings, and thus provides a vital viewpoint on the practices of everyday states.

The concept of a prosaic habit of ‘enduring change’ does not describe unified or predetermined routines of state institutions. Indeed, the characteristics of institutional change are not always evident and are always shifting in contingent ways. Reorganisations may reflect reactions to public and media perceptions of the functioning of government (e.g. accusations of inefficiency and corruption), an immediate response to crisis (e.g. overdrawn budget or a topical social issue such as a rise in unemployment), or may be part of highly emotive appeals to garner support for actions to which governments are already committed (e.g. abolishing a particular service or mode of service delivery) (Maynard-Moody et al. 1986; Alaba 1994). Caiden (1970: 9) explains these processes of change:

Reform is power in action; it contains ideological rationalizations, fights for control of areas, services and people, political participants and institutions, power drives, campaign strategies and obstructive tactics, compromises and concessions.

I suggest that such complex practices of change may elicit variability and a type of institutional ad hocery as part of the struggles for states’ legitimacy and control of an innately unstable governing domain (Clarke and Newman 1997). Moreover, the dynamics I describe are not discrete governing practices. Dynamics of endurance and change infuse state institutions in contradictory yet co-existent ways creating particular habits, traditions and sedimentations of governing practices as part of highly charged political contexts. Such dynamic contexts produce a range of possibilities and sedimentations of governing practices that engage people, ethical performances, relationships and care in the everyday spaces of human service delivery.
3.3 Peopled states: ethics, relationships and care

Individuals are enrolled in the cultural processes of forming states, shaping the ways in which state actions are practised and sedimented in interconnected ways (Gupta 1995; Painter 1995; Marston 2004). The everyday practices of people, then, are fundamental to examining how governing is enacted through state spaces. As Bourdieu (1999: 71) argues:

To understand the symbolic dimension of effects of the state … it is necessary to understand the specific functioning of the bureaucratic microcosm and thus to analyse the genesis and structure of this universe of agents of the state.

While the role of people in constituting states is receiving increased academic attention (e.g. Jones et al. 2004; Marston 2004; Powell and Gilbert 2007), strong theories of states too frequently silence and obscure the forming influence of individuals under the weight of reified framings of ‘the state’. Such framings are undermined by a lack of attention to the ways in which people become, interact and shape state actions, institutions and political contexts (Jones et al. 2004).

In the following discussion, I draw on weak theories in assembling an analytics of practised states; one which openly draws out the practices of people, relationships and care with both curiosity and hospitality. Firstly, I attend to the people who work as part of state institutions, building a personalised and active language which respects the diversity of knowledge, motivations and experiences which people bring to state institutions (Hailey and Smillie 2001; Roberts et al. 2005). Secondly, I aim to further ‘people’ state institutions by enabling a personalisation of the institutional rhetoric of networks and associations which so often defines the spaces of interagency workers. I recognise the possibilities and performances of genuine personal relationships, friendships and ethical working connections between actors, practised as part of
everyday working. Finally, I engage the notion of care to open up the spaces of social governing to a range of possible practices which value social support and nurture the togetherness of people (see Barnett and Land 2007). I frame care not as a simple affect, but as a complex and innately political practice which co-constitutes the possibilities and sedimentations of state institutions and social governing. In valuing the everyday practices of ‘peopled’ states, strongly theorised and sterile accounts of state structures are re-animated and re-affected. This approach opens up understandings of states to a diversity of governing possibilities and practices which can be creative, emotive and caring.

3.3.1 The people of states

Weak theories recognise the need to view state institutions from the inside as practised and peopled in everyday ways; examining states as “peopled organization[s]” (Jones et al. 2004). From a prosaic perspective, individuals working as part of state spaces are viewed as potentially influencing broader institutional structures and practices such that “a profound change in an individual decision-maker is a profound change within the state” (Mountz 2003: 640). Drawing on Foucauldian notions of power and subjection, individuals are not understood as the subjects of a homogeneous domination of structured state power but are themselves simultaneously undergoing and exercising power through complex networks (Foucault 1986a). Thus, as Butler (1997: 84) suggests, attention is needed to “[what] activates or forms the subject”, or how subjects ‘become’ (Gibson 2001). Framing states as peopled foregrounds the ways in which individuals undergo and exercise power as part of governing contexts, revealing the actions, subjections and ethics that help to form state institutions and practices of social governing.
I suggest that framings of peopled states offer valuable understandings that emphasise the practised nature of states, the interplay between institutions and individuals, and the diverse actions of people as part of state institutions. While the literature that I assemble does not often extend beyond acknowledgement to the level of rich ethnographic examination, it does serve to develop understandings of states as practised and peopled (Calavita 1992; Gupta 1995; Mountz 2003). Indeed, the literature forms an analytics of states which challenges the frequent assumption that actors are “simply micro-level clutter” in a broader theory of the state (Calavita 1992: 181), or the “technical conduits” who relay dominant governmental subjections (Clarke and Newman 1997). People are fundamentally active and influential in creating, sustaining and modifying state institutions, and as such, are vitally engaged in the practices of social governing.

Firstly, the analytics I assemble nurture understandings of states as practised phenomena. The very act of attending to people, even if only in theory, serves to question how structures, boundaries, meanings and languages of states that are necessarily created (e.g. territorial boundaries of governments), appear as natural and disengaged from their broader contexts (Mitchell 1991; Mountz 2003). For example, a strict state/non-state divide is challenged once people are acknowledged as recursively engaged in the work of state institutions as well as the broader contexts of their lives. Indeed, people fundamentally interact with and develop notions of what it is to practise as a state institution, and what it is to perform as a citizen (Mountz 2003). Thus the created boundaries of states are considerably blurred and rendered real only when practised by individuals in contingent ways. To understand states, institutions, workers and policies as primarily defined by neoliberal rationalities appears less plausible and possible from these active and complexly assembled spaces of practised states. Indeed, even authoritative policies of states may be described as being enacted amid tension, interpretation and difference (Mountz 2003; Marston 2004).
Secondly, in drawing people into an analytics of states, it is possible to view the complex and contingent interplays between institutions and individuals. It is the primary purpose of accounts of ‘peopled’ states to highlight the power, activity and influence of individuals, yet avoid notions of individuals as unconstrained in their actions, or the sole wielders of power (Mountz 2003). As discussed previously, institutions involve sedimentations of practice and long genealogies of institutional traditions. While these sedimentations are enacted as part of ever-changing political contexts, they can act to influence individuals’ behaviour, shaping their actions, relationships and decision-making (Minson 1998; Schofield 2001; Mountz 2003). The question is not whether institutions or individuals ‘win’ in these interplays of state practices, but literally how they play (Rose, M. 2002). There is no direct trajectory of governmental power operating from ‘top’ to ‘bottom’ which subjectifies and controls individuals. Spacious framings view power as both fundamentally productive and often unpredictable (Foucault 1983). Indeed, sedimentations of institutional practices may nurture ethical practices of social governing that guide and support the everyday actions of workers. Alternatively and simultaneously, individuals at all levels of an institution have the potential to wield substantial influence in shaping the policies, procedures and organisation of institutional practices. These complex interplays of individuals and institutions suggest that governing power does not always travel in the directions commonly assumed nor with the outcomes predicted (Larner and Butler 2007).

Finally, people are fundamentally active agents with the potential to engage in a range of political practices. Many accounts of states may recognise the role of people but only insofar as their ability to resist, usually as part of informal and personal subterfuge, overarching governmental projects (e.g. Dugdale 1998; Nyland 1998). Yet, as discussed in Chapter 2, offering resistance as the sole form of action only acts to further confirm notions of a controlling governmental project. As M. Rose (2002: 384) explains, “the only thing that defines resistance
as resistance is that it is deemed to be in opposition to a pre-established system of power”. The practices of people and the becoming of subjects (imposed and produced) are decidedly more complex, contradictory and changing (Powell and Gilbert 2007). It is important to appreciate workers within state institutions as knowledgeable and heterogeneous, “with sophisticated and diverse understandings of the institutional, social, economic, and political contexts within which they carry out their projects” (Roberts et al. 2005: 1849). Actors are able to enact, create, rework, ignore, or not, the policies and procedures of social governing. People then are not merely faced with the dichotomy of comply or resist, but a range of actions that may be different from, yet co-existent with, key governmental projects.

Acknowledging the interaction of people and institutions also necessitates thought for the contingent connections between formal and informal practices of governing. This approach draws out the compatibility and co-existence of policy and practice, project and enactment (Smillie and Hailey 2001). Workers in state institutions may outwardly and ethically support certain policies of social governing, or they may merely converse in the language of policy while engaging in their everyday actions, or perhaps they often ignore policy rhetoric entirely (O’Neill and Moore 2005). As such, it is important to avoid framing formal policies as innately controlling and regressive—to be resisted. Indeed, formal policies can also be operationalised as valuable addendums which help to support everyday human service practices in communities. Workers may engage in policy development, managerial actions and responsible economic management, yet also be friends, develop caring relationships, and express empathetic understandings of the communities with which they work. Moreover, I argue that these actions are not merely part of performing as ‘good’ economically-moral actors (see McDonald and Marston 2005), but are reflective of the many diverse becomings of workers.
The relationships between people, policy, government and governing are complex and changing. Actors within these governing contexts approach their circumstances “as material to be worked with and negotiated rather than intrinsic obstacles or advantages” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 103). The institutional and political contexts and cultures of governing then should not be viewed as engrafted barriers to local ethical practice, but co-existing in contingent and possibly even supportive ways.

3.3.2 The relationships and friendships of peopled states

It is possible to further extend an analytics of peopled states through an attention to the role of relationships and friendships in the practices of governing. Currently, state spaces of social governing are teeming with the rhetoric of collaboration and partnership (Larner and Butler 2004). Modes of partnership-based work such as interagencies, represent a widespread attempt to institute broader rationalities of relational governing (see Chapter 2). For some, relational governing represents a genuine attempt to undertake more effective and responsive modes of social support (e.g. Clarke and Newman 1993; Rhodes 2000b; Clarke and Glendinning 2002). Yet strong governmental literature frames relational rationalities as superficially socialised concerns which mask the underlying and co-opting agendas of contemporary neoliberal governing (e.g. Jessop 2002; Porter and Craig 2004; McDonald and Marston 2005; see also Chapter 2).

I suggest that both approaches obscure the interplay of everyday relationships in governing with overarching and determinate trajectories of power. Practices of governing do not wield the type of all-conquering power required to completely re-script the complexly assembled and animated practices of people interacting with people. In the following discussion, I wish to re-peopled and re-
affect the framings of partnerships in state institutions. Firstly, I consider contemporary governmental and institutional framings and, secondly, extend these with notions of personal partnerships, relationships and even friendships that help to support and create the practices and sedimentations of governing.

Research on state institutions generally frames recent priorities of partnership and collaboration in impersonal and inactive ways. For much of the literature, discussions of partnerships are infused with the institutional language of networks and associations. While many of these framings attempt to value the practices of collaboration, they undertake this through developing strong overarching typologies to categorise, for example, networks, cooperation, collaboration and partnership (IPAA 2002); and interagency, inter-professional and partnership collaboration (Miller and Ahmad 2000). As discussed earlier, such institutional analyses paradoxically suppress the difference and vitality they aim to acknowledge by establishing strict rules of causal interaction (O'Neill and Gibson-Graham 1999). In addition to institutional framings, the literature on partnerships is also infused with neoliberal framings. From a strong governmental perspective, partnership-based working represents and translates the superficially socialised subjections characteristic of contemporary neoliberalism. This perspective views collaborating subjects as co-opted by the controlling and moralising relationships of neoliberal governing (Larner and Butler 2007). Across both bodies of literature, much analysis of partnership-based working has sought to investigate the various types of partnerships enrolled in current governing, and the range of ways in which they are enacted or perhaps resisted in relation to overarching typologies and neoliberal subjections.

I do not seek to dismiss the established framings of collaborative governing, as this body of literature has valuably informed the understandings and interpretations of my research. However, I do undertake the extension of these
understandings with weak theory framings which allow for the creative activities and productive possibilities of collaborative governing practices. I suggest that the formal typologies of collaboration and neoliberalisation are diversified when attending to the level of governing practice, rendered less convincing and controlling than we might expect. Co-option is not an obligatory requirement of working ‘under’ the power of states and neoliberalism. Rather, states can also cultivate ethical practices, actions and relationships: “not being co-opted” (Gibson-Graham 2006: xxvi). Many current approaches to state-based partnerships fail to capture the significance of personal engagements; restricted by the categorisations of institutional interactions, or the attempts to resist such collaborations as the economistic and moralistic projects of a neoliberalised state. I suggest that a weak theory approach opens up possibilities of genuine relationships and friendships practised between state workers and communities in prosaic and formative ways.

The practices of relating personally to fellow workers and community members can be understood as fundamentally supportive practices in human service delivery and highly personalised interactions and co-operations. Firstly, relationships are not merely informal, unconsidered and casual interactions, but innate foundations to working which can fundamentally “determine the success of projects” (Hailey 2001: 88). Not just working together, but actually liking, trusting and respecting co-workers forms a pivotal basis for enacting effective human service delivery. Relationships can provide vital support to the often difficult work of human service agencies and community workers who continually deal with complex community problems, complicated funding and institutional arrangements, and the difficulties of engaging with a variety of local services and institutions (Larner and Butler 2007: 80). Relationships are developed and nurtured as vital practices of working which can provide the motivation and inspiration to maintain enthusiasm, creativity and care in human service delivery (Hailey and Smillie 2001).
Secondly, relationships are practised in highly personal ways not entirely valued by the notions of association and networking (Mawdsley et al. 2005). Relationships do not involve making every decision and action in consensus, but a considerably more sophisticated process relying on trust, personalities, respect, dialogue and commitment to a shared ethos (Hailey and Smillie 2001). As organisational and much governmental literature attempts to confine and tame relationships as part of categories and typologies, these personal interactions are in practice more likely to undertake different paths; paths formed by the ethics, personalities, backgrounds, working contexts, and the gestures and fluidities of life more generally. Of course, practices of relating to others are not always productive and positive engagements, and can also be formed through manipulation, cynicism and insensitivity (a feature recognised in my subsequent ethnographic analysis; see also Hailey 2001). Effective, easy and unassuming interactions between workers and communities rely on the mutual dynamics of affection, friendship and trust. Moreover, such dynamics are not restricted to the workplace but are a familiar and habitual part of everyday life.

State settings of social governing rely on individuals working together with fellow workers, policy makers, human service institutions and community people in everyday, contingent ways. I suggest it is surprising then that these diverse, yet innately personalised practices of relating to others can become so pervasively invaded by the rhetoric of institutionalism and neoliberalism. Both institutional and governmental research continue to ignore, subsume or even become anxious and hostile towards notions of personal interaction, relationships and friendships in practices of governing (Mawdsley et al. 2005). Strong framings disable the prosaic contexts of states in which governing practices are actively co-constituted by people engaging and relating in personal and everyday ways. To artificially separate states from people and affects involves problematic assumptions that divide and detach the intrinsically connected labours of
governing, production and reproduction (McDowell 2004). Rather than maintain the processes of separating, devaluing and subsuming the personal, I propose a weak theory framing which values people, relationships and care as actually existing and fundamental practices of social governing (Mountz 2003).

3.3.3 Care and ethics in the practices of peopled states

The concept of care is receiving heightened attention in academic debate, with many arguing for a revival of care in response to an increasing extension of neoliberal forces (e.g. Smith 1997; Easterlow and Smith 2004; Lawson 2007). Debates in this field point to a looming crisis of care. This crisis is seen to arise from the rampant advance of market-based governing into the domains of human service provision, the resulting decline of welfare states, and ensuing reductions in the mechanisms and practices of social support and service delivery (Hochschild 1995; Daly and Lewis 2000). In my own research, I assemble weak and less deterministic framings of care. I argue that much of the recent attention to care represents an often anxious antithetical response to an unquestioning belief in the ‘self-actualising’ and all-conquering forces of a hegemonic neoliberal project (see Peck and Tickell 2002).

Alternatively, I frame care as an already existing political practice; one through which “the living together of people” is sustained over time and space (Arendt 1958: 180; see also Barnett and Land 2007). I suggest, then, that attending to care is not so much a process of revival and resistance as one of recognition: acknowledging the shared and enduring traditions of care, and cultivating the already existing ethical practices which constitutively generate care in states. In the subsequent discussion, I firstly introduce geographical framings of care which position care as an antithetical response to the economism of neoliberal
governing. I then build my own assemblage of care as a politics of multifarious, already existing and possible practices enacted across the multiple scales and spaces of social governing.

Care is increasingly contrived in the shadow of neoliberalism. Many recent accounts trace the ways in which care has been subsumed by etho-political priorities, with care subsequently re-framed as an individual, privatised and community responsibility (Smith and Easterlow 2004; Lawson 2007). Workers in the field of social services are largely viewed as co-opted neoliberal subjects, forced to translate the priorities and practices of neoliberal governing. Any caring tendencies exhibited by human service providers are rescripted in specified governmental accounts as submissive, authoritarian (e.g. ‘empathic authority’ McDonald and Marston 2005) or at best, resistant endeavours (e.g. ‘insider policy activism’ Dugdale 1998)—each defined in relation to neoliberalism.

In response to recent recreations of neoliberal governing, some geographers have sought to rescue and revive care from etho-political subjections, advancing care as a newfound responsibility in the fight against neoliberalism. For instance, Lawson (2007: 1) urges us:

[To] think about our responsibility to care … [and] to pose questions in the face of (i) market extensions, (ii) currently pervasive discourses of personal responsibility … and (iii) the withdrawal of public support from many crucial arenas.

Calls to re-institute and re-create care across markets, organisations, state institutions and as part of our own individual responsibilities, are prominent in contemporary debates on governing, with care posing a potentially emancipatory escape from the onslaughts of neoliberalism (Easterlow and Smith 2004; McDowell 2004; Lawson 2007).
While I similarly draw on care as an alternative analytical perspective on governing, this is not merely because of some innate oppositional quality of care in relation to neoliberalism. Comparatively defining care in this way can contribute to sedimentations of a hegemonic neoliberalism and also sustain several problematic assumptions about the practice of care itself: that care does not already exist or is receding proportionately as neoliberalism expands, that care is singularly ‘good’ in contrast to the ‘bad’ of neoliberalism, and that care is inherently local and resistant in the face of a globally dominating and all-conquering neoliberal project (Barnett and Land 2007). I seek to build an assemblage of concepts of care which avoid these strong assumptions and provide an analytical frame for understanding how governing may be practised in caring ways, how states can enact care, and how workers practise the togetherness of care in quotidian ways.

Firstly, I frame care as an already existing practice; the sustained “living together of people” (Arendt 1958: 180), or “the still being here together” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 49) that forms familiar everyday actions. Propositions that we need to revive care as a response to neoliberalism assume that people are not already engaging in caring and ethical practices, that they have been captured by an expansion in the self-interested and privatised behaviours of neoliberalism (Barnett and Land 2007). From this perspective, people are viewed as largely inactive and ignorant, “inhabiting a world of veiled relations that hides from view their real interests and obligations” (Barnett and Land 2007). Moreover, care for others is seen to organically and proportionately diminish as neoliberalism expands its reach into the somehow distinctly defined “caring realms of our lives” (Lawson 2007: 1). As Barnett and Land (2007) suggest, care and self-interest can be co-existent, practised as part of the inherent complexity of ethical subjectivity.
I frame care as ordinary and everyday; not just a part of our private domestic lives but also engaged in the political contexts of governing, the performances of state institutions, and the interactions, understandings and enactments of human service workers. As such, I undertake research which aims to recognise rather than merely revive care, acknowledging the shared and sedimented caring traditions already existing in state practices.

Secondly, despite its often moralised framings, I concur with Barnett and Land (2007) in framing care not as a simple romanticised affect or social relation, but as a multifarious political practice or ‘modality of power’. Care then does not portray a singular fundamental ‘good’ with which to oppose and resist the ‘bad’ of neoliberalism. The practice of care is complex and diverse and can include practical, analytical and even paternal actions (Hailey 2001). Care is not always progressive and ethical in practice, but can be a togetherness that is excluding, and a charitable provision that is disempowering. To recognise this diversity of care is not to disable the ethical potentialities of this political practice. As in the case of care and self-interest, these various actions can co-exist and are not entirely inconsistent with notions of togetherness and social support (Barnett and Land 2007). Moreover, I suggest that a recognition of the diversity of care does not diminish its value as an analytical concept, but instead actually grounds the notion by acknowledging the ordinary and everyday practices of care. This framing of care opens up spaces with which to differentiate, cultivate and nurture the ethical actions of care already existing in the practices of social governing.

Thirdly, I suggest care is an ordinary, everyday practice which is not confined to specified places and times. In constructing care as a resistant force against neoliberalism, conventional assumptions about the localised, privatised and domesticated labours of care are further entrenched in conceptual understandings (Daly 2002). Such assumptions confine care to local actions
and spaces which are continually forced to resist the overarching co-options of neoliberal states. The possibilities of caring ‘from a distance’ then become less plausible under these analytical constraints, and indeed, entirely unimaginable as part of the governing practices of state institutions (Barnett and Land 2007). Re-iterating Gibson-Graham (2006: 59), I argue that we need to “de-domesticate” care from the household and unpaid labour. Care is not limited to informal actions, personal affects and privatised spaces, but can also ‘be at home’ in the spaces of economies, markets, institutions and states (Daly and Lewis 2000; Daly 2002; Smith and Easterlow 2004). Practices of care can be, and I would contend already are, sedimented in diverse ways in the organisation and enactments of state institutions, with a ‘shared ethos’ of caring and working infused across the fields of social governing (Hailey 2001). In opening up the possible domains of care, I allow breathing space for other governing practices and politics, some of which are already operating, wherein caring and ethical decisions and actions are part of everyday governing (Gibson-Graham 2006).

Care is an everyday exigency. Neoliberalism, economies, and states are unable to exhaust or annihilate the need for this practice of togetherness (Daly 2002). People enact the ordinary and familiar practices of care in diverse ways across a variety of geographies, times and spaces. There is no preconditioned and common nature of care as a ‘good’, localised and resistant social relation. As Gibson-Graham (2006: 86) suggest, localised notions of a ‘common being’ need to be replaced in geographic framings with concepts of a “being-in-common”, or “still being here together” which function across diverse spaces and scales. The being-in-common of care is not a unified or homogenised affect of certain domains, but is a diversified political practice which is similarly at home in the spaces of state institutions and enactments of governing, as it is in the private and personal spaces of people’s lives. In framing care with weak theories, I hope to promote more inclusive understandings of governing and state
institutions in which care is an ordinary and prosaic practice. Moreover, I hope that an acknowledgment of diversity and sedimentation in caring practices assists in identifying both existing and potential spaces to nurture ethical social governing; thus generating ‘time to care’ (Daly 2002).

3.4 Assembled conclusions on states, institutions, politics and care
Practices of governing engage complex, diverse and productive power relations, continually acting and materialising as part of historical-geographical contexts. Performing governing power does not always follow orderings from ‘top’ to ‘bottom’, ‘global to ‘local’, ‘power-full’ to ‘power-less’, but exhibits multiple modalities, ethics and political practices (see Roberts et al. 2005; Larner and Butler 2007). States can be understood as particular unfoldings of these diverse and changing practices of governing, rich with dynamic possibilities and historic sedimentations (Lemke 2002). In my assembled analytics, the multiply-mediated performances of states are, in part, constituted by the heterogeneous institutional practices enacted across a myriad of geographies, mandates and interests. State institutions play and unfold through dynamics of endurance and change, exhibiting institutional traditions, continuous change, and the ongoing responsibilities, expectations and demands of balancing accumulation and redistribution. Moreover, I argue as part of my analytics that states are fundamentally peopled (Jones et al. 2004). People working as part of state institutions must be recognised as heterogeneous, knowledgeable and sophisticated actors who engage a variety of affects, actions and ethics which help to constitute the very contexts of governing. In framing states as practised and peopled, it is possible to remain open to diverse performances and sedimentations of everyday governing.
Practices of governing never unfold in a vacuum but are co-constituted as part of social, political and cultural contexts (Mountz 2003). From strong governmental perspectives, the everyday creativities and diversities of practising states are overrun, obscured by the intoxicating rhetoric of an all-conquering and co-opting neoliberal project (Isin 2000; Larner and Butler 2004). Neoliberalism has indeed attracted considerable attention and action in practising states, the organisation and performance of state institutions, and the political contexts of governing (Larner and Butler 2007). Yet from a weak governmental perspective, neoliberalism cannot assume the hegemonic centre of analysis in and of itself. Rather, neoliberal practices are possible performances interarticulated in complexly assembled governing contexts. A failure to contingently contextualise neoliberalism can (as with states) paradoxically reify and mythicise notions of an all-conquering and dominating governmental power (Argent 2005). Throughout my discussions, I aim to attend to the prosaic manifestations of state processes (Painter 2006)—the everyday governing practices that are undertaken as part of the highly politicised, and peopled contexts of state institutions.

The weak theories I have carefully assembled provide an open and hospitable analytics with which to genealogically and ethnographically re-read everyday governing practices. Governmentality, in both specified and spacious ways, provides valuable understandings of contemporary tendencies in governing power and practice, and raises critical questions on how governing is practised through dynamics of possibility and sedimentation. Weak framings of states, institutions, politics and people offer the further necessary grounding for my project which is situated in and through government agencies and workers involved in interagency programmes. The primary aim of assembling these weakly theorised analytics is to provide the foundations for genealogical and ethnographic investigations (Chapters 4, 5 and 6). It is through these
investigations that I undertake the vital and dynamic process of re-politicising and re-peopling state institutions, social governing and the everyday practices of interagency working.
Chapter Four

Contextualising prosaic states
Chapter Four

Contextualising prosaic states: genealogies of social governing and interagency working

Weak theories support examinations of prosaic states and everyday social governing. Rather than seek out already determined discoveries of specified neoliberal rule, weak theories acknowledge the spacious and disjunctive possibilities of social governing as part of state settings (Isin 2000). Yet of course, theoretically acknowledging the possibility of disjunctive governing does not create the methodological means to investigate such practices. States are rarely afforded the types of close and fine-grained methodological analysis reserved for studying everyday social settings and practices. Indeed, states are most often viewed as beyond the social, from fields of political-economic, governmental and bureaucratic theory (Painter 2006). While such theories offer insightful understandings, the everyday peopled practice of states is largely absent, and the interlaced performances of people, politics and power reified (Mountz 2003; Marston 2004).

To challenge any residing theoretical foreclosures, I argue for research which provides scope for the complexity, unevenness and heterogeneity of states (Painter 2006). I suggest that genealogies and ethnographies of states offer the methodological means to support investigations of complex and heterogeneous states. Moreover, both methodologies nurture weak theory perspectives attentive to everyday governing practice, offering what Herbert (2000: 550) describes as an:
Insight into processes and meanings that sustain and motivate social groups … that are both place-making and place-bound.

In the unfolding discussions, I draw on genealogical (Chapter 4) and ethnographic (Chapters 5 and 6) methodologies to examine the prosaic practices that sustain states—an approach that builds thick descriptions of everyday social governing and interagency working.

In this chapter I undertake a genealogical investigation, or historical contextualisation, of Australian social governing and interagency working. As discussed previously, social governing has been recently rescripted through neoliberal agendas which attempt to mediate priorities of efficient markets and economically-rational individuals with the incorporation of more socialised concerns of effectiveness (see Peck and Tickell 2002; Larner and Butler 2007). Interagency working has gained political attention as part of these rescriptings, increasingly utilised across state institutions as a technique which supports efficient (e.g. shared agency funding) and effective (e.g. joined-up government working for joined-up social problems) forms of social governing. Much of the research on social governing and interagency working traces these neoliberalising shifts across state institutions in the US and UK (e.g. Bevir and O'Brien 2001; Raco 2003; Mansfield 2004). While this attention has produced insightful accounts of social governing, there is a proclivity to obscure the diversity and contingency of governing by focusing solely on the post-facto rationalisations of neoliberalism emerging from these ‘centres’ of US and UK governing. Such a ‘centred’ framing of governing tends to view antipodean experiences as idiosyncratic variants of these expanding and globalising neoliberalisms (Stenning 2005).
In valuing antipodean accounts (e.g. Larner 2005; Larner and Butler 2007) it is my aim within this chapter to examine the genealogies of social governing and interagency working in the Australian context. A genealogical examination avoids any strong sense of predetermined governing, acknowledging that practices of governing never unfold in a vacuum but recursively ‘become’ as part of diverse social, political and cultural contexts (Mountz 2003).

To attend to these becomings of social governing, I firstly introduce the concepts, methods and practices of genealogy. Genealogy emerges from Foucauldian framings as a key methodological tool to traverse the intertwining histories of theory, policy and governing practice (Couzens Hoy 1988; Harootunian 1988). Genealogical analysis draws out historical continuities together with contingent variabilities, such that specified modes of social governing are never wholly determined or accomplished. Secondly, I begin to actually practise genealogical examinations of social governing in the Australian context through the key method of policy analysis. In undertaking this examination, I view social policy as a processual creation rather than a static narrative to be ‘read off’ (Larner and Butler 2007). I attend to the complexities of policy creation as part of the congested contexts of state institutions, examining intersections between neoliberalism and Australian (State, Territory and Commonwealth) government policy, and the ways in which these intersections may be different to US and UK experiences. Thirdly, I focus the genealogical analysis on the now predominant social governing techniques of partnership-based human service delivery, particularly interagency working. While strong governmental framings tend to view interagency working as a co-opted

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23 As stated in Chapter 1, I discuss methodologies as a fusion of theory with practice (“the ‘ology’ of method”) (Shurmer-Smith 2002: 95). Thus I deliberately introduce my genealogical analysis with a methodological discussion of the understandings and practices of genealogy and the particular ways in which I have utilised genealogical methods in the research—a process of connecting weak theory and methodology with actual research practice.
technique of neoliberal governing (e.g. Clarke and Glendinning 2002; McDonald and Marston 2002), I reveal a range of influential genealogies that include neoliberalism together with more enduring institutional traditions of state-funded social redistribution and support.

Finally, I utilise two case studies of Families First and SaCC in NSW Government as examples of interagency programmes. I examine the programmes’ policy framings in the contingent historical contexts of Australian social governing and the ever-changing backdrops of state institutions. Australian state institutions are inscribed with long genealogies of social governing enacted as part of always incomplete and highly-charged political contexts. A genealogical examination of these settings reveals diverse enactments of social governing which may include neoliberalism(s) (and their US and UK manifestations), but always as possibilities rather than imperatives (O’Neill and Argent 2005).

4.1 A genealogical methodology: unfolding contingent histories of governing

Genealogy offers a methodological framework attuned to the contingent histories of social governing, supporting ‘thick descriptions’ of governing practices and events over time (Geertz 1973; Foucault 1980b). Indeed, the practice of genealogy is commonly defined as a ‘history of the present’ or ‘history as contingency’ (Dean 1999). The concept emerges out of Foucauldian concepts of governmentality that draw on genealogy as a key methodological tool which is attentive to both historical continuities and contingent variabilities (Couzens Hoy 1988; Harootunian 1988). As Dean (1999) suggests, genealogy is at once diagnostic and anti-anachronistic, uncovering historical formations and sedimentations, yet open to contingent unfoldings and diverse possibilities. In this research, genealogy supports notions of historical continuity and
incompleteness in the practices of social governing, such that neoliberalism is never wholly determining or entirely repressive. This methodological approach allows social governing practices and events to unfold in open and hospitable ways, such that diverse practices of governing can be co-existent.

Challenging strong theories of governing, genealogy sustains my spacious research framings by “dispelling any sense of necessary unfolding” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 49). Indeed, genealogical approaches reinforce the spacious questioning of a Foucauldian analytics in drawing out two vital dynamics of governing: first, the possibilities of practice and, second, the sedimentations that form through practice (see also Chapter 2). Firstly, the genealogical approach widens reductionist framings of neoliberal governing by reading for other histories of governing and the co-existence of diverse governing practices. Acknowledging other histories and practices allows for the multiple possibilities, ever-changing political actions, and shifting institutional settings which inscribe everyday governing. Secondly, the genealogical approach not only acknowledges practices which are diverse and changing, but also those practices which become sedimented over time. These sedimented practices—the “performativities of discourse and materialities of subjection” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 50)—sustain continuities in governing through time. By valuing sedimentation alongside change, any one governing project is revealed as inherently incomplete. Thus, the contingent histories of genealogies expose the unfamiliarity of the past, and in turn, introduce the familiarity of the present (Dean 1999).

In the following discussions, the methodologies of genealogies I describe here are practised primarily through the method of policy analysis. I argue, following Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), that such documentary analysis is a central part of historically-informed and socially-oriented research. While often viewed as removed from the everyday, formal policy documents are in fact socially
produced and therefore require attention to the ways in which they shape, and are shaped by, the social and historical contexts in which they are enacted. I undertake the method of policy analysis in examining the particular histories and contingencies of Australian social policy, focusing particularly on partnership and community-based human service policies, and drawing on academic accounts of such policies where available. In sustaining a genealogical methodology, it is vital to challenge notions of a perfect translation from rationality to enactment, policy to performance. Thus I employ techniques such as policy analysis not merely to trace the variable existence of neoliberal rationalities but to allow social policy and its political practice to contingently unfold.

The types of ‘thick’ historical descriptions enabled by genealogy assist in re-reading the histories of social governing for both continuities and incompleteness, in which the ‘new’ cannot ever fully overcome the ‘old’ (Geertz 1973). Both the creative and constrained aspects of government working are able to co-exist in this framework. Moreover, this process of historicising provides the foundations for understanding the political contexts in which social governing is practised, which in turn informs the in-depth ethnographies of everyday governing actions (undertaken in Chapters 5 and 6). Genealogy offers an assembled analytic and method which avoids determinism and instead allows governing to play in prosaic, contingent yet historically informed ways (Gibson-Graham 2006).

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24 I genealogically examine key policy documents pertaining to partnership and community-based human service approaches and programmes across Commonwealth Government (e.g. MAC 2004) and NSW Government (e.g. New South Wales Premier’s Department 2001), including the two case study policies of Families First and SaCC which are approached as well-established examples of partnership and community-based programmes operating in NSW Government settings. In undertaking this examination, I maintain a view towards the historical foundations, continuities and discontinuities of how these policies play out in government reforms since the 1970s.
4.2 Genealogies of Australian governing: a brief history as contingency

Australian governments have been engaged in a series of recent reforms interconnected with neoliberal modes of governing. In strongly theorised accounts, these reforms are viewed as the varying translations of neoliberalism as it travels downwards and outwards from the seemingly powerful global centres of US and UK governing (Barnett 2005; Castree 2006). As Barnett (2005: 8) describes:

On the one hand, [such research] supports the idea that ‘neoliberalism’ diffuses downwards and outwards from a coherent set of institutional sites located in the United States and Europe. On the other hand, this means that academics can reassure themselves about their sensitivity to difference and contingency by insisting that ‘neoliberalism’ arrives differently in different places.

From a genealogical perspective, Australian experiences and engagements with neoliberalism are allowed to unfold as historic contingencies. Such a perspective not only enables variance but also acknowledges the ‘possibility that things could be otherwise’ (Bourdieu 1999). Indeed, in the following examination of recent governing reforms it is possible to view; firstly, the ways in which neoliberalism has been engaged diversely and much earlier by Australian governments than in stories of ‘globally-centred’ (i.e. US and UK) neoliberalisms and, secondly, the ways in which such neoliberal reforms co-exist with divergent rationalities of governing based on enduring government commitments to social redistribution.

Firstly, Australian governments can be described as engaging in a type of ‘bargained consensus’ on neoliberal modes of governing (Goldfinch 2000). Australian modes of governing are often characterised as recent versions of neoliberal experiences in the UK (e.g. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher 1979-1990) and the US (e.g. President Ronald Reagan 1981-1989) (Yeatman 1990; Pusey 1991; Beeson and Firth 1998), yet unfold from a long history of gradual,
partial and distinct enactments of neoliberalism. Indeed, the Coomb’s Royal Commission in 1976 (Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration RCAGA) began a series of reforms across Australian government institutions which drew heavily on neoliberal notions of effectiveness and efficiency. The proposed reforms of Federal government administration included an emphasis on enhanced managerial skills, devolution of responsibility, flexibility in organisational styles, improved relationships between government and the community, and the creation of a more open and accountable public service more generally. While tabled in 1976, these institutional reforms had continuing and observable effects on successive governments25 (O'Neill and Moore 2005).

Moreover, Australian state and territory governments were also engaged in similar institutional reforms at this time. The NSW Government, as the oldest and largest state administration in Australia, has remained particularly influential in leading and shaping government reforms across both state and national levels (Alaba 1994). For example, the Wilenski (1977) report on the NSW public service raised issues of political responsiveness and improved accountability in government agencies, reiterating many of Coomb’s proposals and leading similar neoliberalising reforms across other State governments (Laffin 1995). As in the case of the Coomb’s report, the proposed changes resonated across successive governments with Greiner’s Coalition (1988-1992) enforcing many of the reforms not adopted by Wran’s Labor government (1976-1986) (Alaba 1994). The later periods of reform in the 1980s and 1990s broadened the focus from responsiveness and accountability to questions concerning the extent of government intervention and control, the quality of government performance, and the promotion of devolution in institutional structures and processes (Laffin 1995).

25 Although the Coomb’s report was tabled as part of the Fraser Coalition Government in 1976, it continued to be enacted well into the Hawke Labor administration (1983-93).
As O’Neill and Moore (2005) note, these reforms initiated by Coombs precede global expansions of neoliberalism. Indeed, these enactments of government reform even pre-empt the neoliberal and managerial agendas associated with Thatcher, Reagan and the roll-back of the post-war Fordist state. From a genealogical perspective, it is possible to view how these once discreet enactments of governing are now subject to the post facto rationalisations of neoliberalism (Larner and Butler 2007). Such rationalisations obscure the diversity and contingencies of these Australian histories of governing with strong notions of all-conquering and globalising neoliberalisms (Argent 2005).

Secondly, Australian governments not only experienced relatively early shifts in governing practices, but also displayed quite distinctive interactions, co-existences and avoidances of neoliberal governmentalities. For example, Australian governments of the 1980s and 90s were particularly involved in maintaining social priorities while undertaking successive neoliberal reforms. Throughout the 1980s and 90s consecutive Federal Labor governments undertook the liberalisation and deregulation of financial, product, and labour markets, together with microeconomic reforms of public institutions and activities (e.g. floating the currency, broadening of the tax base, internationalisation of trade and corporatisation of government assets (Goldfinch 2000; O’Neill and Moore 2005). Yet by the 1990s a series of governing failures\(^\text{26}\) led to a recession which, together with minimised levels of protection, led to a serious reduction in real incomes, increases in unemployment, and an associated increase in political and public unease (O’Neill and McGuirk 2005).

\(^{26}\) O’Neill and McGuirk (2005) outline the failures which halted Australian economic growth during this period, including an inability of the financial system to redistribute capital effectively to productive systems, an increase in current account deficits and foreign debt, and unsuitable monetary policy conditions.
While presiding over many of the major economic reforms of this period, the Labor governments of Hawke (1983-1991) and Keating (1991-1996) responded to the recession with a series of ameliorative and redistributive measures. Throughout their administration they retained a reputation as the ‘party for the underdogs’ (Frankel 1997). Indeed, Australian Labor can be viewed as pioneering a mode of governing typically associated with the later ‘New Labour’ Government of the UK and its now famed ‘Third Way’ policy (Scanlon 2001; Johnson and Tonkiss 2002). As Kim Beazley (Deputy Prime Minister under Keating and Labor Leader in 1996) states; what “others call … the ‘third way’—we used to call … government policy” (Beazley 2000: 9). The Labor governments’ assertion of social justice commitments has been widely critiqued as merely symbolic (e.g. Yeatman 1990). However, the retention of socially democratic commitments has created a particular legacy which, at some level, serves to contradict and co-exist with neoliberal and conservative values (Frankel 1997).

Indeed, an enduring commitment to social justice issues across Australian governments has created political responses and governing actions, even within the conservative Howard Government (1996-2007), which are atypical of neoliberalism. Such atypical actions include the retention of the social-safety net, the restriction of market reform programmes so as to ensure support from non-metropolitan voters, and the maintenance, to varying degrees, of Labor’s key social programmes (e.g. Medicare health care scheme) (O’Neill and Moore 2005). While there have been numerous attempts to expand neoliberal reforms

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27 Responding to rural and regional concerns around the impacts of economic changes, governments enacted restrictions on many market reforms including suspending aspects of protection and financial market liberalisation, slowing privatisation of public enterprises and assets, and enrolling stricter controls on immigration (O’Neill and McGuirk 2005).
across all portfolios, widespread opposition from political and public domains has resulted in the retention of many traditional social justice commitments. Factors such as political resistance from the Australian upper house and State Labor governments, powerful union, green and feminist movements, and a deeply-rooted public expectation that the Commonwealth will ameliorate socio-economic disadvantage, have all contributed to maintaining bureaucratic commitment to confronting social justice issues (Frankel 1997; Davis and Rhodes 2000). O’Neill and McGuirk (2005: 296) describe the maintenance of social and redistributive features as the product of:

A bi-partisan freeze on state-led economic reform ... arising from concerns over the community impacts of microeconomic reforms to the public sector and of the re-engineering of the private economy into a form that delivers more prosperity yet greater inequality.

The resulting governing terrain is a complex one characterised by neoliberalising tendencies in market regulation portfolios, alongside a general retention of post-war government spending departments—a revisioned economic logic that co-exists with enduring social commitments (O’Neill and McGuirk 2005).

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28 Attempts to expand neoliberal reforms include the reconfiguration of Medicare, government funding for private education, and the termination of direct provision of public housing, many of which were undertaken by the conservative Howard Government and propelled by their appropriation (July 2005) of majority control in the Senate (O’Neill and Moore 2005).

29 The influence of Australian state governments is related to their role in determining the federal government’s spending capabilities. The state governments spend the majority of Australian taxation (64%) as part of their constitutional responsibilities for delivering primary services in education, health, public transport, police and the bulk of the justice system; and in employing a greater number of public servants (84%) (O’Neill and McGuirk 2005). The tensions between federal and state governments experienced recent aggravations resulting from the concurrence of a conservative Commonwealth government with the ongoing dominance of Labor governments across the States and Territories. Considerable conflicts emerged from this federal-state tension around governing roles, responsibilities and motivations; conflicts recently tempered with the election of the Rudd Labor Commonwealth Government in December 2007.
A brief genealogy of recent government policy and reform exposes neoliberalism as contingently created, confronted and actively eschewed as part of Australian practices of governing. Governing actions need to be understood as the contingent and recursive becomings of specific political, social and economic contexts (Mountz 2003). Political motivations, state institutional traditions and individual state actors are all highly influential in creating and forming the very contexts of governing reforms and policy. Yet this complex institutional assemblage and political ad hocery of state institutions cannot be entirely viewed or appropriately valued under the weight of centred, globalised and post facto rationalisations of neoliberalism (Larner and Butler 2007). A predilection for strong neoliberal narratives flattens, stifles and homogenises the amassed congestions of governing contexts; ignoring contingent perspectives, genealogies, and those enduring features of state institutions that just ‘keep wriggling on’ (Alaba 1994). A genealogical examination of governing contexts in Australia begins to open up these rich congestions of governing contexts, pointing to the diverse possibilities of actually practising social governing as part of these settings.

4.3 Genealogies of social governing in Australia: interagency and community-based service delivery
Social concerns are a significant feature of government policy and action in the Australian context. Genealogical investigations across recent Australian governments reveal ongoing social and redistributive commitments that guide and shape political responses, institutional practices and policies in fundamental ways. Yet these social concerns also interact with neoliberal rationalities of efficiency and effectiveness. As described in Chapter 2, social governing, and the now common technique of interagency human service delivery, are most often framed as neoliberalised (through the institutions of government) and
neoliberalising (in interactions with governed subjects) (e.g. Rose 2000; Clarke and Glendinning 2002; McDonald and Marston 2005). From this perspective, interagency modes of human service delivery are viewed by researchers as articulated with neoliberalism, particularly through relational and etho-political rationalities promoting the efficient working together of individuals and institutions, and the ethical self-conduct of individuals as part of communities (see Rose 2000; Larner and Butler 2004). In the following, I examine how these particular neoliberal rationalities play, or do not play, in genealogies of social governing policy and programmes across Australian governments.\textsuperscript{30} I particularly attend to interagency human service policies as common techniques of social governing which rely on partnership and community-based working. These genealogies of interagency human service delivery reveal dynamics of enduring change in state institutions—the sedimentations and reforms which produce incomplete neoliberalisations, sticky institutional practices, and varying policy creations.

\subsection*{4.3.1 Interagency human service delivery and partnership-based working}

Social policy and interagency programmes intermingle with recent neoliberal rescriptions of partnered, or ‘relational’ working (see Chapter 2). Interagency working often appears as ‘new’ in research focusing on stories of recent neoliberal revision. Yet through genealogical examination it is possible to view interagency modes of working as more accustomed and settled practices of Australian state institutions. Interagency working has been formulated and practised in the policies and programmes of human service agencies for decades (see also Larner and Butler 2003; Milbourne \textit{et al.} 2003). Indeed, partnered working as part of the Commonwealth Government was already

\textsuperscript{30} Interagency working is widely propagated across Australian government settings, but my discussion will focus on the NSW Government which encompasses the key human service responsibilities of state-level governments and includes the two case study programmes.
occurring shortly after Federation with the formation of the interagency Prime Minister’s Office. By 1976, the Coombs Royal Commission (RCAGA 1976) had established perhaps the first comprehensive attempt at addressing issues of collaboration across and within national and sub-national governments.

The Coomb’s Report promoted partnership working across government as one solution to overlap, duplication and waste in bureaucratic operations. The report made many recommendations to support partnership working in government including joining up services, creating ‘one-stop shops’ for multiple service providers, providing greater client choice and connection with government services, and improving coordination between levels of government (i.e. federal, state and local)\(^{31}\) (Painter 1998). Moreover, State Governments were also enrolling similar interagency policies and practices throughout this time. For example, the Wilenski Report (1977), which examined the NSW public service, sought to introduce changes that would “improve services to the public and streamline and modernise machinery of government” (Wilenski 1977: 11370). The reforms proposed by Wilenski linked the integration and consolidation of government agencies with an enhancement of service provision, promoting interagency programmes as a way in which to sustain networked institutional connections and thus ensure the efficiency of government programmes.

\(^{31}\) Many recommendations of the Coomb’s report were instituted across successive governments. Firstly, the recognition of the need for greater coordination between different levels of government, particularly federal and state, was developed under the Hawke government’s ‘New Federalism’ policy (1990). This policy focused on achieving greater cooperation with sub-national governments, culminating in the establishment of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG)\(^{31}\) in 1992 which sought to institutionalise coordinated government relations in addressing whole-of-government issues (MAC 2004). Secondly, the concept of the ‘one-stop shop’ has been variously attempted since the Coomb’s report with differing degrees of success. Centrelink, the Commonwealth social support agency, was initiated in 1997 and perhaps represents the most significant attempt at creating a one-stop shop. The agency combines income support and employment services together with other services provided by both Australian and state government agencies (Wilkins 2002). Despite recent attempts to restrict Centrelink services and payments (see McDonald and Marston 2005), the strategy has largely been retained as a social safety net.
These long-running attempts to formulate and institutionalise partnership-based working in government have been continued, maintained, and developed across successive governments. Recently, the Commonwealth Government produced a policy for partnered working entitled *Connecting Government: Whole of Government Responses to Australia’s Priority Challenges* (2004). The policy describes partnership-based working as a “foundation of change for the culture of government” and no less than the “public administration of the future” (MAC 2004: vi). Moreover, the current NSW Labor Government maintains an extensive policy framework of partnership-based government working and service delivery including: *Working Together in the NSW Public Sector* (1999), *Supporting People and Strengthening Communities* (2000), *Reforming the Public Sector* (2001), and *Strategic Management Framework: A Whole-of-Government Initiative* (2004). As in the case of Commonwealth policies, the NSW Government draws on partnership-based working as offering a more effective form of governing and human service delivery with benefits including “better and more tailored services to individuals and communities, cost savings through sharing of resources and elimination of duplication, and new ways of delivering services” (NSW Premier’s Department 2001: 48). Across both levels of government, partnership-based modes of working are seen as beneficial tools of government that maintain economic efficiency while supporting ongoing commitments to effective social support.

For strongly theorised accounts of governing, the current rhetoric of partnership-based working is reintegrated under the *post facto* rationalisations of neoliberalism. The long histories, continuities and contextual formulations of partnering work in Australian government settings are obscured by the effacing demands of neoliberalism (e.g. Yeatman 1990; Pusey 1991). To recognise these genealogies does not necessitate that we deny the specified enactments of neoliberalism (see Valverde 1996; Lemke 2002). Indeed, I argue that history as contingency is as much about extending neoliberalism back into its extensive
histories and diverse genealogies, as it is about extending other continuities of governing forward. By reflecting on the specified histories of neoliberal enactments while maintaining spacious attention to contingency, it is possible to allow for co-existence and difference in the everyday spaces of governing. Relational rationalities of interagency working are evident in social policies of Australian government, yet are formed in contingent and historically informed ways.

4.3.2 Interagency human service delivery and community-based working

Interagency policies and programmes are not only inscribed with recent attention to relational rationalities, but also with the rescriptions of neoliberal etho-politics (i.e. those rationalities which promote an active and moral self-conduct; see Chapter 2). In social governing, communities are redrawn through etho-politics as comprising responsibilised actors with an obligation and innate ability (or ‘social capital’) to assist government in facilitating effective social service delivery (Harriss and De Renizio 1997; Bevir and O’Brien 2001; Amin 2005). For example, accounts of social governing in Australia under the recent Coalition Government (1996-2007) point to the ways in which notions of community were utilised in promoting self-regulation, mutual obligation and ‘active’ welfare— notions which most often ignore the structural causes of socio-economic disadvantage (see Shaver 2002; Warburton and Smith 2003). While there is evidence of recent etho-political rescriptions, community-based service delivery has also been engaged by Australian governments over a long period, in divergent and often enduring ways. In the following table (Table 4.1), I outline the key rationalities and programmes of community-based human service delivery recently enacted in Australian government settings. The key rationalities of community-based governing I distinguish include regionalism, community development, early intervention and etho-politics; each of which can reinforce and digress from neoliberal modes of governing.
Table 4.1—Genealogies of community-based human service delivery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Historic genealogies within Australian social governing</th>
<th>Current adaptations within Australian social governing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regionalism</td>
<td>An approach aiming to decentralise and devolve government services and management structures. The approach is framed as better targeting area-specific issues that impact on communities</td>
<td>Regionalism emerged in post-WWII social governing and became formalised in the Whitlam Government era (1972-75) particularly in the Department of Urban and Regional Development</td>
<td>Regionally-focused rationales remain central to government (e.g. Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services) and are reflected in a range of programmes (e.g. NSW Area Consultative Committees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development</td>
<td>A concept recognising the importance of engaging communities in social governing through locally-determined programmes that encourage local participation in government decision-making and administration</td>
<td>Sedimented in the Whitlam Government through the Australian Assistance Plan (1973) which established a national framework for integrating services based on locally-defined needs and local participation</td>
<td>Community development continues to feature in government institutions (e.g. Commonwealth Government’s Stronger Families and Community Strategy 2004) and has undergone more recent reworkings through notions of Assets Based Community Development (ABCD) (Cameron 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Intervention and Prevention</td>
<td>A framing which attempts to identify and target community-based issues before they become entrenched. This is understood as offering long-term social benefits and savings in government resources</td>
<td>Emerged in the modernist agendas of the mid-1900s promoting determinist notions of children as socially redemptive. These notions have since been associated with policies undertaking the removal of children from family settings deemed to restrict their redemptive potential (see Niland 2000; Prout 2000)</td>
<td>Early intervention has been reworked from its modernist origins to feature in current social governing and become instituted in government settings through specific programmes (e.g. NSW Government’s Pathways to Prevention 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etho-politics</td>
<td>A concept which promotes active self-conduct among individuals and communities in providing the means for their own well-being and facilitating effective human service delivery</td>
<td>Unfolding particularly in the recent Commonwealth Howard Government (1996-2007), this concept attempts to link community welfare with economic management. Such a coupling endorses individual freedom in the economic sphere in return for the maintenance of certain social behaviours and conservative family-based values</td>
<td>Examples of etho-political programmes which seek to responsibilise individuals include the Commonwealth Government’s Enhanced Mutual Obligation Policy (1998) (‘Work for the Dole’)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Prout 2000; Everingham 2003; Reddel 2005)
It is enticing in narrating recent reforms to portray a shift in Australian social governing from supportive notions of socially democratic community development (the Whitlam Government) to oppressive notions of ‘new’ etho-political community activation (the Howard Government) (Everingham 2003). These predetermined paths of governing are fundamentally assisted by the current proclivity to subsume divergent governing practices within the post facto rationalisations of neoliberalism (Larner and Butler 2007). Indeed, the divergent traditions of regionalism, early intervention and community development are now unceremoniously rescripted in strongly theorised accounts as indications of ‘actually existing neoliberalism’ (see Chapter 2). However, the range of enduring and recreated rationalities of community-based service delivery outlined in the table point to the extensive genealogies of community engagement in Australian social policy. These genealogies cannot be simply or entirely re-rationalised but rather continue to be variously engaged in community-based policies, programmes and the actions of workers in shaping everyday practices of social governing.

Australian enactments of social governing are more complex and contradictory than portrayed in strongly theorised progressions and periodisations of governing history. For example, socially democratic notions of community utilised as part of the Whitlam Government’s approach to social governing were plagued by undifferentiated and collective understandings of community (Reddel 2005)—community as a “common being” rather than a “being-in-common” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 86). In contrast, recent enactments of social governing, even under the Howard Government, are infused with notions of community development, such as Assets Based Community Development (ABCD). ABCD is an approach which attempts to utilise techniques of community development such as participation, intervention and place
management in genuinely engaging ways. While employing language which may be most easily interpreted as etho-political (e.g. participation, intervention, management), this approach seeks to evade the non-antagonistic, moralised and deficit models of community by acknowledging the diversities, capabilities, talents and resources innate to communities (Cameron 2000). The resulting terrain of Australian social governing is a complex one involving continuities and change in the understandings of community-based human service delivery. Moreover, such understandings are subject to the contingent practices of institutions and actors as part of diversely assembled state contexts.

The genealogies of human service delivery across interagency and community-based settings reveal a sense of the variabilities and sedimentations of social governing in Australia. It is crucial to recognise that technologies of interagency and community programmes are not simply menacing impositions of a new neoliberal global order that predetermines government working and co-opts ‘the local’ (Argent 2005; Roberts et al. 2005). Indeed, contemporary technologies of community and partnership working can have positive outcomes (Argent 2005). Moreover, there are other governmentalities evident in Australian social governing contexts which display ongoing commitment to socially democratic notions of partnership working and community engagement. Communities, local councils and state agencies have been engaged in a variety of these types of partnerships and locally-based initiatives for many decades due to a widely held belief in the benefits of working together on community issues (see Cameron 2000; Everingham 2003; Gibson and Cameron 2005). In the following section, I focus on Families First and SaCC as two recent attempts at instituting

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32 The ABCD approach, developed by John Kretzmann and John McKnight from Northwestern University in Illinois, is a well-established concept of community development put into practice throughout the United States. The approach focuses on mobilising the assets or strengths of communities rather than their needs (Cameron 2000). ABCD also features in enactments of social governing and interagencies in Australia (see Chapter 6), although is rarely referred to explicitly in the social policy documents of State and Commonwealth Governments.
interagency and community-based working in NSW Government. By focusing on these strategies I aim to further contextualise genealogies of Australian social governing settings by building ‘thick descriptions’ of interagency programmes, policies and practices.

4.4 Genealogies of Families First and Schools as Community Centres (SaCC)
Families First was introduced by the NSW Government in 1998 as “the first and largest program of its kind in Australia” (NSW Cabinet Office 2003: 1). Families First draws together the five NSW human service agencies (the Department of Education and Training (DET), Department of Community Services (DoCS), Department of Housing (DoH), Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) and a health department entitled NSW Health) with the aim of improving service provision to families with children aged 0-8 years. The strategy includes a policy framework primarily oriented to interagency and community-based human service delivery.33 Between 2002 and 2006, Families First enjoyed considerable state financial support with the NSW Government allocating $117.5 million to the strategy to support the management of both interagency operations and community-based programmes (e.g. SaCCs). The Families First umbrella strategy, and its programmes such as SaCC, now represent relatively well-established human service strategies which exhibit many of the recent neoliberal rescriptions of relational and etho-political governing.

Yet in maintaining the prosaic perspectives of the methodological framings and weak theory approach, it is vital to question how these modes of governing unfold in the congested contexts of state institutions. Viewing policy as a processual creation, I initially focus my analysis on Families First as an overarching umbrella strategy. Following from the genealogical considerations of social policy, I seek to outline the strategy’s core rationalities of interagency and community-based working, examining how the rationalities are encompassed in the policy framework and the ways in which this has been established, or not, in the structures and institutions of the NSW Government.

In adopting a progressive contextualisation approach, I then focus on the Schools as Community Centre (SaCC) programme as one initiative under Families First. As discussed in Chapter 4, further contextualising Families First through SaCC, and several particular SaCC locations, provides the methodological means to view the everyday ways in which programmes are diversely institutionalised and enacted across institutional and geographical spaces. In this discussion, I seek to set the context for later ethnographic analysis by outlining the core institutional features of the programme and its policy framework, which largely mirror Families First in focusing on interagency and community-based working and service delivery. Progressively contextualising these genealogies avoids a common propensity to wrest policies into ‘determinative schemata’ of governing; instead opening up a contingent perspective on institutional creations and revealing something of the inherent incompleteness and variability of social governing (Walker et al. 2007).

4.4.1 Families First: an interagency and community-based approach to human service delivery

The Families First policy framework positions the strategy as a leading human service approach in Australian government settings. The policy describes Families First as a ‘new’ strategy for interagency working and community-based
service delivery, in that “it is as much about changing the way government does business as it is about providing new services” (NSW Cabinet Office 2002a: 6). Firstly, interagency working features as a central technique in this ‘new’ landscape of governing, linked to enhanced service delivery efficiencies and capabilities. Relational rationalities are drawn upon in constructing the links between working together and increasing efficiency and effectiveness in human service provision—“planning and working together so families get the support they need when they need it” (NSW Cabinet Office 2003b: 1). Families First is portrayed as a key example of the ways in which such benefits to government working and human service outcomes can be achieved through the institutionalisation of interagency structures of governing. In sedimenting such structures, Families First policy lays out the interagency arrangements of the strategy, drawing in various scales of the five NSW human service agencies, together with local government, NGOs, and community representatives (Figure 4.2).

In practising a genealogical analysis, it is necessary to historically contextualise these seemingly well-structured relational interconnections. A genealogical analysis draws out ‘thick’ descriptions of the institutional processes involved in producing the flattened appearance of ‘Families First’. For example, while the

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34 While Families First promotes its role as the first strategy of its kind in Australia, similar strategies have been enacted both internationally and nationally. Head Start is an interagency and community-based human service strategy which was initiated in the US in 1965 as a national approach to addressing the needs of low-income pre-school children (ACF 2006). In the UK, a similar interagency human service strategy is entitled Sure Start. Sure Start assumes the role of the ‘best practice’ programme in Families First policy despite being introduced after Families First and instituting many of the same interagency and community-focused strategies as Families First (Sure Start 2006). The Australian Commonwealth Government has recently released a national strategy (Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2004-2008) that seeks to draw together State Government and local agency programmes into a nationally recognised system providing shared information, indicators and monitoring for early childhood initiatives. The state government of Victoria also initiated an early childhood strategy in 2002 entitled Best Start. Although it is in the early stages of development, the strategy has instituted similar aims to Families First in attempting to provide better integration of, and access to, child and family services (Department of Human Services 2002).
Figure 4.2—Families First institutional structure

**NSW Premier’s Department**

**Senior Officers Groups (SOG)**
- Consists of state-level senior representatives from each of the human service agencies
- Aims to receive and coordinate information from regional level management structures, and report to CEO Committees within Premier’s on the functioning of collaborative working
- In 2006, the Human Services CEO Group established a Families First SOG which will take on similar responsibilities but with a defined focus on the Families First strategy

**Regional Coordination Management Group (RCMG) and Regional Officers Group (ROG)**
RCMGs: operate in each of the twelve NSW Government regions; are comprised of regional managers from state government agencies and a Regional Coordinator; and, aim to identify issues, develop regional interagency projects, allocate resources, ensure objectives are achieved, and evaluate project outcomes.

ROGs: operate in each region; are comprised of Regional Managers and Project Managers; are divided into a Human Service ROG (responsible for the strategic management of Families First) and Economic/Natural Resources/Infrastructure ROG; and, set regional planning, monitoring and expenditure across a range of strategies.

**NSW Health**
- Families First partner agency

**Dept of Ageing Disability and Home Care (DADHC)**
- Families First partner agency

**Dept of Community Services (DoCS)**
- Families First host agency

**Dept of Education and Training (DET)**
- Families First partner & SaCC lead agency

**Dept of Housing (DoH)**
- Families First partner agency

**Families First**
- A regional interagency strategy aimed at improving services to communities and families with children 0-8 years. Programmes include home-visiting and supported playgroups.
- Jointly delivered by the five NSW human service agencies and promotes partnerships with communities, local government and NGOs.
- DoCS (Communities Division) hosts Families First together with strategies including Strengthening Local Communities, Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy, Better Futures and the Area Assistance Scheme.
- Project Management Groups (PMGs) operate at the regional level and are made up of representatives from each of the agencies. The groups provide strategic direction, monitoring, evaluation and guidance to Families First Project Officers at the local level. The PMG also informs and reports to ROG and SOG.

**NGOs and Local Government**

**Communities, Families and Children**

Source: (IPAA 2002; NSW Cabinet Office 2002b; NSW DoCS 2006)
Senior Officers Group (SOG)\textsuperscript{35} currently enacts the central level of Families First management, the Premier’s Department once assumed this role of directing and managing the strategy as a core policy of interior government. In 2004, Families First and other similar community-based strategies were transferred out of central office into a newly established ‘Communities Division’ of the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS). Despite original reports portraying the centralised location in the Premier’s Department as vital to the success of Families First (IPAA 2002), the move was re-framed as providing “better planning, integration and delivery of our community development effort” (NSW Docs 2006: 28).

While seemingly representative of devolved, yet increasingly controlled, interagency governance (see Chapter 2), I suggest that the move into DoCS points more to a shift in political motivations. Indeed, the shift appears to reflect a move down, sideways and in some ways out-of-view of central government, to be obscured by the particular issues and traditions of DoCS. DoCS is well known as a particularly troubled agency within the NSW Government, charged with the massive responsibilities of child welfare, together with well-publicised staffing and structural problems and a pronounced lack of funding. Indeed, DOCS has been described by Carmel Niland (former Director General of DoCS 1998-2002) as an agency at “the end of the public sector food chain” (Niland 2000). The positioning of Families First within this agency dominated by acute child welfare concerns, suggests that the neat policy rationalities of relational working, and their orderly lines of interagency connection, may be complicated.

\textsuperscript{35} In 2003, the NSW Government sought to streamline a range of CEO and interdepartmental committees into five Chief Executive Committee clusters (Aboriginal, Human Services, Transport, Natural Resources and the Environment, and Justice). Senior Officers Groups (SOGs) were subsequently established to support the work of the Chief Executive Committee, addressing strategic, policy, planning, administrative, programme, service delivery and other interagency concerns (New South Wales Premier’s Department 2005).
and congested by the existing institutional structures of DoCS; unfolding a rather different story of actually existing interagency practice.

Secondly, the interagency priorities of Families First are supplemented with concepts of community and community-based working. Attempts to engage community are understood within the Families First policy framework as the key to supporting appropriate and responsive human service delivery. Much of the policy draws on etho-political notions of community as the key space in which to address human service issues, with communities viewed as offering the innate ability to engage, create and sustain individual well-being (see Adams and Hess 2001; Amin 2005). The maintenance of community involvement in their own well-being is viewed as further supporting families through increasing the skills of parents and thus the overall well-being of children. Specifically, the community framings of the Families First aim to:

- Help parents to build skills and confidence in parenting
- Improve children’s health and wellbeing
- Support parents so they can respond to problems early
- Build communities to support families and parenting

(NSW Cabinet Office 2003: 1)

While inscribed with rationalities attuned to etho-political rationalities of neoliberal governing, Families First is also a product of the long-running and diverse traditions of community-based social governing in Australia, including regionalism, community development, and early intervention and prevention (see Figure 4.1). As stated, many of these contingent histories are subsumed by post facto rationalisations of neoliberalism, yet become visible through genealogical examination.
While much of my discussion on community-based working is confined to my ethnographic examinations, through genealogical analysis it is possible to glimpse the complexities and continuities in concepts of community inscribed in Families First policy. For example, the long engagements of Australian governments with notions of regionalism are apparent in the institutional arrangements of Families First (see Appendix B.2 for examples of Families First regional divisions). While these regional orientations may be most simply viewed as yet another example of devolving neoliberal governance, such institutional organisations are also informed by the continuities of post-WWII social governing (see Figure 4.1) and complicated by the already existing traditions and regional arrangements of agencies. Indeed, Families First forms one part of a mélange of long-running regionally-structured initiatives.

Moreover, Families First co-exists, overlaps and often conflicts with the established regional arrangements of each partner agency, such that it operates through 16 regional sub-divisions across NSW while DoCS (even as the Families First host agency) is organised around just 7 regions, with little correlation between regional boundaries (NSW DoCS 2006). This regional organisation is further congested with the addition of new Families First regions and the separation and reorganisation of existing regional divisions arising from ongoing agency restructurings. Although often portrayed as an indicator of neoliberal rule, a genealogical examination of regionalism reveals a sense of historical continuity in this form of governing; uncovering the congestions of actually instituting such arrangements as part of the multiply-mediated contexts of state institutions.

Families First policy clearly supports the advance of interagency and community-based governing across state institutions, including the rationalities of relational and etho-political governing. The policy framework attempts to establish a network of relevant government agencies, workers and programmes
as part of a multiply-scaled, yet community-focused interagency strategy. The interagency approach is positioned in Families First policy as increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of governing, and facilitating communities as active agents in creating their own well-being. In practising genealogical analysis, it is possible to ‘thicken’ the surfaces of policy with attention to the historical contingencies of producing policy. In Families First, this analysis intimates at the dynamics of enduring change which infuse and delineate these spaces—the continuities of state institutions and social governing traditions, together with the variations of political contexts and governing agendas. It is the genealogical glimpse provided on these spaces that begins to dismantle any foreboding sense of an imminent and oppressive neoliberalism unfolding in predetermined and co-opting ways (see Gibson-Graham 2006).

4.4.2 The programmes of Families First: genealogies of SaCC

In essence, Families First operates as an overarching interagency strategy, facilitating, managing and funding a range of diverse community-based programmes. Abandoning the genealogical examination at the level of Families First policy thus fails to fully contextualise the strategy. Within Families First sits many programmes of human service delivery including:

- Home Visiting Services: Early Childhood Nurses and Volunteers
- Nutrition Programs
- Family Workers
- Supported Playgroups
- Parenting Programs
- Transition to School Program
- Schools as Community Centres (SaCC)
- Community Events

(New South Wales Cabinet Office 2002b)
These programmes are not solely the products of Families First policy. Firstly, such programmes include policies drawn in, yet still situated in particular agencies (e.g. SaCC is led by the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET), Home Visiting is enacted by NSW Health). Secondly, even Families First policies remain largely the product of their institutional origins (e.g. programmes targeting health, education and community services are primarily shaped by Area Health Services, DET and DoCS respectively). Finally, most programmes under Families First have featured, albeit under different labels, across successive Australian governments. For example, the home-visiting, nutrition programmes and some community events were a fundamental part of the Welfarist government services of the 1950s, and the later community development efforts of the Whitlam Government during the 1970s (see Niland 2000; Everingham 2003). The institutional terrain of Families First becomes further congested once these programmes and their diverse institutional genealogies are brought into view.

In order to uphold the ‘gray, meticulous and patiently documentary’ practice of genealogy (Foucault 1986b), I delve into the layers of one particular Families First programme—SaCC. The SaCC programme’s core aim is to “support families with children from 0-8 years so that children have a healthy and positive start to school” (NSW DoCS 2006: 28). The policy framework of SaCC overlaps and draws on notions of interagency working and community-based service delivery instituted in Families First, with the programme described as a means of effectively targeting young children in disadvantaged communities across rural, regional and metropolitan locations of the state\(^{36}\) (NSW DET 2003).

In many ways, SaCC policy exhibits the relational and etho-political rationalities of neoliberal governing. Yet a genealogical examination opens up cracks in

\(^{36}\) In 2007, 51 SaCCs were operating across urban and regional locations in NSW (see Appendix B.1).
these policy veneers formed by the continuities of human service traditions and the institutional *ad hocery* characteristic of state settings. SaCC itself has strong institutional ties to DET, the agency that initiated and trialled the programme as part of a pilot project in 1995.\(^{37}\) While five partner agencies are now involved in the programme through Families First, the foundational and ongoing leading role of DET continues to shape the institutional spaces of the SaCC programme. A genealogical view across SaCC points to dynamics of enduring change which shape, not only the institutional spaces of the programme, but also the diverse geographical and institutional manifestations of individual SaCC locations. In the following analysis, I focus on interagency and community working as the core aspects of the SaCC policy, its institutional arrangement and programmatic practice.

### 4.4.3 SaCC: genealogies of interagency and community-based working

The SaCC programme is managed and guided by interagency and community-based rationalities, institutions and modes of working. One of the core aims of the programme is to enhance the “effectiveness of service provision for families with young children through integration and interagency collaboration” (NSW DET 2003: 8). A range of principles for enacting interagency working are included in the policy document which promote respectful and supportive relationships involving agencies and community members, sharing of resources across agencies, and the development of networks promoting collaborative

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\(^{37}\) The *Interagency Schools Community Centres Pilot Project* was trialled in four sites across the state including Curran, Redfern, Coonamble and Chertsey. The pilot was jointly funded by just three of the central agencies: DET, DoCS and NSW Health. In 1997, the *Interagency Schools Community Centres Pilot Project* was evaluated and found to be effective with regard to the project’s aims. From 1998, DoH joined the programme and it was expanded across regional NSW communities such as Kelso, Kempsey West and Kempsey South (NSW DET 2003). From 2001, the incorporation of SaCC within Families First procured the involvement of all five human service agencies in the SaCC interagency structure and further expansion in SaCC locations across NSW.
planning (NSW DET 2003). Moreover, communities are drawn into the policy framing as the space in which these interagency practices need to play out. SaCC policy particularly attempts to develop the skills of communities and families, involve community people in democratic ways, build on the aspirations of the community, and create connections and ongoing relationships within the community (DET 2003).

Interagency and community-based working are viewed as fundamental to ensuring the efficiency of the SaCC programme and its effectiveness in delivering human services, such that SaCC’s approach is seen to:

- Improve decision-making processes relating to the provision of services through increased community participation
- Strengthen communities through building community networks
- Enhance communication
- Sustain more effective resource allocation and use
- Create opportunities to learn from other professionals
- Introduce organisational change that supports the interagency approach

(NSW DET 2003: 9)

The institutional arrangement of SaCC seeks to institutionalise these key aims of the programme into structures oriented to interagency connections and community engagements. As such, the SaCC institutional framework includes the five NSW human service agencies in an institutional structure comprising the State Steering Committee for School-Based Interagency Programs (SSC), Local Management Committees for individual or multiple SaCC(s), and an associated community-based body such as a Local Advisory Group with representatives from the community. Each level of the interagency structure includes the five human service agencies together with Families First (Figure 4.3).
State Steering Committee (SSC) for School-Based Interagency Programmes

- The SSC is responsible for the overall management of three school-based human service programmes: SaCC (0-5 years), Primary Connect (5-8 years) and Parents as Teachers (engaging parents in school activities). Roles of the SSC include service development, evaluation, reporting and the creation and maintenance of interagency relations.
- The committee is led by DET with representatives from DoCS, Families First, DoH, Health, DADHC, and the Attorney General’s Department.

Management Committee

- Local inter-agency committees consisting of the SaCC facilitator, local managers from each of the partner agencies, local council and NGO representatives.
- The committee’s role is to manage one, or several SaCCs, in accordance with programme guidelines. This includes overseeing planning and reporting, ensuring interagency linkages, approving budgets where applicable, providing professional support for the facilitator, and assisting to resolve conflicts at the local level.
- The committee also facilitates community participation through Local Advisory/Project Groups involving community representatives working closely with the Facilitator on a specific project, or more generally in identifying and addressing local issues.

School Principal

- Role in the selection of a local facilitator, monitoring the budget, administration support and supervision of the facilitator, and promoting connection between SaCC and the school.

Local Facilitator

- Works closely with the SaCC management committee, local advisory group and community to identify and respond to local issues for families with children from 0-8, with a focus on the years prior to school entry.
- Their role includes initiating and facilitating activities, connecting communities to services, networking with agencies and representatives, and reporting, monitoring and planning.

Source: (NSW DET 2003, 2005)
As in the case of Families First, the appearance of these interagency and community-oriented institutions obscures the inherent congestions of state institutional contexts, inscribed with the political practices of governing and the sticky institutional practices of government agencies. Indeed, the interagency arrangements of SaCC are fundamentally complicated by three key institutional features: the co-existence of other interagency structures (particularly that of Families First), the changing constitution of the SaCC State Steering Committee (SSC), and the varying enactments of SaCC policy across diverse geographical locations.

Firstly, interagency structures are congested by the ad hoc separation of agency responsibilities. For example, Families First funds the majority of SaCCs as part of an established fund. However DET, due to their role in initiating the project, fund several of the original SaCCs through their own financial systems. In addition, specific SaCC sites often receive ‘top-up’ funding from partner agencies (e.g. NSW Health) or other human service strategies (e.g. Community Solutions and the Crime Prevention Strategy) (NSW DET 2003). The divergent processes of funding and management across these agencies and strategies create a further layer of institutional practice not revealed in the neat interagency structures of SaCC policy. Secondly, the institutional arrangements of SaCC are characterised by inconsistencies and change within the SSC. The SSC has recently been merged from separate management structures for each school-based programme (i.e. SaCC, Primary Connect and Parents as Teachers) into a three-programme body that reduced the number of agencies, actors and time once dedicated to managing and guiding SaCC.

Finally, the community-based nature of the SaCC programme results in considerable variations in institutional practices across diverse geographical locations. As part of the ethnographic approach of the research, I select four SaCC locations: Glebe and Cabramatta in Sydney, and Fennell Bay and
Cessnock in the Hunter Region of NSW (see Map B.1 and B.2; Appendix B). I suggest that enactments of the SaCC programme vary considerably between these four sites due to differences in institutional arrangements, management structures and individual government workers engaged in these spaces. For example, the Management Committees at each site are characterised by changing membership, aims and roles. This is in part the result of the broader institutional restructurings of government agencies, but also part of the flexibility built in to the SaCC programme which produces variable interagency arrangements at a local level (e.g. Cessnock SaCC has little government agency engagement), differing levels of formal community involvement (e.g. a community advisory group in only enacted in Fennell Bay SaCC and not in the other case study locations), and the adoption of different human service projects (e.g. supported playgroups are only utilised in Cessnock and Glebe SaCC). This ethnographic attention to different geographical locations, discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6, allows a viewpoint on the diverse institutional enactments of interagency working that occur ‘in place’ (see also Appendix A). The resulting institutional terrain is one characterised by considerable divergence from that represented in the policy frameworks, thus opening up social policy to the interceding practices of politics, state institutions and people.

The brief genealogical examination undertaken across Australian governments and the case study programmes of Families First and SaCC builds the thick descriptions of social governing as part of state settings. The production of social policy intrinsically occurs as part of the institutional contexts of government. These contexts are formed by shifting political motivations, sedimented agency traditions, bureaucratic procedures and the ever-present and changing acts of balancing economic growth and social redistribution. It is

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38 The socio-economic backgrounds and programme characteristics of each SaCC location are only briefly reviewed in Appendix A, with the main focus of analysis on the variable institutional and individual practices of interagency working revealed across different locations.
in these congested cracks of everyday states that the intoxicating stories of globalising neoliberal rule become less certain and all-conquering (Argent 2005). This recognition of continuity and prosaic complexity does not seek to discredit or deny neoliberalism its place in contemporary governing and modes of interagency working, but to deny neoliberalism a fundamental reality. Neoliberalism is only made possible through practice, and in these historically informed and contingently produced institutional settings of states, neoliberal governing is but one possibility incapable of the complete post facto rationalisations portrayed in strongly theorised accounts of governing (Larner and Butler 2007). The genealogies of social governing investigated here initiate the processes of spacious questioning, avoiding the proclivity to assimilate the cracks and queries of empirical research into established ways of thinking (Massey 2005; Gibson-Graham 2006).

4.5 Genealogical conclusions on the historical contingencies of governing
Genealogical re-readings of Australian social governing reveal a long history of continuity and change in the enactments of human service delivery. Concepts and practices of neoliberalism have been engaged across successive Australian governments in contingent and often unexpected ways. Indeed, neoliberal concepts were engaged in Australian governments much earlier than is often represented in dominant trajectories of centralised (i.e. US and UK-based) neoliberal emergence (see Scanlon 2001; Johnson and Tonkiss 2002). In addition, Australian modes of social governing have attempted to balance priorities of economic growth with redistributive measures seeking to uphold state-sponsored social support. Such governing practices arise from the particular constitutions of Australian governments including federalised systems of governing, the political power of state governments and political lobbying
groups, and enduring public expectations and demands for government-funded social support. Unfolding from these genealogies are questions on the legacy of these contingent histories; how is social governing delineated with enduring beliefs in government-funded social support? How does neoliberalism co-exist in these created and always-produced policy settings? And, how do change and sedimentation play out in the programmes of individual human service agencies?

By taking a progressive contextualisation approach, this genealogical questioning extends further into the contexts of social governing by attending to the policies and programmes of Families First and SaCC. Through this re-reading, two primary features of current social governing (interagency and community-based working) are viewed as variously institutionalised in the policy frameworks and institutional arrangements of the programmes. Firstly, the structures and policy rationalities of interagency working display strong commitments to collaborative modes of working. However, questions around the actual enactment, make-up and representation of these interagency bodies suggests that multiple institutional layerings and congestions act to shape interagency functioning in often surprising and ad hoc ways. Secondly, the policy frameworks exhibit rationalities of community-based service delivery inflected with neoliberal etho-politics of activation and self-responsibilisation. Yet these policies also reveal divergent historical origins and multiple institutionalisations, such that the sense of an oppressively subjectifying etho-politics appears decidedly less plausible.

Through genealogical analysis, the cracks and queries of empirical research are beginning to open up spacious perspectives on social governing and interagency working. However, many questions of everyday practice remain, requiring a further layer of ethnographic examination. In the following discussion, I link the genealogies of Families First and SaCC with questions on
their everyday practice through both my initial interventions in accessing the field and subsequent in-depth ethnographic analysis (Chapters 5 and 6). It is my aim throughout these examinations to retain the questioning stance of spacious governmental framings, attending openly and curiously to the everyday practices of interagency working.
Chapter Five

Prosaics of interagency working (I)
Chapter 5

Prosaics of interagency working (I): the mutable contexts of state institutions and political practice

The genealogies of Australian social governing point to the historical and contingent formations of states. In enacting social governing, these contingent histories guide the rhetorical constitution of social policy, and the institutional arrangements and state practices that ensue. While genealogy enables a viewpoint on the rhetorically and institutionally arranged aspects of social policy, ethnography provides the means to engage with their everyday practice. Much recent analysis of social governing remains silent on the influence of state institutions, politics and workers, rarely engaging in practice-oriented research (Painter 2006). Indeed, for many researchers, social governing and techniques such as interagency working represent practices through which to trace the translations of overarching modes of governance (Larner and Butler 2007). In obscuring the prosaics of state institutions and political practice, our understandings centre on ‘the state’ as a coherent and cogent entity; one that increasingly governs the social in neoliberalised ways.

In this chapter, I aim to re-politicise and re-animate stagnant and reductionist accounts of social governing with an attention to the ‘peopled practice’ of states. I extend the reiterative research process from weak theory re-framings, to genealogical and now ethnographic re-readings (see Figure 5.1). From weak theories to genealogical investigations (see Chapter 4), social governing and interagency modes of working are seen to be unfolding as historically-formed, processual and produced—contingently assembled and entangled in the contexts of political and institutional practice. These challenges to neat paths of
social governing are enhanced by ethnographic investigations that nurture the openings, cracks and queries emerging in the veneers of social policy. An ethnographic approach to states, undertaken by a growing body of researchers (e.g. Heyman and Smart 1999; Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Mitchell 2003; Mountz 2003), mingles with everyday power and politics and allows for the situated unfolding of governing practices. For Painter (2006: 770), these minglings and unfoldings reveal what he describes as the ‘internal workings’ of state institutions:

The mundane, but frequently hidden, everyday world of state officials, bureaucratic procedures, meetings, committees, report writing, decision making, procrastination and filing.

It is the internal workings—the congestions of state institutions, politics and peopled practice—that continually shape and form the prosaics of social governing and interagency working. Recognising such internal workings inhibits any sense of necessary unfolding or all-conquering governmental rule.

To usher in the ethnographies of Chapter 5 and 6, I begin the chapter by introducing the ethnographic methodologies employed in the research.\(^{39}\) Methods of interviewing and observation form the foundations of my ethnographies, offering the in-depth, ‘thick’ descriptions oriented to prosaic states. From here, I undertake the actual practice of ethnography. It is in practising ethnography that it becomes possible to expose the complexities of actually enacting governing, instituting policy and practising politics—opening up the congested cracks between governmental rule and peopled practice (Heyman and Smart 1999; Painter 2006). In this chapter, I exercise ethnographic attention to the everyday efforts of interagency work and how

\(^{39}\) As stated in the previous chapter, I position the methodological discussion of ethnography as an introduction to my analysis, as a way of interconnecting methodologies and research findings (see Shurmer-Smith 2002).
these might interconnect with the seemingly hegemonic relational rationalities of neoliberal governing (see Rose, M. 2002). I draw on the understandings and practices of actors engaged in interagency modes of working as part of the Families First and SaCC programmes. Workers describe interagency practice as often imbued with the interventions of a neoliberal ‘partnering state’, yet grounded in the persistently political and institutional actions of states, which are at times, anything but the reflection of efficient and effective neoliberal agendas. Indeed, actors involved in these strategies communicate everyday practices of governing shaped by two primary features which I discuss respectively: first, the mutable political contexts of governing, and second, the ‘enduring change’ of institutional practices (see Figure 5.1).

Firstly, actors’ accounts suggest that interagency programmes and practices are fundamentally shaped by the complex political practices of governing. These political practices range from the big-power politics of election campaigns, leadership and public representation to the prosaics of managing the responsibilities of accumulation and redistribution, and the unremitting public demand for state-funded services (Frankel 1997; Davis and Rhodes 2000; O’Neill and McGuirk 2005). Secondly, actors illustrate the everyday influences of state institutions on interagency working, and more particularly, the dynamics of enduring change which infuse these institutional settings. The concept of ‘enduring change’ describes the constancy of variability in state institutions (see Chapter 3)—the ad hoc and variable institutional reforms and sedimentations of agency traditions. A spacious analytics attempts to negotiate these mutable yet ‘sticky’ contexts by attending to the actual efforts of interagency as part of a complex and messy assemblage of political ‘tinkering’, institutional ‘bricolage’,

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40 Relational rationalities are interconnected with etho-political rationalities as part of recent forms of neoliberalism. In the following chapters, I approach relational and etho-political rationalities separately as currently prevalent rationalities, yet emphasise that these rationalities co-exist as part of diverse contexts and practices of governing.
Figure 5.1—Re-reading interagency working from ethnographic perspectives: mutable political and institutional practice

RE-FRAMING

Specific and spacious governmentality: specific relational rationalities as part of spacious assemblages of governing practices and contexts (Chapter 2)

Practised and peopled states: the institutions and people who produce interagency working as a diverse, contingent and potentially ethical practice of governing (Chapter 3)

RE-READING

Genealogies: historical contingencies of social governing and interagency working in Australian state institutions (Chapter 4)

Ethnographies: re-politicising and re-animating interagency working in the highly charged political contexts of government and governing, and as the contingent and peopled practice of state institutions (Chapter 5)

Political compromise/concession

Demands of constituents        Public expectations of the state
Expeditious and short-term political actions       Ad hoc political responses
Election tactics            Ongoing commitment to social support

ETHNOGRAPHIES OF INTERAGENCY WORKING:
MUTABLE POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

Enduring change in state institutional practices       Uncontrolled governing
Overlapping programmes       Economic efficiencies
Institutional traditions       Vulnerable programmes
Balancing accumulation and redistribution
Restructuring
and individual practice (Ciborra 2002). This approach retrieves social governing from any strong sense of neoliberal determination and enriches a mutual language of politics, institutions and the everyday peopled practice of states.

5.1 Ethnographic methodologies: uncovering peopled and practised states

Everyday states and governing practices often appear as unremarkable in research on the expressions of big-power politics and hegemonic governance (Gupta 1995; Hailey 2001; Painter 2006). Yet it is these prosaic practices of states which shape the productions of policy and the practices of social governing more generally. Ethnography provides the methodological means by which to explore the mundane and the minutiae of everyday states and governing. It is utilised here as a relatively unbound methodological approach, when compared with its traditional application in anthropological research, one which prioritises the everyday (see Gupta 1995; Hammersley and Atkinson 1999). The approach is aptly captured by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 2) who describe ethnography as, in many respects:

… The most basic form of social research. Not only does it have a very long history, it also bears a close resemblance to the routine ways in which people make sense of the world in everyday life.

Ethnography offers the means to mingle and “muck around” in the everyday bricolage, or internal workings, of governing, states and politics; delving into the understandings and actions of actors involved in these settings (Gibson-Graham 2006: 6). Through these practices, ethnography sustains both spacious and specified governmental framings in ways that draw out two key aspects of prosaic states: the contingencies of practice, and the actions and affects of people.
Firstly, ethnography provides the breathing space for contingent practice. As noted in Chapter 2, contingency necessitates an acknowledgment that specific events and practices may not occur; a recognition which retrieves the possibility that things can be ‘otherwise’ (Bourdieu 1999: 57). The ethnographic perspective I draw on then, does not attempt to evidence overarching and strong theories of specified governing in the internal workings of state institutions. Instead, an ethnographic methodology allows theory to interact and inform state institutions in open ways, nurturing spacious ways of thinking and active forms of questioning (Herbert 2000; Gibson-Graham 2006).

Secondly, ethnography also supports an orientation to people and affective ways of being. Ethnography requires researchers to engage with their emotions through empathic interaction and active participation in the field (Herbert 2000; Widdowfield 2000; Anderson and Smith 2001). These affective ways of being a researcher in turn sustain orientations to the affectivities of those being researched. Such an orientation to people is undertaken with a “reparative motive” that seeks to amend stagnant and repressed accounts of subjects with an attention to people’s activity, creativity, joy and hope (Gibson-Graham 2006: xxix). Actors involved in state institutions are thus not framed as technical conduits or ruled subjects. Instead, actors are welcomed as active, productive and creative agents. Actors are recursively engaged in the work of state institutions and the broader social contexts of their lives, such that they may bring ethical concerns, caring actions and emotional understandings to their everyday work in governing settings (Powell and Gilbert 2007). An ethnographic approach then fuses an attention to everyday power and politics with an affectual orientation to people.

In undertaking an ethnographic methodology, I utilise three primary methods oriented to the level of the everyday: case studies, interviewing and observation. Firstly, I utilise case studies as techniques which, in Clyde Mitchell’s (1983: 192)
classification, are heuristic in that they “reflect in the events portrayed features which may be construed as a manifestation of some general abstract theoretical principle”. Case studies are often approached as purely ethnographic, yet they are also analytical when connected to the broader objectives of the research (Clyde Mitchell 1983). In my own research, Families First and the underlying programme of SaCC form the basis of the case study approach. Indeed, I engage both case studies as interagency human service programmes that genealogically reflect the historic formations of such programmes (see Chapter 4), and offer the in-depth spaces in which to explore their everyday practice ethnographically.

In accessing this everyday level, I draw out four particular SaCC locations that provide a lens on the everyday, on-the-ground practices of interagency working. The process of selecting SaCC locations across NSW was undertaken through my own initial research and discussions with Families First and SaCC representatives (see Appendix C). The locations were selected to provide the in-depth spaces for ethnographic analysis, but also to draw out institutional and individual variabilities which occur between different geographical manifestations of the programme. As discussed in Chapter 4, variations in the socio-economic character of each location itself are not central to my discussion. Rather, the focus of my case study approach is on the everyday, situated enactments of interagency working which involve diverse institutional and individual practices occurring ‘in place’ (Appendix A). An ethnographic perspective values these everyday spaces of interagency working, encouraging a depth of analysis, yet keeping in sight those connections with the broader movements of social governing (Castree 2005).

Secondly, I employ semi-structured interviewing as a method for engaging people involved in the case study settings. A total of 45 interviews were conducted with government representatives across the different scales of each
interagency strategy: Families First State Government and regional representatives, Families First Project Management Group representatives (operating within the Hunter and Sydney regions), SaCC State Government Steering Committee representatives, local SaCC Management Committee members from the four selected SaCC case study sites, and the SaCC Facilitators from each of these sites (see Chapter 4 for institutional diagrams; see Appendix D for interview schedules). Interviews ranged in duration from one to two hours, with follow-up phone calls and contact at meetings enabling further communication with most representatives. Each interview was transcribed in full, providing ethnographic attention to the details, expressions and emotions of their speech (see Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Minichiello et al. 1995; Laurier and Parr 2000). These ethnographic details provide the ‘thick descriptions’ characteristic of ethnographic research (Geertz 1973); descriptions which assist in re-conceptualizing the meanings of workers’ narratives and their interconnections with, and insights into, the broader political and institutional contexts in which human service provision occurs.

Interviewing is, however, a method which spans divergent methodological approaches, only some of which are conducive to ethnographic research. In many projects, interviews with government representatives are positioned as part of ‘elite’ methodological approaches—or ‘researching up’ (Desmond 2004)—an approach predicated on interviewers assuming the position of ‘supplicant’. The supplicant simulates humility as a combative technique which is seen to mediate the intrinsic power advantages of government representatives, their ability to protect themselves and their agencies, and their proclivity to control the interview setting (e.g. Ostrander 1995; Parry 1998; Sabot 1999). Although elite studies provide useful methodological insights, they

41 Most respondents exercised their opportunity to review interview transcripts, yet did not request any revisions.
are infused with structural notions of power as centralised, elitist and
determinately oppressive (Smith 2006). Such a strongly theorised methodology
is unsupportive of weak theory approaches, notions of productive and practiced
power, and the contingency and emotive orientation of ethnography.

Thus, I undertake interviews not from a manufactured position, but as a
personal, trusting and collaborative engagement, or ‘conversation with a
purpose’ (Minichiello et al. 1995; see also Schoenberger 1991). This
ethnographic approach to interviewing opens up breathing space for the
diversities of government representatives’ experiences and the mundane ‘sense
making’ of their everyday work and lives (Valentine 2005). Such an approach
truly values government workers—not just as the ‘subjects’ of governing or
translating agents of ‘the state’, but as knowledgeable people who communicate
diverse meanings, understandings and values through their everyday working
practices. Thus, interviews, conducted in ethnographically informed ways, can
remind us that state institutions are not stagnant reified structures, but active
and imagined networks, populated by people engaging with a myriad of
constraints, possibilities and emotive orientations (Schoenberger 1992).

Finally, as part of my methodological assemblage I expand my attention from
what people say to include considerations of what they do (Herbert 2000).
Participant observation is a common ethnographic method, albeit underutilised
in research on states (Gupta 1995). The aim of participant observation is to
study the processes, relationships and socio-cultural contexts in which events
unfold (Spradley 1980; Jorgensen 1989); practised as “a taking part in the
world, not just representing it” (Kearns 2000: 103). There are many different
typologies of participant observation, but in this research I assume a position
which is most aptly described as ‘participant as observer’ (Silverman 1993). I
participated in a range of management meetings across both Families First and
SaCC as a university researcher seeking to introduce myself and my research
and, at the same time, explicitly observe the way in which these meetings function. The meetings I observed through the research period included: individual meetings with senior representatives of Families First and SaCC (as part of negotiating research approval, access and the selection of case study sites); the regular Families First Project Management Group meetings in the Hunter and Sydney regions (meetings which deliberate on a range of regional Families First programmes and planning initiatives); and, the frequent local SaCC Management Committee meetings in each of the four SaCC locations (meetings which are much more detailed and focused on the day-to-day activities of SaCCs and their interconnections with the community). Although always mindful of power differentials, hidden practices and undisclosed agendas, this form of participant observation allowed me to view something of the everyday interactions of government settings and workers which are often hidden from public view (see Jorgensen 1989).

Yet, it is the very fact that these practices and interactions are often hidden from view that has restricted the extent to which I explicitly discuss the rich ethnographic engagements with these state contexts. Ethical issues around confidentiality were a shaping consideration in negotiating research approval and access into these governing spaces. High levels of confidentiality were demanded by two ethics approval processes—the university's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and the DET State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP)\(^{42}\); with conditions to ensure government workers would be identified by pseudonym and position title, through interview transcripts only (see Appendix C for details of ethical negotiations). Moreover, a concurrent DET-led evaluation of six SaCCs, and proposals to extend the evaluation to the remaining SaCC locations, enhanced sensitivities around confidentiality,

\(^{42}\) Although my research did not concern the functioning of the school, the school staff, students or even the school community, the formal DET approval needed to be granted on the basis that I would be entering school grounds to attend SaCC sites.
particularly DET’s concerns that the research may expose problematic aspects of the SaCC programme prior to their evaluation, in ways that DET could not wholly control.

The further I delved into the spaces of Families First and SaCC, the more I realised just how influential issues of confidentiality were in these state institutions. Indeed, it became vital to maintain a high level of anonymity for respondents in all interactions, with these partnered spaces of interagency working characterised by significant institutional interconnections, friendships, conflicts and sometimes divergent politics that required sensitive and confidential engagement (see also Larner and Butler 2007). The consequence of these ethical limitations, however, is that the discussions in Chapters 5 and 6 are dominated by in-depth interview narratives and have limited engagement with ethnographic observations of these working spaces.

Despite this apparent lack of contingent observation, I argue that this project remains an ethnographic one. My observations of, and personal engagements with, Families First and SaCC workers considerably shape and guide the direction of the research, providing insight into what Calavita (1992: 13) describes as “ethnographic subplots”—the institutional performances, individual protagonists, political narratives, institutional conflicts and congestions that shape these work spaces in prosaic ways. These ethnographic subplots, whilst not explicitly identified and characterised in the research, are “a central part of the story” (Calavita 1992: 13) and vital to forming the thick descriptions of an inductive and grounded research project. Indeed, I suggest that such ethnographies offer immense potential in unveiling the internal workings of state institutions—revealing the “small details” (Pile 1991: 458) that often communicate the most to “larger issues” (Geertz 1973: 28).
Together, the methods of ethnography I utilise offer a window on to everyday social governing, exposing the congested gaps between policy and prosaic practice. Across all these methods, I examine not only the apparent and structured ethnographic interactions (e.g. interviews), but also the ethnographic ‘subplots’ emerging from diverse forays and accessions into the field (e.g. meetings and phone calls) (Calavita 1992). Such ethnographic perspectives may appear to reveal only the mundane and unique, but they are fundamentally and reiteratively connected to the larger issues, wider conditions and shared understandings of social governing (Bennett and Shurmer-Smith 2002). As Katz (1992) argues, a re-visioned ethnography extends beyond localised studies and offers the possibilities of moving between the macro and micro, which in this case, interconnects the rationalities of current social governing with its day-to-day practice. The ethnographic methods of case studies, interviewing and participant observation mutually supplement the types of thick descriptions necessary to ethnographic research, focusing on the everyday "coming-into-being" and “being together” which shapes the political contexts, institutional practices, and individual performances of interagency working (Gibson-Graham 2006: 86).

5.2 Re-politicising interagency working: the mutable contexts of political practice

Much analysis has sought to investigate partnership-based working across state institutions (e.g. Lowndes and Skelcher 1998; Miller and Ahmad 2000; Clarke and Glendinning 2002). Yet ethnographic minglings with everyday partnership working are commonly shied away from in accounts of social governing, with researchers often fearing a loss of some abstracted theoretical purity (Gibson-Graham 2006: 6). Indeed, analyses of interagency forms of partnership remain largely persuaded by overarching theories of governance. Interagency is viewed from these framings as part of neoliberalised contexts centred on reducing state
service provision, increasing economic efficiencies, expanding privatised and entrepreneurial activities, and intensifying surveillance and monitoring. Ethnographic examinations, however, re-animate and complicate these paths of governing. When attentive to actors’ accounts, interagency working appears as less a product of neoliberalism, and more an activity entangled in the prosaic political practices of governing and the ‘enduring change’ of state institutions. In this section, I discuss actors’ accounts of politics and its shaping role in interagency programmes and practices. These politics range from the big-power tactics of election campaigns, to governments’ everyday attempts to manage accumulation and redistribution.

Few accounts of social governing value the assemblage of political actions involved in state institutions (Larner and Butler 2007). In Australia, governments continue to demonstrate political practices atypical of neoliberalism, related to the unremitting need to balance economic growth with the sustained provisions of social support (Frankel 1997; O'Neill and Moore 2005; O'Neill and Fagan 2006). Moreover, governments are shaped by the tactical manoeuvres of political actors seeking to meet public demands, gain political, corporate and media endorsement, and maintain positions of elected leadership (Goldfinch 2000). In recounting everyday interagency practices, actors in Families First and SaCC prioritise the shaping role of these political contexts; contexts congested with ideologies, fights for control, election campaign strategies, political compromise and manipulation (Caiden 1970). This complexly assembled landscape demands attention to the ways in which diverse political actions engage and ‘tinker’ in the dynamic contexts of everyday interagency working and social governing (Castree 2006). Unlike seemingly stable governmental foreclosures and policy translations, the complicated processes of “actually enacting policies” reveal the shaping role of often shadowy and expedient political practices (Heyman and Smart 1999: 15). These congested and changing contexts of political practice imply that interagency working may not be as strategically neoliberal as expected (Larner and Butler 2007).
In the following, I discuss two critical examples of the prosaic politics which interagency actors prioritise: the politics of accumulation and redistribution, and the politics of leadership and public representation. Firstly, actors in Families First and SaCC describe the politics of managing economic accumulation and social redistribution as shaping the contexts of interagency work. These politics are long-customary processes of governments (see O'Neil and Moore 2005). Yet they are far from simple, producing variable, *ad hoc* and vulnerable contexts of working. Secondly, actors highlight the politics of leadership and representation as supporting mutable dynamics, driven by the tactics, manoeuvres and strategies of sustaining political power. These political actions often rely upon expedient responses and restructurings which can influence the practice and very existence of interagency programmes. An attention to the prosaic politics of states reveals what Foucault (in McHoul and Grace 1993: 84) describes as the “war pursued by other means”; involving not only the big-power politics of elections and public representation but also the everyday power challenges, obstructive tactics, compromises and concessions that are fundamental to state institutions and their practices of governing (Caiden 1970; Painter 2006).

### 5.2.1 The politics of accumulation and redistribution: demands, expectations and ongoing social support

State institutions are complex socio-organisational domains enrolled in managing the demands of accumulation and redistribution as part of highly charged political contexts (O'Neill and Moore 2005). In strongly theorised accounts, the redistributive responsibilities of state institutions are viewed as largely eroded and overwhelmed by the neoliberal drive to reduce social support and increase the economic efficiencies of government (see Clarke and Glendinning 2002). Actors in Families First and SaCC, however, describe a much more complex, durable and unresolved political context of economic
growth and social redistribution, in which the commitment to provide human services is a persistent feature. Indeed, actors illustrate a compound politics in which the attempts to minimise redistributive responsibilities are not new, yet the commitments to maintain social support are ongoing.

First, actors describe a politics of accumulation and redistribution focused on minimising redistributive responsibilities and generating savings in government resources. Partnership-based working is generally framed in social policies as one of the primary means of generating resource savings in government via pooled agency funding. As noted in the case of Families First, interagency working is described as producing “cost savings realised through sharing resources and eliminating duplication” (NSW Premier's Department 2001: 48). In SaCC, limited and shared resourcing is framed as “contributing significantly to real collaboration between local services” (Perkins 2005). Such attempts at resource saving are often portrayed as somehow new to the spaces of governing, as part of the efficiency agendas of neoliberalism. However, workers in Families First and SaCC recount a more complex politics of redistribution in which government attempts to reduce and re-negotiate funding are often far from new or strategic in intent. As three SaCC representatives describe:

> In community work, money always makes partnerships work better and you’re never going to get any more money. (Tracey—SaCC MC representative)\(^{43}\)

> You just have to get on and do it. We all wish we had additional money, but it’s just not like that. (Terri—Families First and SaCC MC representative)

> I think anything preventative needs to be funded. I mean governments tend not to because they’re four year termers … that’s never going to change. (Katherine—Families First and SaCC MC representative)

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\(^{43}\) All interview respondents are identified by a pseudonym and position title, with ‘MC’ used as an acronym for Management Committee.
Attempts to save government resources may be most simply cast as reflecting the neoliberalised agendas of government. However, I argue that such actions are also characteristic of the unremitting politics of balancing accumulation and redistribution. This politics is inflected with neoliberal priorities yet characterised by complex, variable and *ad hoc* negotiations between the interminable public demand for services and the ever-persistent attempts to minimise resourcing.

Second, actors describe a simultaneous and ongoing commitment to providing state-funded human services. Actors’ accounts of the shrewd politics of resource minimisation do not detract from the enduring practice of providing social services, but rather co-exist as part of the multiple politics of accumulation and redistribution. As I have argued, neoliberal reforms are complexly shaping Australian governments such that many of the redistributive practices of government remain intact and co-existent (O’Neill and McGuirk 2005; see also Chapter 4). For actors within Families First and SaCC, current practices of human service provision represent persistent commitments, albeit variably enacted, which survive despite the constant variations and negotiations shaping these political landscapes. As one worker describes:

> The service delivery’s happening anyway. Health will always give those services. Education will always give those services … I mean everyone’s going to give those services, there’s always highly trained, highly skilled, highly experienced women of good faith doing it.
> (Tracey—SaCC MC representative)

Economic growth and the minimisation of resource outputs are enduring objectives of government which now intermingle with neoliberalised agendas such as economic efficiency and service privatisation. Yet such governing contexts do not foreclose the potential for ongoing commitments to human service provision. The practices of human service provision are habitually negotiated yet ever-present features of Australian governing (O’Neill and Fagan 2006).
Actors in Families First and SaCC describe contexts of working in which the continual political negotiations around accumulation and redistribution are complex, variable and *ad hoc* in both process and outcome. Unlike notions of strategic increases in economic growth and decreases in social redistribution under neoliberalism, actors illustrate a process of constant negotiation and reiteration between policy creation and political response—a process most often characterised as messy and contradictory. Indeed in the following accounts, actors describe redistribution as supporting often expedient responses that result in gratuitous resourcing, overlapping human service programmes, and inefficient funding across interagency settings.

*The expedient negotiations of redistribution: ‘problem’ locations and ‘complex’ social needs*

Actors identify two primary focus points in the politics of redistribution around which interagency programmes are commonly formed and practised: ‘problem’ locations and ‘complex’ social needs. Both priorities feature in the strategies of Families First and SaCC and are central to current neoliberal governing which designates local communities as the locations in which social needs manifest and need to be addressed (see Amin 2005). While these rescriptings of social need are evident across Families First and SaCC policy, I suggest that they are not necessarily the unique or isolated priorities of neoliberalism. Indeed, actors describe actions which are not so entirely neoliberalised or strategic, but instead variable and *ad hoc* political responses to shifting public demands and the drive to maintain leadership (Larner and Butler 2007).

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44 The reterritorialisation of communities under neoliberalism is the focus of much governmental research (Rose 2000; Flint 2003). Etho-political rationalities, in particular, position communities as the focus of social governing (see Chapter 2 for theoretical framings; see also Chapter 6 for ethnographic analysis). Communities are viewed not only as the location of social need, but also as offering the means of addressing complex social problems through reciprocal relationships with ‘partnering’ states. Such etho-political governing enrols local citizens as self-responsible actors in their own social and economic regeneration, and re-creates communities as “the cause, consequence, and remedy of social and spatial inequality” (Amin 2005: 614).
Firstly, actors position Families First and SaCC in an assemblage of government programmes aimed at redistributing resources to defined ‘problem’ areas. Such programmes form part of policies targeting ‘at risk’ groups (Fisher et al. 2002: 2) in “communities with concentrated socio-economic disadvantage” (NSW DET 2003: 6). Families First and SaCC thus feature in an extensive range of equivalent partnership-based and community-focused strategies, often operating as part of the same ‘disadvantaged’ locations. As a result, some local communities are not so much the subjects of diminished state funding as expedient and immoderate resourcing, with overlapping funding arrangements, human service programmes and workers. For example, Redfern/Waterloo in Sydney’s Inner West receives acute political and public attention in light of high concentrations of Aboriginal and transient populations, problems of urban decline and crime, and highly-publicised riots (see Shaw 2000). The NSW government has recently created a Redfern-Waterloo Authority which attempts to direct planning in the area and coordinate the multitude of human service agencies now servicing this modest geographical location (see NSW Government 2005). For local human service workers, the political attention on the area has created an excess of expedient and ad hoc funding and programmes producing frustrations and mistrust throughout the local community:

I hear there’s 200 agencies in Redfern-Waterloo. How many families are there that are causing trouble? Probably one hundred. I mean, how can there be 200 agencies? How does that add benefit? (Tracey—SaCC MC representative)

We have a Redfern-Waterloo Authority … initiators came into the area, $7m was pumped into the area, which was a result of the riots that happened here. So you know, the Minister says, “something’s got to be done in Redfern-Waterloo. Let’s inject all this money”. [The Authority] came in, it was government run. And it was like ‘consult the community’, but the community don’t feel they’ve been listened to, whether they’re community members or community workers … So there’s a bit of, well the government wants to put in an integrated service delivery model
whether we like it or not, whether we think it’s going to work or not. And if we stay out on our own, we could risk our funding. So I think we’re just going to have to wait and see.

(Peta—SaCC Facilitator)

This example suggests that interagency programmes can be created and enacted as *ad hoc* responses to the ever-present pressures of governing and social redistribution, rather than as necessarily strategic interventions of neoliberal states. Indeed, the immoderate influx of funding and the overlap of human service programmes exposes diverse interjections and investments of government (and associated inefficiencies and complexities); actions often atypical of neoliberal aims to minimise resources, privatise services and erode social support.

Secondly, actors describe Families First and SaCC as part of an assemblage of government programmes which attempt to match ‘complex’ community problems with relational modes of working. This approach to human service provision is often described in social policy as ‘joined-up working for joined-up problems’ (MAC 2004). The rhetoric of ‘joined-up’ working is currently prevalent in social policy, yet actors illustrate a political context for ‘joining-up’ often characterised by disconnected and *ad hoc* practices of redistribution. Indeed, actors describe a politics which produces confusion in the everyday provision of social support, such that they are left questioning “where do we fit in with all these new, other initiatives?” (Peta—SaCC Facilitator). For example, workers describe a recent event in which two new government programmes (The *Early Intervention Program*—NSW Government; and *Communities for Children*—Commonwealth Government) were introduced despite encompassing equivalent and overlapping human service aims to that of Families First and SaCC. Neoliberal rationalities—pooling (limiting) human service resources, reducing duplication and coordinating corresponding services—are effaced in
these overlapping spaces of social redistribution, with workers describing these two strategies as actually increasing funding and service programmes, and creating economic inefficiencies, duplication and waste in state agency resources.

In the NSW State Government, the *Early Intervention Program*\(^45\) was recently established as a well-funded interagency and community-based strategy aimed at coordinating human service agencies and programmes. Many of the aims and responsibilities of the programme are interchangeable with those of Families First, with both strategies even operating under the same lead agency of DoCS. Actors describe the initiative as posing significant problems of disconnection and duplication in the apparently relational and efficient networks of contemporary governing. Moreover, these workers critically question the political motivations behind the programme. They suggest that enhanced media and public attention to the problems of DoCS, as a human service agency of government, may have provided the impetus for establishing the programme\(^46\):

DoCS was always creating problems for the Government in terms of bad press. So a decision was taken at the time for a $1.3 billion dollar enhancement … so a significant increase in resourcing for DoCS which would have the effect of taking it off the front page of the paper … but from a whole of government early intervention approach, one would express a very different view … The concern I have is that we’ve got

\(^{45}\) The *Early Intervention Program* (DoCS) was initiated in 2003/2004 as a partnership-based programme drawing together human service agencies with a community and early intervention focus. Initially involving only community-based early intervention caseworkers, the programme is expanding to directly coordinate, engage and fund a range of relevant partner agencies and community-based programmes (DoCS 2006).

\(^{46}\) DoCS often features within workers accounts, and also media portrayals, as a particularly problematic agency. In such accounts, DoCS is characterised by massive child protection responsibilities and associated public accountabilities, together with well-publicised staffing and funding problems. Indeed, Carmel Niland, Director General of DoCS (1998-2002), describes a common perception of DoCS as operating at “the end of the public sector food chain” coping with a lack of political and financial support and taking in complex clients other agencies are unable to assist (Niland 2000).
Families First as a whole of government strategy for early intervention, and then we've got this parallel programme over here for children that we kind of have no responsibility for. It's just crazy.
(Paul—Families First representative)

Now we've got Early Intervention Funding from DoCS, how's that going to fit in as well? From a political and strategic point of view, we [Families First] on the ground can keep writing submissions and we have some really good workers on the ground, but maybe we should be using some of those resources and consolidating some of that funding rather than having yet another funding programme.
(Sophie—Families First representative)

Far from an attempt at efficient coordination, consolidation and reform, workers describe the Early Intervention Program as ‘yet another’ layer of programming which adds complexity rather than value to their everyday work with communities. Workers view the strategies as wresting financial and political support from the Families First strategy. Moreover, actors’ accounts point to a variety of political motives driven by media headlines and public perceptions over the government’s ability to sustain successful practices of redistribution and social support.

In a similar example of overlap, a programme called Communities for Children was initiated at the national level in 2004, with the Commonwealth Government committing $142m to the programme. While instituting different processes of service delivery to those of Families First, Communities for Children engages in a similar community development, interagency approach to targeting disadvantaged children in their early years. Many Families First workers note the significant complexities created by yet another disconnected service programme:

47 Communities for Children emerges from the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2000-2004. The programme differs from Families First in that it is a four-year, place-based approach to community development currently operating in 45 community sites around Australia. Non-government agencies are funded as ‘Facilitating Partners’ who establish a committee with broad representation from stakeholders in the community, a four-year Community Strategic Plan, annual Service Delivery Plans, and undertake management of funding allocations (Commonwealth of Australia 2005).
One of the problems at the moment is that the Commonwealth and its Communities for Children initiative has produced, well it’s kind of like throwing a stone in the pond. I mean these are four year funded initiatives that who knows what the outcomes will be after four years. And how well do they bed down with Families First activities? … I mean if Families First is going to be an ongoing thing, we’ve got to bring some of these things that are currently outside the fold back inside.
(Paul—Families First representative)

The Federal money that’s going out now, the Communities for Children money, which is sort of, mimicking Families First … It’s a huge cross over … I’m on the committee, and it just doubles my work … It was very frustrating when it was first announced because, for example, [Families First have] got $3.9 million right across South-West Sydney to put into improvement of services. At Miller, the first Communities for Children site, they have maybe $2.5 million, just for four suburbs. At Rosemeadow, they have $3 million … At Fairfield they have $2.5 million. So between the three of those they’ve got over $7 million of money which is almost twice as much as we have to go into the whole of South-West Sydney. And the things that we could have done if they’d said, we’re going to double your budget now you’ve done such a good job, go out and do everything else that you needed to do. We could have made a huge impact without setting up a whole extra structure.
(Yvonne—Families First representative)

Workers perceive this overlap of programmes as creating unnecessary institutional complexity and fatigue in already established practices of interagency work—a process that ultimately detracts from their ability to help communities and families. The financial support rolled out at the Commonwealth level are viewed by some State-level workers with a type of covetous regard; part of an imagining or envisioning of the potentialities in genuine ‘joined-up’ working and funding across state institutions. Actors describe these potentialities as primarily obstructed by political imperatives related to the then divergence of political parties between the Commonwealth (Liberal) and State (Labor) levels of government (see Chapter 4). As one worker explains, “you have your Liberal Government and you have your Labor Government and there’s no way they’re going to give money directly to Labor to make them look
better” (Yvonne—Families First representative). Political parties across Federal and State Governments engage in ongoing arguments and negotiations to sustain their leading positions. As part of these negotiations, political parties continually (re)enact programmes and policies in the hope of claiming a publicly approved and politically acclaimed response to the demands of redistribution.

The politics of accumulation and redistribution interact with and shape interagency spaces of human service delivery. This politics reflects the types of complex rationalisations, ad hoc tactics and mediatory concessions that Caiden (1970) describes as innate to governing contexts. Rather than necessarily viewing these political actions as co-options arising solely from neoliberalism, I suggest that such governing contexts include neoliberal motivations together with less economistic, privatised and marketised actions concerned with balancing accumulation while maintaining ongoing commitments to providing social support (Larner and Butler 2007). Moreover, I argue that the diverse political dynamics shaping interagency practices (including neoliberalism) never operate as ‘intrinsic obstacles’. Actors instead engage and negotiate these dynamics in contingent ways, such that they continually “try and make sure that the Commonwealth and State things are working in harmony rather than in conflict” (Paul—Families First representative); or as one actor describes, “we overcome some of those political issues … to make it work for the local community” (Emily—SaCC MC representative). In adopting a weak theory framing, political events and practices are able to unfold in open and contingent ways. Ethnographic analysis provides breathing space for the everyday politics of interagency working. Indeed, ethnography allows everyday practices to emerge from overbearing framings of governing and instead become grounded in the dynamic political contexts of state institutions.
5.2.2 The politics of leadership: tactics of election cycles and public representation

Actors’ accounts of interagency working reveal not only the importance of a politics of redistribution, but also a politics of leadership. This politics is infused with the demands and expectations of regular short election cycles and public representation (see O’Neill and Moore 2005). Actors within Families First and SaCC describe political contexts shaped by the tactical manoeuvres of governments and political actors seeking to meet public demands and expectations, gain political, corporate and media endorsement, and maintain positions of leadership. Such political practices in turn produce a proclivity towards immediacy, expediency, precariousness and variability across state institutions and interagency programmes (Goldfinch 2000). As I have argued, this complexly assembled political landscape cannot be simply ‘read off’ policies or specified governmental rationalities, but requires ethnographic attention to prosaic political practices as part of the highly charged, and publicly scrutinised spaces of state institutions (Larner and Butler 2007).

Actors in Families First and SaCC describe election cycles as a primary shaping force in the political contexts and practices of interagency work. The shifting governments, political representatives and leaders of these brief cycles means that most policies and programmes, however well rationalised, experience insufficient periods, moments, or indeed, a termination of political support (see Goldfinch 2000). Interagency working is a part of these changing and precarious contexts of political cycles. For workers, the ever-changing nature of government persistently impacts on the enactments, and very existence, of interagency working, as described below:

It’s that short term, everything is focused on the election cycle ... I’ve worked with government departments for 22 years and I’ve seen regionalisation and then bringing it back to centralisation and then back out to decentralisation. So, I don’t know, I think [interagency] will stay, but who knows what the policy directive will be.

(Therese—SaCC SSC representative)
It’s a pendulum and it depends on what part of the swing you actually come in on. But I guess [interagency’s] been around long enough that you see the pendulum going this way and back that way again … It’s always political.
(Brad—SaCC SSC representative)

The Families First curse is that, we might have a new Premier … and he might turn around one day and say well I don’t like Families First any more, and that’s that. That’s the Families First curse I call it.
(Matthew—Families First and SaCC MC representative)

Workers acknowledge fluctuating political contexts as an intrinsic part, or ‘curse’, of government with which their working practices confront and coalesce. There is a recognition that with the ever-changing motivations of governments, or indeed, the election of a new government, changes in policy directives may ensue that do not support interagency working, despite its prevalence in current social policy. The political variability inscribed in state institutions complicates any notion of states wielding determinately neoliberalising policy and programmes. Neoliberalism, and indeed interagency working itself, are instead positioned often precariously as part of practised and politicised contexts of elections and leadership; contexts continually shaped by expedient political responses and shifting institutional arrangements (Ball 1997).

Most particularly, actors describe the impacts of political responses which arise from attempts to maintain political survival throughout election cycles. While much governmental research traces the increasing strategic interventions of relational rationalities (e.g. Clarke and Glendinning 2002; McDonald and Marston 2005), workers suggest that such rationalities are also contingent upon the expedient fluctuations and often shifting actions of governments responding to the demands of constituents (Frankel 1997; O’Neill and Moore 2005). Interagency programmes may benefit from such political actions (although in often cursory ways), as political parties and representatives utilise this technique of social redistribution to gain public favour and endorsement.
Workers critically question such uses of interagency programmes to support tactical political campaigns, as seen here:

Are SaCCs the best investment, or is it just a politically expedient investment to cover what is a glaring hole in the patchwork of services we’ve got in NSW?
(Paul—Families First representative)

Sometimes government may have unrealistic expectations about one SaCC and one person can do in a community if everything else stays the same … I mean SaCCs are a good thing and better than nothing, but if there isn’t adequate childcare then I think they are a stop-gap measure.
(Robert—SaCC MC representative)

The SaCC programme is emphatically and often passionately supported by workers as a beneficial human service initiative, yet they express wariness around the political extension of such a programme to cover a dearth of broad-ranging human service provisions. Ongoing commitment to state-sponsored social support is infused with responsibilities, financial limitations, and public demands that often elicit expedient political responses. I maintain that such political actions are not always driven by neoliberal efficiencies, or indeed, socially-democratic concerns of egalitarian social support, but often the expedient and tactical manoeuvres of governments and representatives attempting to maintain political favour and leadership.

Indeed, actors’ accounts point to many instances in which the tactical responses of government institutions and leaders can influence interagency programmes across diverse geographies and scales. For local political representatives, the SaCC programme represents a potentially gratifying response to the needs of local constituents. For example, one SaCC representative described an event in which a local MP used ‘political sway’ to ensure the location of SaCC in their electoral area, as part of their community campaign for re-election (Robert—SaCC MC representative). In another suburb,
a SaCC was proposed among other programmes in response to the report *Unequal in Life* (1999)\(^48\) which pronounced the suburb as the most disadvantaged in NSW. One worker describes the location of SaCC as an expedient political response to the report: “well, what are you going to do about [the problem suburb]?” (Bronwyn—SaCC SSC representative). While interagency programmes may benefit from such expedient political responses through increases in funding and political support, workers view these shifts in critical ways as often cursory, superficial and complicating influences on their everyday work with communities. As a SaCC facilitator (Maggie) states: “there are a tremendous amount of local politics in interagencies, both good and also quite negative”. Attempts to maintain leadership and ‘political face’ are thus not confined to the big-power politics of policy, senior ministers and high-level bureaucrats, but are also intertwined throughout the highly charged political contexts of everyday governing (Painter 2006).

Actors also describe the formative politics of leadership as incurring expedient restructurings, often played out through changing agency structures and procedures. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, Families First and SaCC have both experienced vast restructurings of their institutional settings, policies, management bodies and staff. Actors describe these prosaic political contexts of restructuring as creating variabilities and vulnerabilities in interagency working:

> I think restructuring ... when you’re going through that process the services feel less stable and therefore they have less energy for things like moving outside of their day-to-day practices to do interagency ...

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\(^48\) *Unequal in Life* (1999) is a report on research conducted by Professor Tony Vinson (University of New South Wales), which produced social disadvantage scores for postcode areas across Victoria (622) and New South Wales (578). The disadvantage score was calculated by combining ten different measures of disadvantage, including mortality rates, notifications of child abuse, and rates of emergency care. The report received immediate and high-profile government and media attention, with the NSW government publicly supporting the report's recommendations.
If you’re trying to start something new or progress something you need to know who the decision-makers are and that’s really difficult when they change.
(Sophie—Families First representative)

We’ve had a really difficult time recently because everybody restructured. I went to a meeting and there were twelve people, and only three had been in the spot they’d been in before. Everybody else had been restructured, cancelled, redeployed and this was their first meeting and they wouldn’t be at the next one. That sort of change within government, and it happens to every single one of our agencies, has made it really difficult to actually keep [interagencies] going.
(Yvonne—Families First representative)

Workers view restructuring as potentially producing a range of difficulties in interagency working. These difficulties include maintaining consistency in representatives, drive and long-term commitment to the interagency strategy, and knowledge and connections within the interagency network—problems which I witnessed and experienced (in often frustrating ways) as part of my own ethnographic interactions in these spaces. The difficulties created by expedient restructuring may quite reasonably be framed as reflecting the off-loaded consequences of neoliberalism, with actors attempting to uphold human service commitments in the face of receding social services. And yet, ethnographic perspectives suggest that concluding the analysis at this point may overlook the political contingencies of these contexts.

49 The cogent and deducible institutional structures portrayed in the SaCC and Families First policy frameworks (see Figures 4.2 and 4.3) do not capture the change, fluidity and conflict inherent to these settings. Unlike portrayals of a simple identification process that ‘starts at the top’ of an institution under study (e.g. Ostrander 1995), the paths for accessing possible interviewees seemed to go every which way but down in my own research; following intricate webs created and sustained by the continual and characteristic shifts of election cycles, political representatives and institutional restructurings. In these ever-changing institutional settings, previously established connections and contacts were continually obscured, creating problems not only in identifying participants but actually keeping them (Parry 1998). As one government representative stated in initial communications, “well you don’t put up any photos, because you’ll only have to move them”. Continual shifts in key staff within the programme created a maze of connections, phone calls and time spent tracking people across, within and outside of state agencies. While proving a lengthy process of access, these initial ethnographic forays into the research setting reiterate the sense of enduring change in state institutions.
For example, Families First was recently restructured; transferred out of its once central positioning in the NSW Premier’s Department to be ‘hosted’ under the line agency of NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS). The restructure was justified as an attempt to “ensure better and more efficient planning, integration and delivery of our community development effort” (NSW DoCS 2006: 28). These post hoc rationalisations of Families First restructuring are quite clearly expressed in the neoliberalised rhetoric of efficient and effective governing. However, such understandings do not fully value the assemblage of political motivations driving these institutional restructurings. Indeed, actors’ accounts expose the restructuring not as an instance of neoliberalisation, but as an inherently political move, caught up in the strategic and tactical manoeuvres of governments and representatives seeking to maintain leadership and the gratification of their constituents:

I’ll choose not to say too much about that, because it’s a little political. I think if you have any knowledge of how government units work, when you’re merging something from the Premier’s Department into DoCS, you’d know that it’s part of a strategic plan.
(Matthew—Families First and SaCC MC representative)

How honest do you want me to be? Moving us into a line management agency was generally not considered by workers as being a good move. It was seen as a political one … It was clearly preferable to maintain us in a non-line agency … That’s where we felt the strategy needed to go because otherwise it’s under threat to just become another funding strategy.
(Yvonne—Families First representative)

It was at a time when the Minister and the Director General changed … it’s often not the people sitting around the table that are responsible for some of these bigger decisions. I mean they have no say on what their Director General is or isn’t going to do.
(Paul—Families First representative)

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50 Families First now operates under the newly created ‘Communities Division’ of DoCS (with a range of other similar interagency and community-based strategies such as Community Solutions and Better Futures; see Chapter 4).
Media portrayals, public perceptions and the ever-present intimidations of opposition parties, place significant pressures on leading governments. Government representatives create expedient responses and restructurings so as to quell any rise in dissatisfaction, particularly in the complex and demanding areas of social policy and human service delivery. As suggested previously, these types of political restructurings can create beneficial alignments with interagency strategies, yet these alignments are vulnerable. Families First, once understood as the “Premier’s baby” (Matthew—Families First and SaCC MC representative), has suffered from the ephemeral nature of political support. For many actors, the ramifications of these political restructurings not only produce immediate effects for strategies such as Families First, but can also impede and detract from the broad principles of an interagency approach more generally.

These brief examples reveal some of the prosaic politics that characterise state institutions. Actors describe political practices that do not solely reflect agendas of neoliberalism, but are often more demonstrative of the vacillating and expedient responses of government and political leaders. Interagency working as part of these political contexts cannot ever be understood or practised in predetermined and strategic ways. It is not only neoliberalism that becomes vulnerable in these politicised contexts, but also the everyday programmes and practices of interagency working itself. Indeed, even in spaces where interagency collaboration is being enacted, there are political actions that intercept to form surprising and unpredictable responses. In the following, I seek to extend this ethnographic attention to political practice by examining another primary aspect of interagency identified by actors: the dynamics or ‘enduring change’ of state institutions (see Maynard-Moody et al. 1986; Clarke and Newman 1997). The politics of redistribution and leadership reveal a sense of enduring change in state institutions, but further ethnographic examination exposes the influential role of these dynamics in forming, and being formed by, the everyday practices of interagency.
5.3 Re-animating interagency work: the mutable contexts (‘enduring change’) of state institutions

Peopled and practised states form the contexts of this research, comprising not only highly charged political contexts, but also everyday institutional dynamics. In institutional accounts of partnership-based working, these dynamics are framed in the language of interdependent networks, composite systems of management, shared funding mechanisms, connected service professionals and recipients (Lowndes and Skelcher 1998; Rhodes 2000b; Flinders 2002). Although attending to institutions, such accounts often present a cleansed and inanimate story of institutional interactions effaced of the diversity of actors, plots, motivations and traditions which constitute the everyday practice of institutions. In governmental research, there have been attempts to address this limitation in institutional accounts by acknowledging the institutional complexities involved in interagency modes of working including deficient institutional coordination, the overloading of interagency programmes (‘initiativeitis’), and overlaying of interagency demands with existing agency requirements (Cowell and Martin 2003; Larner and Butler 2003). Actors within Families First and SaCC, reiterate and confirm many of the institutional complexities of interagency work identified in governmental research, as illustrated here:

Interagency work is very slow and hard because you don’t always know where to intervene. You don’t know their system as well as you might know your own. Although, you know, it seems crazy because we’re all working for the State Government.
(Jane—SaCC SSC representative)

The crisis of urgent requirements is always a threat to good interagency … all departments have got the possibility of having their agency totally taken over by crisis management.
(Paul—Families First representative)

Everyone’s overworked, dedicated staff remain but have no more ability to take on more cases … you’ve only got so many slices of the pie, and for all that partnerships are good, if you’ve all got too much work to start with, being in a partnership doesn’t necessarily make that much better.
(Tracey—SaCC MC representative)
That’s the difficulty in interagency work; that it’s often in addition to people’s other work and they find it hard to give it the time that it needs. (Jane—SaCC SSC representative)

Interagencies commonly feature as a secondary responsibility for workers, such that they are not always enacted or prioritised in everyday work. Agencies have their own institutional structures, procedures and practices that elicit immediate demands which overtake attempts to enact and coordinate interagency working. Actors are overly aware of the adverse effects that these competing state institutional demands and constraints can have on interagency working in the already politically pressured spaces of human service delivery and social support (Milbourne et al. 2003; Larner and Butler 2004).

Specified governmental accounts of interagencies acknowledge some of the institutional complexities described by actors in Families First and SaCC. Yet there is a tendency to strongly position these issues as the off-loaded consequences of an overarching neoliberal project—the “intrinsic obstacles” of neoliberalised state institutions (Gibson-Graham 2006: 103). In this section, I seek to further these specified perspectives with a spacious questioning of ‘how’ institutions play in everyday interagency spaces. Through ethnographic examination, actors reveal several key institutional practices as influential in the interagency settings of Families First and SaCC. These practices do not routinely represent clean lines of institutional interaction, nor the consequences and obstacles of neoliberalism. Instead, I suggest that such practices are marked by the dynamics of enduring change which infuse and inscribe state institutions, unrestricted by any one government or governmentality. Change is a habitual practice of government (Maynard-Moody et al. 1986)—what Clarke and Newman (1997: 37) describe as the “tyranny of transformation”. The complexity of institutional practices that emerge from these dynamic contexts cannot ever be fully valued by strong theories of institutional networks or neoliberalised states.
Actors describe the enduring change of state institutions as involving four key aspects which impact on the day-to-day functioning of interagency work. Firstly, actors illustrate the variable and often ad hoc nature of institutional practices across interagency settings. These practices are marked by incomplete institutional reforms, inconsistent institutional requirements and unreliable institutional procedures. Secondly, these mutable institutional contexts reveal curious tensions between institutional freedom and isolation (see Rose 1999; Chapter 2). Actors’ accounts challenge notions of enhanced (albeit distanced) governmental rule with descriptions of institutional processes that foster often unfettered and disconnected interagency practices. Thirdly, actors illustrate the enduring institutional traditions and beliefs that continue to intervene in interagency spaces. Such institutional endurances reflect the individual agency responsibilities, needs and commitments that arise from discrete human service portfolios (e.g. health, housing, education), and the disparate genealogies of their respective professional fields. Finally, actors reveal how these mutable institutional contexts are creatively negotiated, accepted and shared as part of interagency settings. In practising weak theorising, the enormous powers of resilience and change in state institutions are viewed as consequential—not as intrinsic obstacles, but as the enduring institutional practices that actors work with contingently as part of everyday interagency work (see also the work of Calavita 1992; Alaba 1994).

5.3.1 The variability and ad hocery of state institutions: messy in-between spaces of Families First and SaCC

Actors across Families First and SaCC recurrently describe the variable and ad hoc institutional practices that shape interagency structures, procedures and day-to-day practice. It is the ‘in-between’ spaces of Families First and SaCC particularly where these stories of institutional inconsistency play out. For the
SaCC programme, institutional change and restructuring have been enduring features since its inception in 1995. Initiated as a NSW Department of Education (DET) programme, SaCC came under the strategic direction of Families First in 1998, yet maintains continued leadership from DET (see Chapter 4 for organisational diagram). The movement of SaCC into the fold of Families First was justified in policy documents as an attempt to further consolidate interagency human service programmes; linking already existing services and helping them “to expand and remodel themselves into a coordinated service-delivery network” (NSW Cabinet Office 2002b: 4).

While framed in the institutional rhetoric that typifies partnership-based working (Lowndes and Skelcher 1998; Rhodes 2000b; Flinders 2002), the restructuring of SaCC as part of Families First has been enacted in largely ad hoc ways, with many ‘grey areas’, gaps and complexities now well-established across the processes and practices of these interagency bodies. It may be easy to position these ad hoc practices of restructuring as the products of remnant bureaucratic practices (Rhodes 1996), the inherent gaps of ‘governing at a distance’, or evidence of failures in, and resistances to, neoliberalism (Rose 2000; Higgins 2004). Yet the examples described by actors and outlined here point to an ad hocery of institutional practice (Maynard-Moody et al. 1986)—an enduring feature of change in state institutions which is diversely animated and decidedly less singular and strategic than may be expected.

For actors, the ‘joining up’ of Families First and SaCC remains largely incomplete. The seemingly strategic attempt at efficient integration and coordination of these bodies is instead described as a quite typical representation of the inherent ad hocery of state institutional practice. Indeed, actors utilise the residing institutional isolation of several of the original SaCCs, as solely DET-managed programmes, to illustrate the often-unfinished institutional restructurings that occur across state institutions:
It adds some levels of complexity and ambiguity ... where there’s Connect Redfern as being one of the original SaCCs. So it’s not the Families First programme. It has a state secretariat that’s run through the lead agency of DET. It doesn’t actually answer to the Senior Officers Group of the other Families First or interagency programs ... If it’s a whole of government approach, then we need to have a whole-of-government system to manage it.
(Megan—SaCC MC representative)

Most of the SaCCs fall within the Families First framework, but you still have a number of SaCCs outside that. Outside in the sense that the funding comes, not from Families First like the majority of them do, but comes from individual departments ... It is an anomaly that we don’t support in this department. We would like to see the whole thing coming together under the Families First banner, not to have two separate structures that just kind of stumble on from year to year.
(Brad—SaCC State representative)

Rather than framing this ad hocery as reflecting a resistant bureaucracy or failing neoliberalism, actors’ accounts suggest more of a habit of hastily assembled institutions and incomplete governing practice. The often unfinished re-assemblages of institutions are described as one of many outstanding issues that remain at “the bottom of political and agency agendas”; caught up in the familiar practices of “stumbling on” (Brad—SaCC State representative), or fumbling through everyday institutional pressures and expedient political demands of governing (see also Robertson 2007). Largely neglected by state institutions, the incompleteness of restructurings creates inconsistency across certain interagency practices, described by actors through several key examples.

Firstly, actors describe the successive institutional restructures of SaCC as resulting in ad hoc funding procedures. The incomplete joining up of DET and Families First (under DoCS) has resulted in significant complications in the funding of individual SaCCs, with varied funding procedures engaged in different geographical locations. Moreover, individual SaCCs may have other human service programmes located on their premises which contribute to SaCC
funding and support (for example, Glebe SaCC has an Anglicare Family Worker; Cessnock SaCC has a Family First funded Supported Playgroup); or receive financial ‘top-ups’ from partner agencies (e.g. Fairfield SaCC receives a $3000 ‘top-up’ from DoCS). Workers portray these congested funding structures and processes as *ad hoc* and variable in their constitution:

They’re funded in an extraordinary manner … I mean I’m sure it works really well when you look down at it from above, saying oh well you know, Treasury will give the money to Education, and Education will run the services and then they’ll get all the reports back and then they’ll tell DoCS what’s going on, fabulous you know (laughs)!
(Yvonne—Families First representative)

At one stage, Treasury funded DoCS, DoCS funded DET centrally, DET then sent it out to Bathurst who would hang on to it for ages because they don’t care whether someone in Woodberry was being paid or not, and then finally it’d filter down to a region somewhere and eventually people would get their money. So at least now it’s direct from Treasury to DET. So that takes out one stage but I’m sure it’s just as messy internally … God only knows how much [DET] have skimmed off centrally. It’s probably better that I don’t know. I’d lead a march on Parliament House if I did (laughs)!
(Christine—Families First and SaCC MC representative)

We’ve been doing this for quite a long time and it’s been very difficult to organise the money particularly because [DoCS’] financial year is June to June whereas [DET’s] is in November. And their funding doesn’t always come in on a regular basis. At the moment, we’re actually looking to find out where the funding this year has gone.
(Camille—School Principal)

Many SaCCs at the time of interviewing were in a state of suspension, waiting for their budget to come through from DET and receiving little information or support concerning the timing of its delivery. Although framed as an efficiently joined-up interagency, the unsettledness of institutional arrangements between DET, DoCS and a range of other partner agencies creates confusion and misunderstandings for interagency workers in the programme. The strategic and orderly rescriptions of interagencies as relational and joined-up are decentred by the *ad hoc* practices of state institutions which involve discrete agency requirements and expectations (see Hailey 2001).
Secondly, reporting procedures institutionalised in Families First (DoCS) are incomplete and often absent in the restructured practices of SaCC. Unlike other Families First programmes, SaCC is simultaneously positioned as part of a separate DET policy and management framework which has its own reporting procedures and requirements. Several Families First workers describe here a sense of *ad hoc* disconnection and incomplete institutional arrangements that are not supportive of, or helpful in, interagency practices of working:

Any other project that [Families First] manage we expect an annual accountability report in DoCS format and at the moment the SaCCs haven’t been required to do that since they moved in ... The SaCCs that have come out of the Families First budget, used to be reported on within the Families First framework but that money’s now being transferred directly from Treasury to DET and the accountability reporting lines have changed ... So there’s no direct responsibility to us anymore. Which I think has been a loss, because they’ve really lost the connection.

(Yvonne—Families First representative)

DET are supposed to send [reports] out to us but there’s that big bureaucratic grey area where it just doesn’t happen ... there is this feeling that the SaCC projects are, not a law unto themselves, but really aren’t part of the Families First projects and accountable to Families First, and realistically they are.

(Matthew—Families First and SaCC MC representative)

The prevailing isolation of SaCC within the restructured spaces of Families First is described by workers as creating a ‘hole’ in reporting, with SaCC representing a potentially ‘rogue’ programme within the Families First mandate. The sense of efficient, distanced yet increasingly monitored neoliberal governing practices seems almost incongruous as part of these messy, grey and obscured institutional settings.

Finally, *ad hoc* institutional practices are, perhaps more surprisingly, revealed in actors’ accounts of the practices of evaluation enacted across Families First and SaCC. Evaluation is commonly associated with recent forms of
neoliberalism as a prevalent technique in measuring and controlling neoliberal agendas of efficiency and effectiveness in service provision (e.g. Rose 1999; see also Larner and Butler 2004 for discussion). Yet within the in-between spaces of Families First and SaCC, evaluation is often practised differently and in uncontrolled and ad hoc ways. Many workers express concern at the lack of connection and guidance from the interagency partners in DET’s processes of evaluating SaCC. Actors describe the evaluation process as self-directed by DET and largely ineffectual:

[DET’s] approach to evaluation is to justify continued funding and support of senior Ministers. So they would be trying to take an approach that says, “this is fantastic, you know, we can’t live without this, it’s wonderful” … People do evaluations and hold them very close to their chests until everybody has signed off on it … I think [Families First’s] side of the coin is more around that broader evaluation of, is this a really good model that we’re sinking a lot of money into?
(Yvonne—Families First representative)

The problem is that the [DET evaluation] really needs to come back to the Families First partners. That’s the role of the partners to be able to collect that data … there needs to be some consistency from the state as to what we’re analysing.
(Paul—Families First representative)

The notions of control and surveillance often associated with techniques of evaluation are skewed in this instance, with the in-between spaces of Families First and SaCC displaying less strategic attention to measurement and coordination. Indeed, actors often describe practices of evaluation as reflecting immediate and gratifying responses to the political pressures and demands of reporting to senior level ministers. While the actual motivations behind practices of evaluation may be ethical (e.g. to ensure the programme’s longevity; see Chapter 6), the unsystematic nature of evaluation processes reflects the complexities and ‘grey areas’ instituted in these settings. Such grey areas suggest that a diverse range of institutional priorities exist in state institutions that are not always driven by neoliberalism, but by the events, habitual actions and changing demands of everyday social governing.
In practising weak theorising, the institutional complexities described by actors are viewed as neither the intrinsic obstacles of neoliberalisation, nor the insubstantial bureaucratic actions of state institutions. Indeed, I argue that the often *ad hoc* and incomplete institutional arrangements of Families First and SaCC are reflective of intrinsic dynamics of enduring change, sedimented and habitualised in the everyday practices of governing (Maynard-Moody *et al.* 1986; Clarke and Newman 1997). Strong governmental notions of increasingly strategic, albeit distant, neoliberal interventions in state institutions are diversified by accounts of the co-existing *ad hocery* and variability of these institutional settings. Indeed, actors recount not only distant, but also problematically isolated and unsupervised spaces of interagency working.

### 5.3.2 The tensions of freedom and isolation in mutable institutional contexts

The variability of institutional contexts might appear to reflect the balanced freedom of ‘government at a distance’, or indeed, expose ‘gaps’ for a resistant and productive freedom from centralised governing (Rose 1999; Flint 2003; Higgins 2004). Indeed, a balanced freedom, incorporating self-direction and supervision, is viewed by workers as vital in addressing the diverse and changing needs of local communities, as illustrated by one worker:

> There are boundaries … and loosely defined aims and goals around which the programme operates. It’s good that they’re loose because that allows flexibility, but it’s good that they are there so that you’re focused. (Anton—Families First and SaCC representative)

In accounts of government-at-a-distance, such balance between self-direction and supervision is framed as part of neoliberalism, whereby specified freedoms are imparted in return for the regulated economic and moral behaviours of governed subjects (Rose 1999). Yet actors in Families First and SaCC describe
a governing context frequently shaped by the unregulated independence of *ad hoc* institutional arrangements, such that actors relay feelings of frustration, a sense that they are “floundering and floating” out on their own (Rebecca—SaCC Facilitator), or “lost” in terms of their strategic direction (Peta—SaCC Facilitator). Workers’ descriptions reflect recurrent instances of *ad hoc* disconnections and freedoms in state institutions that diversify notions of an increasingly regulated state, and moreover, create difficulties in day-to-day interagency practice.

Indeed, actors illustrate considerable problems of isolation arising from the *ad hoc* institutional arrangements of management at both state and local levels of SaCC. At the state level, successive restructurings within the State Steering Committee (SSC) for SaCC (the leading management body of the programme; see Chapter 4 for organisational diagram) reveal frequently erratic and uncontrolled efforts of governing. The interagency management body for SaCC has encountered high levels of staff turnover, a change in roles to ‘managing up’\(^{51}\), and also a concurrent expansion in the SSC’s responsibilities to include two other interagency programmes; all of which have incurred considerable difficulties for workers described here:

> I don’t think many of [the state-level agency representatives] have a real picture of what [SaCC] looks like. Whereas in the past committee, those people had worked on the committee for a long time, they knew a lot about SaCC, a lot of commitment, a lot of understanding. I wonder whether the commitment was greater when they were the separate committees because they knew more about how it worked. Whereas now, it’s more a policy framework rather than a specific programme. (Bronwyn—SaCC SSC representative)

> As far as support goes from Sydney, that’s really non-existent. And they keep changing seats, so whoever you talked to last month you don’t talk to this month … I can’t even tell you who they are that are sitting in the

\(^{51}\) The shift to notions of ‘managing up’ refers to a conscious attempt by SaCC management structures to focus on reporting to, and ensuring ongoing funding from, the Director-Generals of each of the partner human service agencies.
seats in Sydney … I mean it just seems to be very ad hoc and we seem to be left asking ourselves questions and nobody necessarily giving us any answers … They really haven’t been supportive at all.
(Camille—School Principal)

We don’t know what they do. I mean I’m assuming they do sort of make decisions and discuss the kind of programme as a whole and its direction. But none of it filters down. In fact, at our last committee meeting that question was asked, what role does it play? And no one said they really knew.
(Adrienne—SaCC Facilitator)

While the policy framework of SaCC describes a well-organised and strategically focused management structure for the programme (Chapter 4), the actual practice of these structures reveals a less intentional and controlled institutional context. Actors even describe responsibilities clearly identified as part of the SSC policy framework, such as professional supervision, as seriously deficient and in many cases non-existent—the erratic products of “total luck, not good planning” (Emily—SaCC MC representative).

At a local level, the disconnection and isolation of institutions across Families First and SaCC is reiterated in actors’ accounts of the local Management Committees established in individual SaCC locations. In this case, the effects of ad hoc institutional arrangements and incomplete restructurings are experienced through a lack of membership, commitment and direction from agency representatives. Such experiences are explicitly related to the broader habitual motions of enduring change and restructuring across state institutions. Workers describe instances of severely inadequate attendance and agency commitment:

Often the meetings are just with [the SaCC Facilitator] and [the School Principal], and the [DoCS Supported Playgroup Worker], because the other agencies actually didn’t send anybody or their management had changed and the new person in that role didn’t come to the meeting.
(Camille—School Principal)
I think in a sense [the facilitator has] just given up on the committee … she just gets on and does. She talks to the principal and if the principal’s happy, well they just get on and do it. Which is okay because they’re doing a good job so I think that’s probably fine, but it isn’t how it’s meant to work.
(Linda—Families First and SaCC MC representative)

With few agency representatives attending committee meetings, many SaCCs represent more of a self-directed and community-based programme than they reflect the governmentally strategic and ‘joined-up’ project of interagency management. Committees are limited in the extent to which they fulfill their obligations in providing diverse and multiply-mediated agency direction into the SaCC programme (see Chapter 4). While SaCCs appear to continue their human service efforts in local communities, the broader relational rationalities and priorities seemingly well-instituted in interagency projects are often lacking or non-existent.

Actors describe the ad hoc institutional settings, gaps and in-between spaces of Families First and SaCC as often problematic; supporting a ‘governing at a distance’ characterised more by ad hoc isolation and frustration than strategic and co-opting rule (see Rose 2000). These accounts, I argue, reflect what Painter (2006: 752) describes as “prosaic manifestations of state processes”—those which necessarily evade the reductions of strong theories of governing. Indeed, the prosaics of institutional disconnection reveal these gaps as neither innately regressive nor conducive of resistance as it is these same gaps which, despite the frustrations of ad hocery, simultaneously provide breathing space for creativity and freedom in everyday interagency work. Actors point to the centrality of balance in institutional arrangements between these informal gaps and formalised management structures, noting their necessary complementarity. Indeed, actors value both informal and formal practices as vital parts of the diverse interagency ‘tool-kit’ which they draw on in supporting, guiding and facilitating their everyday work (Smillie and Hailey 2001).
5.3.3 Sedimentations of state institutions: agency traditions, beliefs and ownership

Intriguingly, actors’ accounts of enduring change reveal not only the variability of state institutions, but also the less material habits guided and shaped by particular agency traditions. In government policy, agency-based traditions are most often positioned as regressive bureaucratic habits and ‘siloed’ behaviours to be erased as part of ‘new’ interagency practice (e.g. Rhodes 1996; Shergold 2004). Moreover, in strong governmental framings these habits are viewed as remnant and increasingly redundant interruptions to neoliberalising states (e.g. Rose 2000; Colebatch 2002; see also Chapter 3). However, in adopting a weak theory perspective, such agency-based traditions play out in more prosaic ways.

Regardless of neoliberalising processes, state institutions in Australia are arranged and enacted in certain ways along traditional lines of redistributive responsibility, such that individual agencies assume particular human service portfolios (e.g. housing, health, education). The act of balancing state responsibilities of accumulation and redistribution are played out in each agency—through political battles over ever-shifting resources, the institutional genealogies of agency-specific practice, and the disciplinary traditions which infuse individual agencies with particular norms of social support. By widening the analytical lens, it is impossible to view agency-based practices as entirely redundant interruptions to neoliberalism or the thoroughly regressive behaviours of bureaucracies. Actors describe agency-based traditions as enduring, persistent, yet co-existent practices. Indeed, in illustrating the engrained principles of particular human service agencies, actors also describe a simultaneous type of ‘shared ethos’ operating across human services agencies in which workers show pride in their individual agencies yet respect for the shared visions of interagency working (see also Hailey 2001).
In the following, actors’ accounts of agency-based traditions are particularly situated in the in-between spaces of Families First and SaCC (respectively associated with the agencies of DoCS and DET). Firstly, actors describe the contexts of Families First and SaCC as sustaining a divergence between DoCS and DET. As discussed previously, SaCC differs from other Families First programmes in that it is led by DET, with DoCS and other partner agencies providing “specialist assistance and advice to the Department of Education and Training” (NSW DET 2005: 2). Thus DET as one agency remains chiefly responsible for managing what is a DoCS-based interagency programme, as workers describe here:

What actually goes on in a SaCC has really not been the concern of Families First Project Management Groups. And I guess that has really raised for me questions around well should we have been more hands on? … We’ve kind of left their running to DET … they tend to assume responsibility for them. Which is fair enough … but you know, if it’s a true interagency approach I think some of that stuff should be shared by the whole of agency management group.
(Paul—Families First representative)

DET are largely left to manage [SaCC]. So while the concept's good, if you actually look at what’s happening the funds are managed by the school, DET employs the facilitator, so they’re responsible for all the issues around employment, industrial relations, any discipline issues, those sorts of things … So a disproportionate amount of that work is being carried by Education rather than the other agencies.
(Robert—SaCC MC representative)

The pronounced differences between the institutional traditions of DET and DoCS began to emerge when accessing these spaces as part of the initial research process. For example, the negotiations over selecting four case study SaCC locations involved ongoing interaction between DET as lead agency of SaCC, Families First (DoCS) as umbrella strategy and myself as researcher. While I produced a short list of possible locations, the decision rested with key regional representatives from Families First (DoCS) and DET who were keenly supportive of interagency working, yet active in reproducing and maintaining the traditions of their respective agencies. Representatives from both agencies asserted their institution as more ‘appropriate’ in guiding the SaCC selection process, due to their individual traditions of human service provision rendering them ‘closer’ to the SaCC programme and more ‘responsive’ to communities. Such ethnographic subplots (see Calavita 1992) point to the congestions of interagency programmes generated by the ongoing assertions of institutional traditions and territory—institutional behaviours that are continually negotiated, contended and compromised in contingent and changing ways.
The complex of institutional spaces between Families First (DoCS) and SaCC (DET) reveals often divergent agency-based practices. Contestations emerge as part of these spaces around structural questions concerning how the ownership of strategies should be devised, and also normative questions on what particular institutional practices should be sustained and who is the most ‘appropriate’ agency to make those decisions.

These institutional divergences of both structures and norms reveal particular tensions between DoCS and DET. Most often, DoCS workers express concern around the rigid traditions of DET as an educational and school-based institution. DoCS workers tend to view DET’s institutional traditions as persistent barriers to addressing broader community-based issues and social needs. With DET assuming a lead role in a community-based interagency strategy, many DoCS workers question the institutional capabilities and practices of DET in managing and supporting the SaCC programme and its workers. Indeed for many actors external to DET, the agency is viewed as practising techniques of management which inhibit a truly shared interagency network, both structurally and ideologically, as described here:

Education interagency is different … they’re really quite narrow in the way they’re thinking … When Education recognises a problem within its work it tends to try and solve that problem within the resources that it has at its disposal rather than necessarily looking outside itself.
(Paul—Families First regional representative)

It’s a new way of doing business for DET, one that they haven’t really got their head around. It’s a real community development model whereas DET has always largely been focused around learning outcomes. Community development is something that [DoCS] take for granted, it’s something that we just do.
(Linda—Families First and SaCC MC representative)

I think of all the structures that you deal with, DET is probably one of the most difficult. It’s such a big organisation, with so many rules and so many players … In terms of [Families First’s] continuing role, it is to ensure that [DET] are still participating in an interagency fashion … so not go off and turn them into another classroom … another DET thing.
(Christine—Families First and SaCC MC representative)
What DET might require in terms of monitoring an agency … and their knowledge of how you fund a community-based project is very limited. It’s not about reading, writing and arithmetic, it’s a much broader scope … I don’t think they have the tools or the experience … I don’t think they even have a format, a tool to do that.
(Matthew—Families First and SaCC MC representative)

The divergence of practices identified here are not merely material consequences of government procedure and policy. These practices can also represent engrained institutional understandings and agency-based ideologies about the nature of partnership-based community development work. Such institutional understandings sustain normative assumptions that certain agencies may be more attuned to these human service practices than others. Both DoCS and DET are guided by the institutional practices, ideological principles and disciplinary backgrounds of their respective agencies. While concentrating on the most obvious divide between DET and DoCS, the other partner agencies are also implicated in the process of establishing, owning and shaping a programme through identification with agency-based practices and traditions of social support. In an interagency programme, these differences in framing and practising social support are amplified and compared as part of the fundamental interactions of a partnership, often exposing divergent notions of ‘appropriate’ service delivery and care. Such sedimented traditions and norms complicate and diversify any sense of a newly revised, neoliberalised state.

Many of the procedures instituted within DET are described as producing significant barriers for workers in enacting interagency practices as part of Families First and SaCC. For some workers, the institutional problems are explicitly connected to DET-specific practices, to an agency perceived as unaccustomed to the traditions and ideals of partnership-based working and community development. For others, and often the same workers, such complexities and divisions in institutional traditions co-exist and include a
recognition of the complexities of state institutions and governing more generally. States assume massive responsibilities in accumulation and redistribution which require shifting human service responses as part of always limited funding and “highly charged political climates” (O’Neill and Moore 2005: 24). As one worker concedes, “there are constraints because of [DET’s] lack of resources, like any government service” (Matthew—Families First and SaCC MC representative). DET is thus positioned by workers as an agency often employing problematic institutional practices, but one that is subject to the political and institutional vagaries that are a shared feature of their collective work spaces. The institutional traditions confronted, negotiated and ignored by workers are often emphatically criticised. And yet, simultaneously, actors are able to engage in a type of institutional empathy – a “still being here together” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 49) – recognising that they too have to cope with the mutable institutional and political contexts of states.

The spaces between Families First and SaCC, DoCS and DET, expose agency-based sedimentations that at times cause conflict and concern in agency understandings, beliefs and enactments of interagency work. And yet, such institutionalised differences are not described as intrinsic obstacles. Indeed, many workers negotiate the ideological divide between agencies and are able to work across it successfully for the benefit of their own work and the community in which they are engaged. As one worker states:

For a partnership to work, you have to expect that people actually have different views, expectations and perspectives. It’s about how you manage those to still get the desired outcome.  
(Brad—SaCC SSC representative)

Workers do not portray interagency working through the inactive institutional rhetoric of networks, consensus and consistency. Instead, they undertake interagency work as a more sophisticated and dynamic practice involving trust,
respect, cooperation and commitment to a shared vision of providing ethical and productive forms of social support (Hailey and Smillie 2001). Obviously not all workers are able to engage effectively in these types of negotiations and express degrees of distrust and suspicion of other agencies' intentions and motivations. Yet actors most often appear to negotiate such difference and disagreement as “material to be worked with” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 103); “differences of opinion needing to be ironed out at the local level” (Paul—Families First representative).

Viewing prosaic states challenges the notions of institutional traditions as intrinsically regressive interruptions to neoliberalism, or redundant bureaucratic practices. These sedimentations represent the enduring and mundane dynamics of state institutions engaged in the everyday work of their individual portfolios (Smillie and Hailey 2001). Interagencies, as described by these workers, are not about creating flat and uniformly apportioned structures. Actors illustrate interagencies as active practices of sharing and learning between already existing and proud institutions of social support; each of which have their own responsibilities, sedimented practices and disciplinary backgrounds. Indeed, institutional traditions can sustain and nurture practices of social support even in the mutable contexts of state institutions (see also Chapter 6).

5.3.4 Sustaining, negotiating and accepting the mutability of state institutions
For many researchers, the problems, negotiations and confrontations of interagency spaces represent the off-loaded consequences of neoliberalisation (Larner and Butler 2007). In these settings, the alternatives for action are most often ‘be ruled’ or, at best, ‘resist’ (Rose 1999). However, actors in Families First and SaCC diversify these framings of interagencies with enactments of
creativity, acceptance and the types of enduring notions of social support that are intrinsic to the institutional traditions of human service agencies. Notions of a type of opposing or hostile resistance do not fully capture the spaciousness of productive power, divergent motivations and creative mediations, undertaken by actors and unrestrained by strong dichotomies of rule or resistance (see Rose, M. 2002; Allen 2004). It is in viewing the prosaic practising of states that these types of diverse and productive enactments of power are revealed; enactments that I argue need to be nurtured as everyday practices and exigencies of human service work.

Firstly, actors in Families First and SaCC engage in active and creative ways with the dynamics of enduring change in state institutions. While actors note many of the problems of these mutable spaces, they are able to negotiate these changing spaces and mediate subsequent difficulties as part of working with practices of governing, rather than merely being worked on as co-opted subjects of governmental power. Actors describe events of creative negotiations with institutional ad hocery, such that they engaged with, and produced their own, management and support mechanisms, as described below:

[The management bodies] can’t assist individual sites anymore. So that’s why we started to put into place regional areas where we get together. So we’ve got an Inner West facilitators’ group where we get together on a regular basis to support each other.
(Peta—SaCC Facilitator)

I think the facilitators have developed their own communication networks because the communication from the centre to the network has sometimes been problematic. So I think they’ve decided that, well we’re here as a group, we’re out here in the region, we’re doing our bit, we’ll have our network.
(Bronwyn—SaCC SSC representative)

I mean we manage, because we manage it ourselves. I think as far as the region goes, the facilitators have got themselves together and formed a fairly coherent group. And that seems to be working.
(Camille—School Principal)
Dichotomies of governmental rule and individual resistance do not capture the dynamics of institutional practice, nor the types of negotiations undertaken by workers in mediating any arising issues. SaCC facilitators, for example, actively and ethically engage the school institution itself, local agencies, councils and the other partner agencies in providing additional funding, training, development, and professional supervision to workers and the SaCC programme more generally. Moreover, facilitators create their own institutional support networks, as I demonstrate in the following chapter, encouraging and motivating sharing with each other as part of their collaborative working practices.

Secondly, actors convey a sense of acceptance in negotiating the ever-shifting landscapes of state institutions. This form of acceptance cannot be confined and tamed by notions of bureaucratic complacency or neoliberal co-option. Indeed, the acceptance that actors portray includes active engagements and shared commitments to the everyday practices of social support. While acknowledging many of the adverse impacts of enduring change on interagency work, actors almost always qualified such recognitions with an amused and light-hearted acceptance that institutional change is an inevitable feature of state spaces, to be dealt with and negotiated as it was encountered in everyday spaces: “it's just part of government” (Cynthia—Families First representative); it “happens no matter what department you’re in”; it represents the “sort of day-to-day problems which are the bungles we all have to live with (laughs)” (Sue—Families First and SaCC MC representative). Actors are able to engage in a type of institutional empathy—“still being here together” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 49)—recognising that as government workers, they all continually interact with the ever-shifting spaces of governing.
Finally, actors extend the shared ethos of ‘still being here together’ to the practices of interagency working more generally. Interagency working is proudly upheld by actors who note the potential of interagency strategies to survive the motions of mutable state institutions, as recounted here by two workers:

The philosophy has really become normal practice now for a lot of agencies they have really picked it up and run with it. And almost, and that’s fine, don’t recognise it as being a Families First philosophy anymore, it’s just about best practice service provision, which is fantastic.
(Yvonne—Families First representative)

I continually reflect on how astoundingly successful [SaCC] is. For a whole range of reasons, the service delivery on site, the relationship with the school, and the ability to more broadly change the way interagency groupings work and develop.
(Maggie—SaCC Facilitator)

Despite the difficulties created by habits of enduring change, actors communicate a shared belief in the practices and behaviours of social support and community development instituted in the interagency strategies of Families First and SaCC. Workers engage in often productive and proud ways with the collaborative practices promoted by both these strategies. These kinds of positive engagements of workers co-exist with agency-specific sedimentations through a broad, shared vision of interagency social support. Thus, despite the difficulties of their working contexts, actors challenge cynical and despairing notions of interagency working as a repressive technique of neoliberalism which off-loads problems onto local workers (Larner and Butler 2007). From a spacious perspective, actors’ understandings of interagency extend beyond the confines of particular governments or specified governmental projects, and are instead “rooted in a genuine commitment to helping the poor and disadvantaged” (Hailey 2001).
5.4 Concluding on the prosaics of interagency working: the mutable practices of institutions and politics

Weak theory perspectives on the actual efforts of interagency working reveal a diversity of political practices that infuse the social governing settings of state institutions. As Mountz (2003) argues, practices of governing never unfold in a vacuum but are co-constituted as part of social, political and cultural contexts, which in this case, represent the innately peopled and practised settings of state institutions (Jones et al. 2004). Utilising interagency working as a currently prevalent technique of social governing, I undertake an ethnographic re-reading of social governing performances as part of state institutions. Through ethnographic attention to the prosaics of interagencies, it is possible to re-politicise and re-animate the often stagnant institutional typologies of partnerships and repressive accounts of neoliberal co-option (Larner and Butler 2007). The actual practices and illustrations offered by the people who do interagency work are thus valued and drawn out from underneath the regulating and restrictive framings of strongly theorised analysis.

In assuming a prosaic perspective, I argue that the accounts of interagency workers in Families First and SaCC expose diverse governing enactments primarily interconnected with the political and institutional contexts of states. These state contexts include neoliberal rationalities and agendas, rather than being perniciously and wholly determined by them (see Roberts et al. 2005). State institutions operate as both socio-organisational domains and apparatuses charged with the core responsibilities of balancing accumulation and redistribution (O’Neill and Moore 2005). It is in these politically and institutionally practised spaces that the demands, commitments and strategies of ‘playing politics’ come together with the institutional structures, practices and traditions of state-funded social services.
Firstly, actors describe a prosaics of interagency shaped by the political demands and commitments of accumulation and social redistribution, and the political tactics and expedient manoeuvres of election cycles and public leadership. Secondly, actors describe the centrality of institutional practice in everyday interagency work. These institutional practices are inscribed with dynamics of enduring change—the institutional ad hocery, organisational isolation, agency sedimentation and sustained social support that characterises everyday human service practice. State institutions often ‘stumble through’ day-to-day governing (Brad—SaCC State representative), portraying a complex of possible and sedimented practices involving actions that can be habitually erratic and ad hoc, historically ordered through enduring beliefs and ideologies, and politically practised as part of the characteristic traditions of Australian governments and governing.

Strong governmental framings insufficiently acknowledge the contingencies of practice in an attempt to wrestle diverse practices into a post facto framework of neoliberal governing. Accounts of the efforts of interagency (rather than just the effects) reveals interagency practices which are not always determined and defined by neoliberalism (the off-loaded consequences of neoliberal subjections), or as the yet to be fully dissolved bureaucratic practices of welfare states (siloed and inflexible institutional structures) (Rose, M. 2002). As Larner and Butler (2007) suggest, practices and performances, both individual and institutional, continually shape interagency work. Such practices may often generate frustrations and tensions for workers, but also reveal their ability to negotiate, confront and even ignore the institutional and political practices that form the shifting contexts of their work. Even highly problematic examples of political and institutional obstacles did not completely foreclose the potentiality for workers to engage in knowledgeable, creative, and caring actions (see Gibson-Graham 2006). Indeed, I argue that actors seem able to cope with dynamics of change in open and inclusive ways as part of their everyday work.
The notions of a hegemonic neoliberal project encompassing devolved, yet strategically controlling modes of governing (i.e. government at a distance), appear decidedly less determining and all-conquering from a spacious perspective of practice and possibility. Diverse political ideologies, institutional actions and expectations are innate to interagency working and reveal stubborn, sticky and variable contexts in which strong stories of neoliberalised states are unable to take hold.

In the prosaic interagency spaces of Families First and SaCC, actors communicate many of the relational rationalities of neoliberalism. Yet actors also communicate very different and co-existing understandings that recognise the forming influence of states, institutions and politics on the everyday practice of interagencies. Actors’ accounts illustrate the activity and dynamism of social governing—the peopled practices that infuse state settings and help to shape the scope of governing possibilities. It is these types of active and creative actions by people that are often ignored in strongly theorised governmental accounts of current governing. And yet, it is these same practices that I suggest (and argue in the following chapter) present potentiality for nurturing and co-constituting ethical, caring and genuinely collaborative working and governing as part of state institutions.
Chapter Six

Prosaics of interagency working (II)
Chapter 6

Prosaics of interagency working (II): the vitality of people, relationships, ethics and care

State institutions and practices of human service delivery continually engage with an assemblage of rationalities that can be described as neoliberal. Specified governmental accounts suggest that recent neoliberal rearticulations enrol two central rationalities in the domains of social policy; namely, relationality (Chapter 5) and etho-politics (Chapter 6). The Foucauldian concept of etho-politics, on which I focus in this chapter, describes a moral rationality of individualisation, responsibilisation and surveillance in which the individual is rethought as an ‘active citizen’ or ‘entrepreneur of the self’ (Rose 1996; Flint 2003). States are enrolled as part of these moral rationalities as a mediating partner between markets and citizens, promoting more efficient and effective services in return for the moral commitments of economically-rational actors (Bevir and O'Brien 2001).

From a strong governmental perspective, social governing is viewed as remoralised under neoliberal etho-politics. This process is seen to result in the reduction of state-funded social support and a simultaneous increase in the personal and economic responsibility of social service recipients (Lemke 2001). The currently prevalent social governing technique of interagency working is positioned in such strong accounts as reworked by etho-politics, with interagency workers acting as the conduits of etho-political priorities, responsibilities and technologies. In these framings, then, interagency practices and workers are studied for their co-options under neoliberalism—the ways in
which they are complicit in conveying the overarching moral and economic responsibilities of etho-politics (Larner and Butler 2003).

Specified governmental analyses of social governing have valuably revealed neoliberal rescriptions of current modes of human service delivery and its subjects. Yet, as was revealed in my ethnographic analysis of interagency working and relationality (Chapter 6), specified governmental framings often enrol strong theorising, such that spacious perspectives on the actual practices of social governing are obscured. Ethnographies that draw on both specified and spacious understandings of governing allow for the innate diversity and contingency of practice, thus decentring any residing notions of an all-conquering and determinately subjugating neoliberal project (Argent 2005).

In this chapter, I further develop my ethnographies of social governing by examining the understandings and enactments of people engaged in interagency modes of human service delivery. The recreation of social governing, workers and subjects is crucial to a neoliberal etho-politics. And yet, this neoliberalisation process is contingent upon the activity and vitality of political practice and people. So, how do actors understand current neoliberal recreations of social policy? What are the range of governmentalities that shape their working practices and performances? How do actors understand and approach the recipients of human services? What ‘other’ ethics are involved in human service delivery? I propose that ethical enactments of service delivery are both possible and prevalent in these interagency spaces—an ethics which promotes caring, support, diversity and co-existence rather than an exclusively etho-political project of subjectification and moralisation. Moreover, I suggest that such an ethics is not restricted to the performances of ‘well-meaning’ individuals but extends into the sedimented practices and traditions of state institutions.
Figure 6.1 demonstrates the ways in which I continue the ethnographic re-reading process initiated in Chapter 5 to engage in an analysis of interagency working which re-peoples and re-affects the politicised and animated settings of human service delivery. Through ethnographic analysis, actors’ accounts of interagency working point to the empirical significance of people, relationships and care in everyday understandings and enactments of this mode of social governing; features not always valued in accounts of overarching and dominating governance projects. Moreover, I suggest that the practices of people, relationships and care offer valuable analytical viewpoints that extend existing frameworks of geographical analysis. The ethnographic viewpoints on people and practice decentre strong etho-political framings and routinely stagnant institutional accounts by exposing diverse, active and ethical spaces of working.

In attending to the practices of interagency working, I do not ignore the evident interjections of neoliberal etho-politics in actors’ understandings of human services and recipients. Instead, I openly and contingently explore the diverse efforts of governing (Rose, M. 2002), which involve neoliberal rationalities yet perhaps more influentially support ethical actions, respectful relationships (both with fellow workers and communities), and caring practices. Such actions and dynamics of ‘peopled’ states are often viewed as informal, idiosyncratic and inconsequential (Mitchell 1999; Jones et al. 2004). Yet actors’ accounts suggest that it is these ethical motivations and shared beliefs that often represent enduring and formative practices in these working spaces. Indeed, such practices often appear as more resilient than the ad hoc and expedient practices of governments and political leaders. It is my aim in this chapter to allow breathing space for ethical and caring practices of working, governing and human service delivery.
Figure 6.1—Re-reading interagency working from weak theory perspectives: people, relationships and care

**RE-FRAMING**

Specified and spacious governmentality: etho-political rationalities as part of complex assemblages of governing practices (Chapter 2)

State, institutions, politics and people: the practiced, peopled and potentially ethical contexts of human service delivery (Chapter 3)

**RE-READING**

Ethnographies (I): Re-politicising and re-animating interagency working in the political and institutional contexts of government and governing (Chapter 5)

Ethnographies (II): Re-peopling and re-affecting interagency working as an active, vital and potentially caring activity of state institutions and actors (Chapter 6)

**ETHNOGRAPHIES OF INTERAGENCY WORKING:**

**PEOPLE, RELATIONSHIPS AND CARE**

- Support and togetherness
- Self-responsibilisation of service recipients
- Care in working
- Personal and professional relationships
- Moralisation of social support
- Creative and innovative workers
- Humour and enjoyment in work
- Shared ethos of human service work
- Belief in traditions of social support
- Productive and obstructive personalities and attitudes
- Care in states
- People caring for people
- Personal connections and trust
- Friendships
- Paternal practices of care
In the first section of the chapter, I review the key policy framings of interagency working. I discuss how these framings often position interagency as part of a ‘new’ form of social governance, and how governmental critiques label these framings as etho-political. Extending these policy and governmental accounts, I draw in actors’ illustrations of interagency working in Families First and SaCC. Ethnographic attention to practice reveals the ways in which actors engage with dominant framings in complex and often different ways. Indeed, actors describe three primary shaping elements in their prosaic practices of interagency working (discussed in the second section of the chapter).

Firstly, actors describe the importance of individual people to the functioning and enactments of interagencies. Rather than people representing co-opted and moralised interagency managers/practitioners, my analysis suggests that ethical personal characteristics—such as caring, sharing and creativity—are most valued and nurtured as part of community-based interagency work (Hailey and Smillie 2001; Larner and Butler 2007). Secondly, actors identify relationships, both professional and personal, as essential to the success of interagency programmes which fundamentally operate through the engagement of local people and service providers. Actors do not describe relationships through the institutional discourse of ‘networks, collaboration and association’. Instead, actors frame relationships in innately personal ways that extend beyond working spaces to convey the ‘togetherness’ of everyday lives (see O’Neill and Gibson-Graham 1999; Smillie 2001; Barnett and Land 2007). Finally, actors illustrate practices of care in interagency work. These caring practices co-exist with etho-political priorities and include critical, ethical and even paternal practices. It is my aim to value the diversity of actors’ enactments of interagency working so as

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53 Due to the ethnographic level of analysis, much of the discussion in the second section of the chapter is confined to the working spaces of SaCC, rather than Families First, as it is the SaCC programme that undertakes the most direct forms of service delivery to communities.
to identify existing and possible ethical practices, and provide an analytical perspective that nurtures the vitality of social governing.

6.1 Framing interagency working: current social policy and specified governmental critiques

Research on social governing exposes many of the current shifts in social policy. Modes of service delivery, such as interagency, are generally described in social policy as a means of addressing the failures of earlier neoliberal reforms and the institutional rigidities of bureaucratic welfare states (Clarke and Newman 1997). While bureaucratic welfare states are regularly viewed as fostering inefficiency, dependency and despair, neoliberalised states are positioned as not only more efficient, but as socially effective (Fraser and Gordon 1994). Current collaborative and community-based modes of governing are drawn on to facilitate the newly rescripted agendas of governing; mediating the extremes of market and bureaucracy with the formation of an efficient yet socially responsive service base (Smith and Easterlow 2004). These shifts in social policy are evidenced in a recent Commonwealth Government policy document entitled Connecting Government which is aimed at instituting interagency working:

New public management has been good at putting emphasis on efficiency, but has fragmented the capacity of government to address … a special class of policy issue (‘wicked problems’) that defy jurisdictional boundaries and are resistant to bureaucratic routines. 

(Management Advisory Committee 2004: 10)

54 Much of the critique of bureaucratic welfare states is now implicit after decades of deconstruction in government policy. Moreover, unlike the New Zealand context of partnership working described by Larner and Butler (2007), social policy in Australia largely avoids the ‘explicit rejection’ of neoliberalism. Instead, social policy tends to establish neoliberal practices as an efficient basis for governing that can be effectively supplemented and mediated with more social and relational considerations; part of the ‘bargained consensus’ approach to neoliberal modes of governing generally undertaken across Australian governments (Goldfinch 2000; see Chapter 4).
Interagency working is positioned in such social policy frameworks as an effective technique that is capable of maintaining efficiency while attending to the complex, or ‘wicked’ problems of social need—a strategy often referred to as ‘joined-up working for joined-up problems’ (Miller and Ahmad 2000).

From a specified governmental perspective, the recent rescriptions of social governing constitute key features of a newly inscribed neoliberalism. This rescripted mode of governing extends priorities of earlier neoliberalism with an inclusion of the social concerns and individual responsibilities of etho-politics (Larner 2000; Rose 2000; Amin 2005). The role of states, then, shifts from ‘providers’ of social services to the ‘enablers’ of social support. Families, communities and children are drawn into this relationship through a responsibility to assist government by activating their own means of economic and social support (i.e. not a ‘hand-out’ but a ‘hand-up’). For example, Families First policy states:

Families, with the support of communities, need to fully appreciate and act on the responsibilities associated with preparing the next generation to lead fulfilling lives.

(New South Wales Premier's Department 2000: 12)

Specified governmental analyses highlight the ways that terms such as social capital are used to describe the capacity of citizens to sustain their own well-being and translate etho-political behaviours (Harriss and De Renzio 1997; Gibson and Cameron 2005). Moreover, these analyses point to techniques such as early intervention as attempts to address the problems of communities identified as ‘lacking’ in social capital—framed as a means of achieving efficiency (long-term savings in government resources) and effectiveness (solving problems before they become entrenched) (Prout 2000; Dobrowolsky 2002; Elizabeth and Larner 2003). From these specified governmental perspectives, interagency modes of working can be viewed as both a natural
panacea to the problems of earlier efficiency reforms and, perhaps more influentially, as an added etho-political measure assisting citizens in becoming moral, self-responsible and economically rational actors.

There is much research that traces the etho-political recreations of social policy and the modes and subjects of service delivery (e.g. Imrie and Raco 2003; McDonald and Marston 2005). Such moralised responsibilisations are increasingly evident in the Australian social policy context. However, I argue that many analyses in this field have been caught and bound by strong conceptualisations of neoliberalism that seek to name and categorise—scouring for evidence of etho-political existences (and variabilities) in the service delivery policies and practices of governments. As Larner and Butler (2007: 73) note, such strongly theorised research too often concludes that the subjects of governing are being co-opted into the hegemonic projects of neoliberal states.

The contingency of ethnographic analysis reveals the complexities and diversities of actually practising social governing. In the interagency and community development spaces of Families First and SaCC, actors communicate many of the etho-political rationalities of service delivery and recipients, but also convey different understandings that include ethical practices promoting caring, support, diversity and co-existence.

One example of responsibilisation in the Australian social policy context is that of the Work for the Dole programme. The Work for the Dole programme was initiated in 1998 as part of a Commonwealth Government Enhanced Mutual Obligation Policy. The policy is delivered by the Commonwealth social support agency Centrelink and requires all young unemployed people who have been receiving unemployment payments for six months or more to undertake an additional activity in return for receiving payments. The Work for the Dole programme has been widely criticised by opposing political parties and peak community groups for its harmful focus on youth, lack of ability to create any genuine employment opportunities or accredited training benefits, the promotion of cheap labour, and incrimination of the most disadvantaged in society (Yeend 2004). The programme, then, is perhaps most easily positioned as part of broad etho-political framings, driven by both the expectations of self-responsibility and underlying priorities of market efficiency.

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In the following sections, I delve into the etho-political and ethical possibilities of governing by focusing on actors’ understandings of the interagency policies that frame their working spaces. I examine the ways in which actors describe policy refractions of: firstly, the mode of service delivery (i.e. interagency); and, secondly, the subjects of service delivery (i.e. communities, families and children). While strong governmental framings position such workers as the conduits of etho-politics, I demonstrate that actors often engage with etho-political rationalities as fleeting political responses, or as rationalities to be re-enrolled as part of everyday ethical working practices. Moreover, these actors working within Families First and SaCC also expose ‘other’ diverse performances and sedimentations of governing practices. Such practices of human service delivery are atypical of neoliberalism and centre on ethical performances, personal relationships and care. In interpolating actors’ understandings with policy framings, I aim to practice spacious thinking on the specified governmental policies of human service delivery; an approach that nurtures hope and the diversity of practice. From this perspective, I reveal opportunities for identifying, stimulating and sedimenting genuine ethical working practices, thus reclaiming ethics from the confines of neoliberal etho-politics.

6.1.1 Understanding interagency working: policy, translation and diverse practice

Assuming a weak theory perspective on interagency working is crucial to acknowledging the range of understandings, governmentalities and practices that act to shape the contexts of social governing. As many critical geographers note, neoliberalism is an inherently varied and hybrid project which does not present a wholesale imposition of a new form of governing (e.g. Larner 2003; Radcliffe 2005; Peck and Tickell 2007). And yet, few analyses of contemporary
governing actually value this practice and diversity through ethnographic examination. Rather, diverse practices of governing are largely seen as reordered and re-enacted through the inventiveness of neoliberalism (Barnett 2005). As Larner and Butler (2007) argue, systematising post facto rationalisations are common to understandings of neoliberalism. Thus it is vital to contingently examine the ways in which these rationalisations are informed, practised and often ignored in everyday practices of governing, rather than concluding on their co-opting control.

In the following discussion of interagency framings, I demonstrate examples of well-versed policy rhetoric, together with instances in which actors are able to draw on this rhetoric selectively in ways that support their day-to-day working. It is important to appreciate workers as knowledgeable and heterogeneous agents, “with sophisticated and diverse understandings of the institutional, social, economic, and political contexts within which they carry out their projects” (Roberts et al. 2005: 1849). The discussion exemplifies that neoliberalism can indeed co-exist with diverse rationalities, practices and subjects rather than solely consume them.

Actors within Families First and SaCC engage in policy rhetoric that reframes interagency modes of service delivery in the language of ‘joined-up working for joined-up problems’. In Families First, such rhetoric is expressed through the recognition that ‘no one’ agency has the capacity to ameliorate the increasingly complex problems of communities (New South Wales Cabinet Office 2002b: 5). Actors often draw on this rhetoric in illustrating the currently “more complex issues of families” and the recognition that “one service can’t support those multiple needs” (Peta—SaCC Facilitator). As Michael (Families First representative) described it:
In many cases, people’s problems and challenges are multifaceted ... these people need support and assistance across a whole range of areas and they’re more likely to thrive where a coordinated approach is adopted.

Actors understand collaborative techniques such as interagency as attempting to match the multifaceted ‘nature’ of communities. From a strong governmental perspective, these descriptions of interagency working quite simply illustrate the institutionalisations of an etho-politics that problematises ‘challenging’ citizens and ‘complex’ needs. Workers, then, are positioned as conduits that translate neoliberal subjections.

Yet I argue that these rationalities of interagency working are not so strongly and invariably influential in the everyday spaces of enacting social governing. Actors are able to selectively draw upon policy rhetoric, engage in divergent practices, and uphold enduring traditions of interagency work, often in contradictory yet co-existent ways (see also Hailey and Smillie 2001).  

Firstly, while some actors draw on policy rhetoric, it is often revised or even ignored as part of actors’ individual and institutional working practices. For example, actors frequently qualified their engagements with policy rhetoric—“no single service has all the answers”—as “the blurb that everyone talks about” (Sophie—

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56 The diversity of actors’ engagements with policy rhetoric and practice was also revealed in the ethnographic ‘subplots’ that emerged during negotiations undertaken to approve the research project (Calavita 1992). Representatives of Families First and SaCC exposed particular institutional rhetoric and sensitivities that needed to be addressed in order to receive approval for the project. Some representatives proved particularly obstructive, driven by the desire to ensure proper institutional protocols and procedures were followed, and that they themselves would be placed in a position to grant approval; actions Schofield (2001) describes as “bureaucratic responsibility” and the “protection of personal reputation”. However, for other individuals, similar sensitivities over access and confidentiality were framed by distinct “instrumental motivations” (Schofield 2001): passionate socially-democratic beliefs in the benefits of the programme for communities and the potential for critical research to impact on the longevity (i.e. funding) of the programme. While divulging in the same procedural language and institutional rhetoric, the individual motivations for using such rhetoric varied, thus challenging the notion of workers as technical conduits that simply translate policy and governmental subjection.
Families First representative); or “that warm and fluffy thing” (Matthew—Families First and SaCC MC representative). Actors seem able to draw upon policy rhetoric selectively, using such language discerningly to support and validate their everyday working practices.

Secondly, actors not only engage selectively in current policy rhetoric, but also understand and practise interagency work in ways that are atypical of ethopolitical agendas. As evidenced in the following statements, actors within Families First and SaCC most often frame their everyday interagency practices through notions of help and care, both between fellow workers and with the subjects of service delivery:

I think we’ve got things to learn by working together, which is exactly what the philosophy is in the programme, that we can help each other.
(Vicky—SaCC Facilitator)

[Interagency is] better for workers because there’s that sharing of knowledge and that sharing of responsibility … We can’t do it alone, we need help.
(Sophie—Families First representative)

I still think we as government agencies have got to be much more respectful of community and community needs and I think when we come in in our own little individual group, then that’s not a respectful way of working.
(Bronwyn—SaCC SSC representative)

Interagency is understood and utilised as a mode of working that fundamentally “makes sense” (Vicky—SaCC Facilitator), “is much smarter” (Sue—SaCC MC representative), and “a good thing” (Matthew—Families First and SaCC MC). Actors view interagency working as innately supportive—a mode of human service delivery that allows for the sharing of responsibilities, encourages learning from the expertise of others, and creates an environment in which people assist each other with the difficulties of everyday work. In comparison, any rigid, territorial and unconnected ways of working are understood as arrogant and insensitive, in that they ignore the inherent ‘togetherness’ of
communities, families and social needs. The detached framings of ‘joined-up’ working for ‘joined-up’ problems are re-peopled and re-affected in actors’ accounts that prioritise caring and respectful ways of working with communities and families.

Thirdly, the support provided by working in partnerships and across agencies is a process long-nurtured and sustained in the human services and community development field. Actors within both programmes commonly portray the interagency model as a more enduring feature of state institutions than depicted in strongly theorised accounts of ‘new’ neoliberalised settings. Most of the actors involved in Families First and SaCC have been engaged in human service delivery and community development work for decades. Actors communicate an extensive genealogical view of interagency models of working, recognising such models as operating successfully and independently of contemporary policy framings. As such, actors across all levels of the programmes portray interagency working as a long-standing practice:

There’s always been interagency … I don’t think it’s a new thing because I think a lot of people have been working towards it but I think perhaps Families First has given us a framework for working in that way. (Sophie—Families First representative)

[Interagency] was already established and most of the agencies had worked together. I think what Families First did was give it an issue and a priority, so put children onto that agenda … and certainly it was embraced quickly by the community because that’s the way we work … Interagencies have been here for years … it just goes on and on. It’s just the way work’s done. (Emily—SaCC MC representative)

How a community development role could work without an interagency model, I don’t know if you could do it, I think that’s always crucial to it. (Therese—SaCC State Level representative)

As demonstrated in Chapter 4, interagency approaches to human service delivery have arisen, at least partly, from many years of institutional and
academic critiques (see also Bevir 2003), and nurtured through ideologies of social support such as community development; understandings instituted and sustained in diverse ways across Australian governments since the 1970s (Everingham 2003). Thus while Families First may be positioned as one particular policy response, interagency working has been supported and enacted by state institutions and actors in various contexts over a long period. Interagency working, then, is understood as one of the necessary and sedimented practices of community-based human service delivery.

Attention to the diverse prosaics of interagency working unsettles neoliberalism and etho-politics from their often determining position in accounts of social governing. Recent framings of interagency modes of service delivery display certain interarticulations with neoliberal etho-politics, yet also reveal diverse understandings crucial to everyday practices of human service delivery and the ‘how’ of social governing. Actors are able to engage with policy rhetoric both genuinely as valuable addenda that can support their everyday work, and as part of a qualified and selective use of fleeting political ‘blurbs’. As O'Neill and Moore (2005: 27) explain, actors develop skills of conversing in the language and procedures of policy while engaging in their own necessary actions of everyday work:

[Human service practitioners] might comply with adjusted organisational performance models, and they are happy to develop efficiencies in resources use, yet they produce peculiar alignments between some sort of lip service to a strident neoliberalism and desires for more equitable social and economic outcomes.

Moreover, the desire for more equitable outcomes can also produce actions and understandings atypical of neoliberal framings, promoting ethical notions of help and care, and sustaining enduring traditions of interagency working.
The use, selective ‘lip service’, and avoidance of policy framings are not easily folded back into a dichotomy of co-option or resistance (Rose 2002; Larner and Butler 2007). Procedures that promote efficiency are not determinately inimical to workers, as they too wish to promote the efficient use of resources, their effective deployment, and the benefits that ensue for communities (Schofield 2001). Workers engage in human service delivery as active agents with assertive desires and intimate knowledge of service practices and community needs. Workers’ understandings are grounded in the very real and immediate responses of people; such that if their working practices are unsuccessful in engaging local people, the SaCC will simply not be attended and subsequently fail (see Hailey 2001 for further examples). The actual and exigent issues that workers continually negotiate and confront in their everyday interagency practices act to shape the contexts and very framings of this mode of service delivery.

6.1.2 Understanding subjects of service delivery: responsibilisation, early intervention and care

Contemporary framings of interagency service delivery draw on etho-political subjectivisations of service recipients. An etho-politics characterises service recipients primarily through moralised notions of activity and responsibility with a particular focus on self-responsibilisation and early intervention (Prout 2000; Elizabeth and Larner 2003). Strong governmental accounts often trace the ways in which government workers enforce, or potentially resist, these subjectivisations through their work in communities (e.g. McDonald and Marston 2005). Although noting the potential for people to resist the translation of such subjectivisations, the very process of pitting structure against action, dominance against resistance, people against programme, paradoxically reinforces and sediments notions of a pre-existing hegemonic neoliberalism.
I suggest it may be useful to assemble frameworks of weak theory that support more spacious perspectives on the active ‘becoming’ of subjects (Butler 1997; Gibson 2001; see also Chapter 2); perspectives which view power and subjection as diverse and productive practices. Such spacious perspectives openly value hope and allow for the co-existence of diverse understandings and prosaic practices of knowledgeable, skillful and politically savvy actors. For workers in Families First and SaCC, etho-political framings of service recipients are drawn upon, revised and ignored in their everyday work. Key concepts such as early intervention co-exist in workers accounts with examples of caring enactments of these same concepts, and the divergent understandings of other traditions and working actions. As in the case of recreations of interagency service delivery, these contradictions and ambiguities of governing practices are not irreconcilable—they “survive as part of any organisation” (O’Neill and Moore 2005: 27). The subjectivisations of service recipients through both self-responsibilisation and early intervention are thus engaged by workers in a multitude of ways as part of the broader contexts and diverse practices of human service settings.

Firstly, in describing the services and aims of Families First and SaCC, actors draw upon the rhetoric of self-responsibilisation, which frames service recipients as agents in the creation of their own social and economic well-being. These notions of activation and responsibilisation are indicative of etho-political understandings and priorities. Indeed, governmental critiques that workers act to support the etho-political responsibilisations of citizens are evidenced in the following accounts of actors enrolled in Families First and SaCC:

[The role of SaCC is] supporting families in supporting their children and supporting them also in supporting themselves in acquiring skills that allows them to be worthwhile contributors to the community.
(Carol—SaCC MC representative)
People need meaning in their lives, so it’s good to be learning stuff and also to be giving something to the community … they’re not just on the receiving end, they’re actually giving to the community.
(Vicky—SaCC Facilitator)

It is not about doing it for them. Not a welfare mentality.
(Maggie—SaCC Facilitator)

The people engaged in the spaces of Families First and SaCC describe these interagency, community-based approaches as facilitating and supporting communities in their own actions. There is a strong theme throughout the interviews that current human service approaches are distinct from previous and outdated welfare provisions in that they recognise existing capacities and facilitate new skills in individuals. Individuals are positioned as capable, skillful and ‘worthwhile contributors’; viewed as developing both individual self-worth and benefits to the broader local community through what can suitably be described as relational and etho-political actions.

While these framings of service recipients may be most easily positioned as evidence of etho-political translation, I suggest that actors’ understandings of social support are practised in multiple ways. For example, actors in Families First and SaCC engaged extensively and emphatically in the language and understandings of Assets Based Community Development (ABCD; discussed in Chapter 4). ABCD is an approach to social need founded several decades ago as a result of extensive academic research and institutional traditions of community development. ABCD frames communities as gifted and capable, opposing subjectivities of deficiency, passivity and need by harnessing the abilities of local people to address local issues (Cameron 2000). Seemingly etho-political activations of service recipients, then, can also represent quite discrete traditions and understandings grounded in the nurturing of genuine relationships of trust and respect, as workers describe here:
My idea is let’s see if we can build on the strengths that they already have there. We [the agency] are very much into Assets Based Community Development. These people have all got huge skills. But no one ever asks them. So what I would like to do is to get them in here and say, “what are you good at, let’s do that to start with” and then see how we can incorporate that into the school system as well.
(Steve—SaCC Facilitator)

It’s got to be driven around what do the parents want rather than us say, “well this is what a SaCC programme is”. And that’s why this programme is all local context … So looking around what the community wants and needs is quite critical … I think that is much more respectful … looking at a strengths-based approach as opposed to deficits.
(Bronwyn—SaCC SSC representative)

Actors’ describe ABCD as an increasingly sedimented institutional practice across agencies. Moreover, actors uphold the ABCD approach proudly and personally as a motivating influence in their everyday work. Rather than just a subjectivised process of mutual responsibilisation, actors also value people as part of personal everyday relationships. And, like any relationship, reciprocation and sharing of vital elements such as trust and respect are not only expected, but also essential to their functioning. Service recipients are valued as skillful and knowledgeable people who can work together and with service providers to achieve positive outcomes for communities.

Secondly, actors drew upon the rhetoric of early intervention and prevention in describing the aims of social service provision and the expectations of service recipients. In Families First policy, early intervention is described as providing “cost savings” through “a sustained improvement in children's health, education and welfare” (New South Wales Premier's Department 2001: 48); framed as a means of achieving efficiency through treating ‘wicked’ problems before they become entrenched (see MAC 2004). Families First actors explain their own understandings of the early intervention approach here:
If a community is prone to crime, then the child is at risk of seeing criminal behaviour as a kind of pathway for them in the future … if children have a head start in life, then they’re more likely to lead productive lives as adults … And that saves a lot of money for government, in the long run, if people make you money rather than being incarcerated or depending on welfare (laughs).

(Jane—SaCC SSC representative)

[Early intervention is] picking up pace significantly … with quite a major move at the moment in the Human Services Executive level … This is reflecting the growth in research internationally that shows investment in the early years provides very significant benefits … And it does this in two ways: it reduces people’s reliance on welfare types of services, and it provides them with employment opportunities which in turn provides the government with revenue opportunities (laughs). So it’s actually kind of a win-win situation.

(Brad—SaCC SSC representative)

The complexities, ambiguities and ‘peculiar alignments’ of practising human service delivery are made evident in these statements on early intervention. Actors draw on established rhetorical connections between early intervention and future economic and social benefits. However, the economic benefits to government are almost always referred to as an aside or, as in these cases, with a qualifying laugh. Actors may pay ‘lip service’ to the policies of early intervention and prevention but this rhetoric is communicated in a detached, and often qualified manner, in opposition to other framings that are engaged more frequently and in more intimate ways.

Indeed, actors also engage in highly personal and practical notions of early intervention that diverge from the qualified lip service to policy rhetoric. Countering the critiques of determinism directed at policies of early intervention⁵⁷, actors in the programmes understand this approach as one that

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⁵⁷ As discussed in Chapter 2, early intervention has been associated with infant determinism as it tends to link childhood conditions with adult outcomes. Critiques of early intervention point to the potentially problematic applications of this association whereby disadvantage in childhood can be determinately framed as a precursor to educational and labour market failures as an adult (Prout 2000).
values the lifespan of people and one that has very practical and tangible results. The following descriptions reveal some of these understandings:

I think [early intervention] has brought a lot of agencies and organisations together in the sense of looking at the continuum of children’s lives … rather than seeing, “this is their birth, okay I’m focused on this, off you go now” … I love prevention and early intervention. I think if you’re going to make a difference you’ve got to start from birth. And I think the kids are our future … that’s on a personal level.
(Emily — SaCC MC representative)

The biggest value of [early intervention] is early identification of kids with issues. Because of [the SaCC’s] close early identification work with the community we’re finding kids well before they come into school. And we’re able to get support for them before they start school which has had amazing results.
(Tony — School Principal)

We’re really lucky because we actually get to work on the nice side of prevention. It’s nice to see that the programmes we put in do have an effect … You’re not only working with someone when they’re in crisis, or when they’ve got to work with you, but because people actually want to do it.
(Georgia — Families First and SaCC MC representative)

Rather than the purely etho-political language of responsibilisation and economic efficiency, actors view the positive and ‘common sense’ notions of engaging with children and their families early in their life, the ensuing benefits of which can be witnessed and enjoyed. Moreover, early intervention is not understood as a simple and singular answer to local problems. Actors engage daily with the complexities of the communities that they work in and acknowledge that early (or indeed, ‘late’) interventions do not necessitate a predetermined response. Notions of early intervention, like ABCD, are “used organically for learning … rather than as a narrow tool” (Anthony—SaCC MC representative). Thus early intervention represents one feature of an assemblage of community development techniques that actors draw upon at different times and in different ways as part of broader practices of ethical working (see Hailey 2001).
The formalised etho-political subjections that frame communities, families and children seem less influential and over-powering than portrayed in strongly theorised accounts of governing. Valuing actors as able to engage and disengage with formal policy is supported by the vital recognition that these same people are often the ones directly involved with the community; they know what works, what is respectful, what people will participate in (Smillie and Hailey 2001). Actors in Families First and SaCC seem able to balance notions of negative and positive, needs and assets, obligation and reciprocation, more organically than policy or governmental research, as part of their everyday working practices and performances. Communities are understood as possessing the skills needed to address the issues that they themselves identify as part of a supportive and caring service environment. As Debbie (SaCC MC representative) explains:

People are intelligent. You don't need to tell them they’ve got a crappy life. They know what they would like to have but sometimes they’re powerless to get there … basically we want people to be happy with their lives.

Actors shift in a largely unforced manner between the rationalities of both the modes of service delivery and the subjectivisations of service recipients as part of a broader, prevailing and often ethical understanding of community development. They generally exhibit a genuine commitment to communities as part of personal and affective desires for people to be ‘happy with their life’. Moreover, this type of commitment is not merely enacted in individual performances of extra-ordinary actors, but appears to be largely sedimented as a ‘shared ethos’ in the institutional practices and traditions of human service agencies enrolled in the field of community development (see Hailey 2001; Gibson-Graham 2006).
Of course, the intricate workings of human service delivery are not all as pretty and promising as the examples I have discussed here. Actors and institutions can operate in cynical and manipulative ways (Hailey 2001). But as has been suggested previously, these dynamics are rarely sustained or nurtured within an interagency and community development environment which innately functions on relationships, sharing, and the involvement of local people. In the next section, these complexities, ambiguities and co-existences of actually practising interagency working are further contextualised. I undertake an ethnographic examination of the enactments of SaCCs, service delivery and engagements with community beyond the policy framings of service delivery and service recipients. A spacious focus on the efforts of interagency working (Rose, M. 2002) reveals the dynamics of people, institutions, relationships and care as predominant and shaping influences in the prosaic practices of human service delivery.

6.2 Re-peopling interagency work: the vitality of people, relationships and care
Contemporary social policy exposes particular neoliberal rationalities concerning both the modes of human service delivery and service recipients themselves. Actors within social service spaces convey a range of understandings and practices that include these neoliberal rationalities among a complex and contingent assemblage of governing practices. Such diverse practices of people tend to be obscured in strong research frameworks which view only co-opted actions that interpret, vary or translate overarching governmental projects (Castree 2006). In the following discussions, I seek to re-peoplen and re-affect these strong framings by ethnographically examining the contingent and diverse enactments of interagency working as part of the innately politicised and animated contexts of governing. In adopting a
framework of weak theory, I do not deny the sedimentations of hegemonic projects of governing but examine these sedimentations as “practiced phenomena” (Rose 2002: 384); thus reviving the efforts and vitality of everyday interagency practice.

Actors’ enactments and accounts of everyday practice highlight the significance of people, relationships and care; exposing the individuals and emotions inherent to ‘doing work’ (Widdowfield 2000; Anderson and Smith 2001). While these features are hardly new to geographical analysis of social governing, their treatment is often tamed with a lack of attention to practice, contingency and diversity, as part of a now common conclusion of neoliberal co-option (Larner and Butler 2007). By adopting weak theories of everyday practice, the ethical and personal aspects of human service delivery raised in the opening of the chapter are further evidenced. Firstly, actors explain the importance of people within interagency spaces, with key traits often atypical of neoliberal norms emphasised as central to interagency and community development work. Secondly, actors prioritise relationships in everyday interagency work, describing relationships in the personalised language of friendships, trust and support. Finally, actors reveal the complex and fundamentally political practices of care that infuse their work. These practices of care point to the already existing ethical actions engaged in the prosaic performances of human service delivery. Despite the rarity of intimate accounts, I suggest that any working person would acknowledge the centrality of features such as personalities, personal relationships and care to the everyday functioning of work spaces. My weak theory framings allow me to not only include but also to value these everyday features of governing; nurturing the practice, vitality, diversity and contingency that shapes interagency settings.
6.2.1 Prioritising people and personalities

Recent attention to states as “peopled organizations” (Jones et al. 2004), has been part of geographical debates on the need to view state institutions from the perspective of everyday practice. From prosaic perspectives, individuals are positioned as potentially influencing broader institutional contexts and practices of states, such that “a profound change in an individual decision-maker is a profound change within the state” (Mountz 2003: 640). Despite the renewed attention to people, many analyses of states often conclude at the point of cursory acknowledgement, with ethnographic analysis of the actual practices and efforts of governing remaining largely unexplored (Calavita 1992; Gupta 1995; Mountz 2003). I suggest that an ethnographic perspective on peopled and practised states offers valuable understandings of social governing and interagency working, revealing the centrality of people, key personality traits and particular roles in creating and supporting interagency work. In ethnographically attending to people, assumptions that actors are simply the “technical conduits” that translate neoliberal subjections (Clarke and Newman 1997) are complicated and diversified. People are instead valued as actively and vitally engaged in the practices of creating, sustaining and modifying states.

Interagency and community development work is characterised by close collaborative working practices based on relationships with fellow workers, associated institutions and the communities within which the service delivery is based (Larner and Butler 2007). People, and their ability to engage in genuine collaborative practices, thus shape interagency and community-based work in prosaic ways. Moreover, the ways in which people engage in collaboration varies contingently between scales, times and geographical locations. Without exception, every actor prioritised people and personalities as primary factors in conducting successful interagency service delivery. Families First and SaCC representatives describe the pivotal role of personalities below:
It comes down to the individual. What type of worker it is, what their approach to working with others is, and the personalities and the relationships that they form.
(Sophie—Families First representative)

It comes down to people doesn’t it? It comes down to … the people who are translating that belief, that vision, that passion back into the work that they do.
(Carol—School principal)

[Interagency] very much depends on who the [workers] are and how good they are. And this is where the human element is actually quite important: a person’s experience in working effectively in a community setting; how long they’ve been around; whether the person has been engaged in that particular job for a while … It’s also a personality thing. Some people are empathetic and can see other people’s perspectives and points of view. But other people can’t. No amount of coaching will actually teach them.
(Brad—SaCC SSC representative)

Personalities necessarily support, but also potentially impede, the practices of interagency working. Indeed, the influence of personalities means that people can inevitably act as barriers to the success of interagency programmes, such that “[people] can become very entrenched in their own practice and find working collaboratively very stressful” (Maggie—SaCC Facilitator); or as one actor explains “It’s been about people … the stage they were in their lives, they didn’t want to sort of adjust to change” (Christine—Families First representative). And yet, the types of personalities which are understood as barriers to shared interagency working are generally viewed as temporary obstructions in a field which, overall, sustains people suited and committed to the principles and practices of interagency working.

In defining the benefits and hindrances of personalities, actors clarify and illustrate particular traits that are perceived as productive, sustainable and indelible in the spaces of interagency and human service delivery. Indeed, actors’ accounts of the characteristics that are valued in interagency working are remarkably consistent across the scales and spaces of the Families First
and SaCC programmes. As Larner and Butler (2007) suggest, diverse and adaptive skills, a strong sense of social justice, humour, integrity, emotion and creativity are all commonly nurtured practices enacted everyday by interagency workers. Actors describe these shared characteristics here:

It's very much dependent on the individuals that are involved, it really is … You've got to have the motivation, the drive, the commitment and a really clear understanding of your role. (Jean—SaCC MC representative)

It can only work if the people running it are open and flexible and understanding of the sorts of situations people come from … We've got to keep up with the times. It is our best bet of keeping things going. And that’s easy on the ground because you evolve with the community. (Sue—SaCC MC representative)

I think we’re all good with people, we’re all really people focused. We’re all really highly driven and motivated … and very creative. (Emma—SaCC Facilitator)

The ability of people to work in an open and organic way allows adaptation to the dynamics of ‘enduring change’ that characterise the state institutions in which they work. Moreover, such openness is viewed as crucial to maintaining the relevance and potency of programmes situated in ever-changing community settings. Indeed, the types of personalities that actors describe have become a defining, sedimented and shared feature of partnership working such that “if they didn’t have those [qualities] they possibly are either not the right person for the job or they wouldn’t stay in the job” (Therese—SaCC SSC representative), or as Sophie (Families First representative) explains, “most people are able to [work collaboratively] possibly because if you come into it … then you’re attracted to working with people and that sort of networking and contact”. The attraction and encouragement of certain personalities to these collaborative working spaces has resulted in many actors remaining in these programmes in the same, or similar roles, over long periods of time. As a result, these actors gather a history of experience and knowledge, sedimenting certain personalities, roles and even particular people into these institutional spaces.
Larner and Butler (2007) suggest that the influence of individuals on partnership programmes is such that the programmes themselves often become highly personalised. Individual personalities feature as the pivotal dynamics around which the actions, intentions and effects of a programme are formed as part of particular geographical locations. SaCCs typify these processes of personalisation as individual centres can appear to function in relatively distinct ways between different sites, depending particularly on the practices of the facilitator who manages the centre. For actors, the pivotal influence of personality is drawn out through two key sedimented roles and the personalities of people employed in these roles. The facilitator and school principal figures\textsuperscript{58} are utilised by actors as examples of the ways in which individuals influence the varying enactments and outcomes of interagency programmes across different locales. These roles and their influence on working practices are described by the following actors:

The success of the programme is very much attributed to the type of facilitator that you employ.
(Jean—SaCC MC representative)

It depends on the facilitator ... I quite often think it's not the role but the personality in the role as to whether it works. So I think you will get different outcomes in different areas even with the same sorts of projects, just through their personality and their experience.
(Katherine—SaCC MC representative)

The principals basically need to be on board otherwise, it just wouldn't work.
(Anton—Families First and SaCC MC representative)

\textsuperscript{58} There were a range of other actors identified as important people in shaping the functioning and outcomes of the interagency programme. Although not as influential as the SaCC facilitator and school principal, actors also acknowledged the role of Regional Directors within the five NSW human service agencies, and particularly the School Education Directors (DET), as setting the outlook and approach to interagency working and thus the support offered to actors engaged in the programme.
I think a key person is the school principal. You need a principal who supports the ideals of SaCCs, who supports interagency concepts ... and encourages participation in it.

(Sue—SaCC MC representative)

The SaCC facilitator and school principal are viewed as key actors in the interagency network with their personalities understood as influentially shaping the achievements and outcomes of particular SaCC sites. As such, actors also portray both figures as possible impediments to enactments of interagency service delivery. The school principal is particularly identified as a potential barrier due to the associated institutional background in the ‘education system’ (as opposed to ‘community development’\(^{59}\), and also due to the existing responsibilities and demanding requirements of managing a school. While particular personalities are valued within the interagency network more broadly, it is these two key roles, and the people employed in these roles, that are seen as pivotal to the programme and thus exemplify the ability of individuals to ‘personify’ these working spaces (Larner and Butler 2007).

Again, as in the case of interagency more generally, actors actually identify and illustrate the characteristics widely perceived to be essential to the role of SaCC facilitator and school principal. Firstly, in the case of a facilitator, actors identify traits such as openness, genuine connection to community, independent working, and long-term vision as central to this role. Moreover, SaCC facilitators define themselves in complex ways—not merely as public servants but as community and family members, activists, students, leaders, managers, and

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\(^{59}\) In Chapter 5, I discuss the specified and enduring agency-based tensions between institutions of ‘Education’ and ‘Community Development’. Most often, workers involved in the community development field express concern around the rigid traditions of DET as an educational and school-based institution, viewing such traditions as obscuring and ignoring broader community-based issues. With SaCC sited in schools, many community development workers question the role of principals in guiding and supporting SaCC human service workers. The obstinate institutional traditions which shape these subjectivities and roles diversifies any residing notion of simple and predetermined policy translations (see Butler 1997; Larner and Butler 2007).
agency representatives (Larner and Butler 2007). Actors define these roles and traits below:

It needs a person that takes a 360° view … because you’ll always be taken off your path, and for good reason.
(Ann—SaCC SSC representative)

With the four original sites, we have three of the four original facilitators … I think that shows the sort of job it is. And I think it shows the sort of job it needs to be. When you’re in a community you need to be in there for the long haul … I am more just a person in the community … [The community] may not even realise that I am a government worker and I think that’s really important because of the fear and mistrust in this community around government.
(Peta—SaCC Facilitator)

We have teaching, early childhood, social work, a whole range of backgrounds, but we’re all at that point where we’re pretty much self-starting. We can run a programme. We need minimal day-to-day supervision and we’re all clear about what we’re doing … I always get referred to, so someone new comes into the community and they say, “go and see [the facilitator] or go and see the SaCC”.
(Adrienne—SaCC Facilitator)

SaCC facilitators are viewed as the centre of many of these communities, engaging and working with both the service community and people in addressing local issues. The facilitator encourages and sustains genuine and trusting relationships as part of ethical working practices that necessarily seek to engage community members: “[The community] like her, they see her as a person to go and talk to, they trust her” (Tony—School Principal). The facilitator thus represents a central connective and coordinating figure which, depending on their working practices and principles, has the potential to personify the programme and influence the outcomes of the strategy through the extent of their community engagement and involvement with service providers.

As in the case of Larner and Butler’s (2007) research on partnership programmes, actors here acknowledge the dominance of middle-aged, professional women across human service settings and, most particularly, in the
role of SaCC facilitator. As the following facilitators describe: “We’re really all women … and we’re all between the ages of about 38 and 50” (Adrienne—SaCC Facilitator); “There are about 50 SaCCs now in NSW and there are two facilitators who are male. Does that tell you something?” (Steve—SaCC Facilitator). Critical geographical and feminist research has pointed to the central role of women in shaping recent political responses to social issues (Dobrowlsky 2002), the predominant enrolment of women in participating in the human service domain, and their undertaking of much of the ‘emotional labour’ involved in partnership-style working (Larner and Butler 2004; Larner and Craig 2005).

Although this body of literature points to the long history of women’s engagement and enrolment in the field of social services, gender did not seem to feature as an explicitly determining feature in the dynamics and descriptions of the interagency workplace. As one facilitator went on to describe, “It’s not about whether he’s a bloke or not … but whether he can fit in the mould” (Adrienne—SaCC Facilitator). Indeed, although men are fewer in number, those who did work in these spaces operated as key figures within the community, and as a valued and respected part of the interagency service network. While gender clearly shapes, and is shaped by, the institutional settings and genealogies of interagency working, the broader ‘peopled’ characteristics of personalities, roles and working practices are decisive in influencing the everyday actions and accounts of interagency working.

60 In my ethnographic examinations, gender appeared as a varied influence in the research settings. The interviewees were primarily women (35 out of 45), and largely middle-aged, most often having worked in community-based service agencies for decades; a pattern that reflects human service agencies more generally (see Larner and Butler 2007). I recognise that “gender makes a difference”, but as in the case of Schoenberger (1992: 217), I am not always “precisely sure what difference it makes”. Gender featured in indeterminate ways, acknowledged by actors in descriptions of a largely feminised workforce, yet simultaneously challenged as a predetermining dynamic. Thus, I argue that gender is played out in the peopled practices of states, yet in unsettled ways as part of contingent and context-dependent negotiations of everyday human service delivery.
Secondly, in addition to the facilitator, actors also identified the influential role of the school principal and their position in supporting the achievements of SaCC programmes in particular sites. In the case of the school principal, different traits are identified to that of the facilitator that relate to their institutional background in the education system and their ability to engage in open and different ways of working (i.e. in the community development field), as explained by some workers:

I think it’s very difficult to have principals … when their mindset is about reading, writing and arithmetic. When you have a project which is community development, it’s very difficult for a hard-nosed teacher to step outside that mindset … I think it’s integral that they have a principal that’s supportive and open to all those ideas … If you’ve got a principal who’s very open to it and thinks it’s conducive to education in the future, then I think you’ve got at least half the battle won.
(Matthew—Families First and SaCC MC representative)

Principals are individuals and some are more able and more skilled … One of the key factors is whether they view their job as much more than teaching kids to read and write, if they understand that children will be much better at learning to read and write when the community is engaged.
(Robert—SaCC MC representative)

Absolutely the most important element is [the principal’s] own perceptions of what [SaCC’s] about, and their ability to be flexible enough to understand there’s another management on site … that they don’t own the programme.
(Maggie—SaCC Facilitator)

Actors working within the community development field do not expect the school principal to fully understand what they do, but they suggest that an openness and willingness to trust and participate in their approach to community work is central to achieving valuable working relationships and expansive community engagements. While often criticising the personalities of some principals, actors from the community development field are also able to empathise with the role of school principals as part of a shared ethos, or “still being here together” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 49), that recognises the shared difficulties of working in
interagencies. Actors encourage the support of principals, acknowledging the massive existing requirements and demands of their role, and the unfamiliar nature of the SaCC programme within the school system. Actors describe a ‘togetherness’ in which principals need to be supported and educated in their role so that they are able to gain an appreciation of ‘community development’ and become a nurtured co-worker and collaborator in these spaces.

In recognising the centrality of key actors in the programmes, workers describe an environment influenced by individuals, personalities and their backgrounds (e.g. personal, institutional, academic, political). For actors, the recognition of people and their critical role in interagency working would hardly come as a surprise (see also Hailey and Smillie 2001). And yet, there was a certain reluctance and even guilt in ‘reducing’ the policy and philosophical frameworks of current social policy to the level of the individual, as seen in these actors’ descriptions:

I mean it shouldn’t have anything to do with people’s personalities or anything like that but really the more that you understand each other ... the more that you respect what each other’s trying to do and you can support each other and work together.
(Therese—SaCC SSC representative)

I think it’s an individual thing. I know it shouldn't, but I think if someone’s committed to it, and is good ... then that rubs off on the group.
(Emily—SaCC MC representative).

Interagencies rely on people and personalities to engage and support certain working practices. Moreover, interagency and community development intrinsically rely on the ability of people to engage with each other. These types of personal interactions need to be acknowledged, valued and supported by institutions and researchers in the personal and committed ways in which they are enacted (Smillie and Hailey 2001). Without acknowledging the influence of people on governing, research on interagency working will remain distanced
from the everyday practices of governing and overlook opportunities to facilitate and support ethical human service practices.

Throughout the analysis, a foundation of weak theory enables perspectives on peopled state spaces revealing the centrality and vitality of personalities and individuals in practising interagency work. Indeed, as Larner and Butler (2007: 87) suggest, it is people who are involved in transforming the agencies they work with, as part of the broader potentiality to actually “change the institutions and culture of government”. Revealed in actors’ often guilty engagements with notions of peoples’ personalities, demeanours and attitudes, it is clear that these personal aspects of working remain largely unrecognised in the framings of interagency and community development work (Mawdsley et al. 2005). The inability of many accounts of governing, even critical and contextual approaches, to value people has resulted in a skewed understanding of the working spaces of governing. The institutions and cultures of government, or indeed the rationalisations of neoliberalism, appear to dictate the actions and spaces of governing in a pre-existing and determining way (Barnett 2005; Castree 2006). Recognising the persistence of ‘peopled practice’ retrieves the intrinsic emotions and ethics of doing work from framings which would see them rendered trifling and negligible. People, and the relationships between them, form the very contexts of state institutions and help to constitute the everyday practices of human service delivery.

6.2.2 Relationships, friendships and the togetherness of working

Interagency practice fundamentally relies on working together with fellow workers, associated institutions and community people. Much of the literature on this form of partnering work can be broadly divided between institutional accounts of networked connections and governmental analyses of neoliberalised relations (e.g. Lowndes 1998; Miller and Ahmad 2000; see also
Chapter 3). Across both bodies of literature, analysis of partnerships largely involves processes of categorising and typifying, which I argue tend to depersonalise and deactivate the everyday practices of ‘people relating to people’. In the following discussion, I seek to extend institutional and specified governmental framings by undertaking a re-peopling and re-affecting of relationships and collaboration in state settings. I suggest that the formal typologies and neoliberal co-options of social governing spaces become less determining at the level of practice (Smillie and Hailey 2001).

Relationships are innately prosaic and personal practices that provide the support crucial to everyday work. I utilise several key relationships characteristic of Families First and SaCC to provide insight into the pivotal role of genuine relationships and even friendships across interagency spaces. At an ethnographic level of analysis, the importance of personal elements, as seen in the emphasis on personalities, is further revealed through actors’ positioning of relationships at the core of maintaining and enjoying interagency work. Relationships fundamentally help to infuse, support and nurture the ethical practices and sedimentations of social governing. It is my aim to value workers as active, knowledgeable and genuinely relational; as agents who engage intrinsically with notions of partnership as the personal and professional relationships that fundamentally support everyday interagency work (Hailey 2001).

Firstly, relationships are viewed as innate foundations to working collaboratively. Developing relationships with community service providers and community members is positioned as the basis for enacting effective and beneficial human service delivery (Hailey and Smillie 2001). Actors in both Families First and SaCC describe their reliance on relationships within their everyday work:
Interagency is about relationships, relationships, relationships. Because you can’t develop a partnership unless you have a relationship to start with … People often see it as the same thing and they’re different. Like you actually have to have a connection to another service or individual before you can actually start developing partnerships.

(Yvonne—Families First representative)

When you’re trying to do something differently, you actually have to rely on relationships, because it’s not easy. And so if you haven’t got a relationship already established and then you’re asking people to work in a different way, and think differently, and allocate resources in a different way they go ‘why’?

(Bronwyn—SaCC SSC representative)

I think you need a personal contact with them … You need to actually know who they are, what they do, where you contact them … Because without that, you just can’t support anything else.

(Sue—SaCC MC representative)

The relationships are critical. Meetings you can almost do away with … I’ve found that a lot of these meetings I’ve done more work in the coffee break.

(Anthony—SaCC MC representative)

For actors within the programme, relationships are seen as the roots for building interagency and community-based services. Not just working together, but actually “getting on” (Peta—SaCC Facilitator) as part of personal and professional relationships, forms the basis for both effective service delivery and efficient working practices; as Carol (SaCC MC representative) illustrates “if you know who to go to, or who to see, or who to get help, it cuts down a lot of your time”. Actually liking and respecting someone, both in terms of their personal nature and professional capacities, can prove pivotal in enacting policies of collaborative working and achieving successful outcomes in communities.

Secondly, actors frame relationships as supportive practices and intrinsic tools of interagency working, describing their role in maintaining the often difficult and complex work of human service delivery. As Larner and Butler (2007: 80) suggest, interagency-based work presents significant challenges in “reconciling
the competing demands that characterize partnerships” (Larner and Butler 2007: 80). Relationships do not involve making every decision and action in consensus, but a more sophisticated process relying on trust, personalities, respect, dialogue and commitment to a shared ethos (Hailey and Smillie 2001). Actors illustrate the value and implications of feeling supported and encouraged in their work by personal and respectful relationships with fellow workers. For example:

No one here can work in isolation very well because it’s such a mixed community and we deal with a lot of different issues … It’s a very good process of working.
(Melissa—SaCC Facilitator)

Those sorts of communities really are pretty challenging at times … Some of the problems SaCCs deal with on a daily basis are huge. They need to know that they’re a referral agency, they are not the solver of the problem … so if the interagency is working, then the facilitators have a very ready port of call for assistance. And that makes them firstly, supported and, secondly, much more effective in their role.
(Bronwyn—SaCC SSC representative)

For actors working within the field, dealing with the often complex problems of community members, and the difficulties of engaging local services to support those people, necessitates trustworthy and reliable relationships of support. Relationships fundamentally strengthen workers’ ability to sustain motivation, creativity and purpose in their everyday working practices and performances.

Finally, I turn to discuss several of the central relationships that form the basis of the Families First and SaCC interagency programmes. Rather than a general notion of networks and associations, actors describe the pivotal roles played by particular relationships between key actors within the programmes, with such relationships functioning as both potential supports and barriers in interagency work. Firstly, facilitators primarily engage with each other as part of providing knowing and understanding bonds attuned to the peculiarities of their role. Facilitators describe the importance of their own relationships:
I think we build networks between facilitators ... It’s like any work colleague, you strike up a relationship, you think I’m going to ring that person when I need to have lunch, or I need to debrief, or I need some ideas, or, so you may not necessarily go to the person that’s closest to you in locality, you might go to someone that’s in another region or someone that you’ve connected with.

(Emma—SaCC Facilitator)

No-one else understands it. Like you’ve really got to talk to other facilitators and they go “oh I had the same issue”. And until you get together, a problem you may have been dealing with on your own you find is quite common amongst several facilitators, so you can go well “how have you solved it?”

(Peta—SaCC Facilitator)

Facilitators develop relationships together due to their role as largely self-directed and self-supported actors in the community development field. As a result of the structure of the SaCC programme and a frequent lack of structural/institutional support for SaCCs (discussed in Chapter 5), facilitators operate largely independently of any one institution or group of actors. These independent working practices help to create the often differentiated locales of highly personalised SaCC programmes. Actors suggest that facilitators who fail to develop personal relationships and professional recognition across these largely independent and ad hoc working environments, tend to suffer from ‘isolation’ and ‘burnout’, with some facilitators ‘going under’ as a result. Thus facilitators generally engage in extensive and supportive relationships, not necessarily determined by geographical proximity, but functioning and thriving on the formation of intimate connections across locales. Such modes of working provide the sustenance needed to support the provision of ethical, beneficial and efficient services to communities.

Secondly, the relationship between the facilitator and the principal forms another potentially supportive (or obstructive) working axis for SaCCs. As mentioned previously, the personalities of the facilitator and the principal
individually influence the enactments of SaCC sites, with each role fundamentally rooted in divergent institutional traditions. In addition, it is the relationship formed between these two key actors that also impacts on each SaCC, particularly through the connections between the community and the school that can be supported by this relationship. Actors explain the importance and influence of this particular relationship:

[The SaCC] depends on the principals and facilitators … the dynamics of their relationship.
(Alex—Families First representative)

[The relationship between the principal and the facilitator] has to be a fairly respectful solid relationship because they’re representing both parts.
(Sue—SaCC MC representative)

[The principal and I have] got respect for each other. I think we work really well together. It’s a wonderful relationship, but I don’t think it worked like that with the last one. When I first came here, I was looked upon with a great deal of suspicion by the teachers and that’s because of the last facilitator.
(Steve—SaCC Facilitator)

It’s a partnership because I try to clear the way for her, make sure that she’s got the cooperation of the school … [The facilitator] and [the office staff] get on like a house on fire, it just depends on relationships … It’s more of a partnership than a supervisory thing.
(Tony—School Principal)

While not necessarily detracting from the everyday operations of the SaCC, trusting relationships between the facilitator and principal can provide a beneficial addition to the programme: “[The relationship] is not critical to what we do, but it can help in the sense of building connections with the school” (Adrienne—SaCC Facilitator); so that where the relationship is not strong “life can be a little more difficult” (Peta—SaCC Facilitator). A close relationship between the principal and the facilitator seems to result in close connections with the school community, including teachers and administrative staff. Thus in many cases, a thriving relationship allows for additional financial and
administrative support from the school, and an enhanced ability to connect with children via classroom teachers. The ability for the principal and facilitator to engage across the substantially diverging institutional divisions of their roles and backgrounds is influenced by their ability to ‘get on’ through personal understandings, relationships and respectful working practices. It is these personal and intimate ways of working that fundamentally enhance the capacities and efficiencies of the SaCC programme.

Thirdly, the relationship formed between the facilitator and the community itself provides the necessary connections for community participation and thus helps to determine the success, functioning and very existence of a SaCC (see Hailey 2001). Challenging institutional notions of participation as a governing/management tool, actors engaged in genuine relationships with the community characterised by several fundamental ethical attributes including endurance, respect, trust and a willingness to listen. Moreover, everyday personal relationships with the community were part of the motivations and inspirations for facilitators to engage in community development work. Actors illustrate this particular relationship as in these examples:

I was told at the beginning when I moved in here, I was a government department, “we weren’t consulted whether we needed you, you’re only going to be here for two years, you’re just another one of them”. It was about proving that I’m still here, I’m not leaving the community, I’m in for the long haul and that’s where things change … I’ve established relationships, I’ve got trust with the community … I think that’s where it helps the community if there’s consistency with programmes and with relationships.
(Peta—SaCC Facilitator)

[Engaging communities] is just very informal in some ways. You build a relationship with them over time … Here you had to build trust, because they’d come from backgrounds where people in positions of power had abused them … And you have to give of yourself a bit, like they wanted to know who I was, did I have children … the biggest thing that I had to learn was that respect and understanding, and the listening.
(Emma—SaCC Facilitator)
They see me as a grandfather figure. And all the kids, I just get on so well, I haven’t got any grandchild of my own. People say have you got grandchildren and I say 50 a day. All of them different.

(Steve—SaCC Facilitator)

Facilitators engage actively in relationships with the community as part of ethical, professional and personal working practices, as Melissa (SaCC Facilitator) explains, “you can’t just sit in your centre, advertise things and expect, I will build it and they will come”. Moreover, such relationships are not viewed merely as an organisational tool. SaCC facilitators build genuine “personal connections and personal trust”, such that over long periods of time facilitators begin to “know the streets, the houses … you know the children and other siblings … the community, GPs” (Sue—SaCC MC representative). Facilitators are able to engage in a personal and sophisticated knowledge of working beyond the realm of policy. They view the fundamental connections between genuine community relationships and the participation of community members; building the collaborative and respectful foundations that sustain effective human service delivery.

As Smillie and Hailey (2001) note, the primary importance of relationships to the functioning of interagency and community development work would not surprise actors operating within these fields. And yet, both institutional and governmental research continues to ignore, subsume or even become anxious and hostile towards notions of personal interaction. In much of this research, relationships are devalued through institutional language (e.g. networks, affiliations, organisational learning) and the drive to name overarching neoliberal subjections (e.g. superficial partnerships and moralised associations with citizens) (Mawdsley et al. 2005). Actors within these fields expressed an explicit and unwavering commitment to relationships, and even friendships, as part of their work and life more generally, as reflected on by the following actors:
If I think back on the different relationships that I’ve had with other agencies, it’s often come down to personal relationships, professional but personal relationships I’ve developed.
(Sophie—Families First representative)

[The facilitator and I] worked well together because of ourselves as much as the process … so it about liking the people who are there … If she’d been someone who I didn’t respect, I just would have left … Sometimes partnerships can bring friends.
(Tracey—SaCC MC representative)

It’s like any relationship that you have, if you don’t put into it, then no relationship is going to happen. It’s going to fall apart. It’s not a difficult idea.
(Matthew—Families First and SaCC MC representative)

Of course, the fact that personal connections across interagencies are engaged as ‘any relationship’ means that they are also subject to a range of inherent complexities and difficulties. Thus relationships “take time” (Bronwyn—SaCC SSC representative), are subject to personality clashes, misunderstandings and, at times, the “need to start again” (Sophie—Families First representative). Recognising the potential impediments of relationships, only acts to enhance understanding of the everyday practices of human service delivery and the innate connections between work and personal domains. Actors engage in the relationships of their workplace in ways that complexly and largely effortlessly cross professional, personal and ethical domains. Such relationships avoid the restrictions of typologies, predetermined paths of institutional communication, and the problematic divisions of productive and reproductive domains (McDowell 2004; see also Chapter 3). Easy and unassuming interactions between workers, colleagues and communities rely on the mutual dynamics of affection, friendship and trust; dynamics that are not restricted to the workplace but represent familiar and habitual practices of everyday life.

In this section, I have sought to value the personal aspects of interagencies and community development by acknowledging actors’ emphases on relationships as central to their working practices. Relationships are viewed as indelible
features of interagency and community development due to an engrained reliance on connections with service providers, community members and fellow workers in supporting human service delivery. Moreover, relationships are valued on a personal level by actors as providing the motivation and inspiration to maintain enthusiasm, creativity and care in their everyday work. As in the case of actors’ accounts of personalities, the failure of such personal features of working to be more broadly acknowledged resulted in actors often ‘indulging’ in descriptions of relationships with a sense of guilt or qualification; “we got along great as well, not that that should matter, but it does makes it easier when you can have a laugh and a chat” (Emily—SaCC MC representative). Actors obviously prioritise personal, warm and fun relationships as significant and shaping interactions—the ‘emotional skills’ of doing work (Larner and Butler 2007). Yet a lack of formal acknowledgement in political, institutional, and often academic fields means that they simultaneously feel that they should be able to almost overcome or override such ‘trivial’ aspects of their everyday working spaces.

Current research on partnership-based working such as interagencies reveals many of the limitations in addressing the importance of relationships. The strong theoretical framing of partnerships and community participation continues to promote this mode of working as a reflection of overarching neoliberal (etho-political) subjections: a co-option of subjects into primarily controlling, dominating and demeaning relationships (Larner and Butler 2007). However, such an approach fails to capture the significance of personal engagements, as demonstrated by the genuine relationships engaged between, and within, workers and communities as part of Families First and SaCC. Co-option is not an obligatory requirement of working for government or under the ‘power’ of policy, instead such spaces can cultivate ethical practices, actions and relationships—“not being co-opted” (Gibson-Graham 2006: xxvi). Weak theory allows for genuine relationships and friendships between workers and
communities, recognising these as the familiar and everyday practices that provide support and enjoyment in interagency work.

Similarly, the mechanistic interactions of institutional framings do not capture the fluidities, personalities and emotions innate to working. I demonstrate that the emotional aspects of everyday working, particularly in the connected spaces of community-based interagencies, are largely ignored in institutional research (see Chapter 3). As much as institutional literature attempts to confine and control relationships, such interactions are in practice more likely to take different paths guided by personalities, backgrounds and settings (e.g. institutional, political, academic), working environments, and the movements of life more generally. Indeed, I suggest that the more relationships are devalued or ignored in research and policy, the more we will be blinded to their necessary interventions and thus to the functioning of these governing spaces. By enabling spaciousness in the observations of interagency work, innately prosaic and personal elements of working can emerge from strongly theorised framings. These perspectives on interagency work offer the potential to value relationships as possibly enduring, institutionally sustainable, and caring aspects of social governing.

6.2.3 The political practice of care and togetherness

Care is commonly conceptualised in academic accounts as one possible response to expansions of neoliberal market forces; expansions aligned with a decline in welfare states, and reductions in the mechanisms and practices of social support (e.g. Smith 1997; Easterlow and Smith 2004; Lawson 2007). Care is viewed from these perspectives as largely co-opted under a neoliberal etho-politics that promotes individual, moralised and privatised responsibilities (Smith and Easterlow 2004; McDonald and Marston 2005; Lawson 2007). Some
analysts subsequently describe a pressing need to rescue care from the onslaughts of neoliberalism, advancing care as an antithetical and potentially liberating response to challenge the ‘self-actualising’ forces of a neoliberal project (Easterlow and Smith 2004; McDowell 2004; Lawson 2007). In the following discussions, I similarly draw on care as a valuable analytical perspective on governing. Yet this is not merely because of an assumed polarity of care and neoliberalism. Indeed, I argue that continuing to position care in the shadows of neoliberalism sustains several problematic assumptions about the practice of care itself: that care does not already exist, that care is inherently ‘good’ in contrast to the ‘bad’ of neoliberalism, and that care is local and resistant under the forces of a globally dominating neoliberal project (see Chapter 3). From weak theory perspectives, care is revealed as an already existing political practice of interagency settings.

In this research, the notion of care portrays both an empirical finding exposed in actors’ understandings of human service delivery, and a valuable analytical entry point which personalises specified governmental and institutional analyses. Firstly, care is widely evident in actors’ understandings of communities, social need, and the role of human service delivery, featuring as an already existing practice that motivates and inspires their work with colleagues and communities. Secondly, interviewees recounted diverse understandings of care such as practical, analytical and even paternal notions that challenge any residing tendency to romanticise care as a ‘good’, localised and resistant ideal. Finally, actors’ accounts suggest that notions of care extend beyond the individual performances of actors to the sedimented practices of institutions, with a ‘shared ethos’ of caring and collaborative work infused and intertwined across human service agencies (Hailey 2001). As Daly (2002) argues, care is not limited to informal, personal and social spaces but can also operate across economic, market, state and institutional spaces. In adopting a prosaic orientation, I suggest care is not so much in need of revival in state
institutions as it is respect. We need to value the prosaic practices of care, the shared and enduring traditions of care, and nurture the existing ethical practices that act to constitutively generate care in states.

Care is an already existing and exigent political practice; sustained through the “living together of people” (Arendt 1958: 180; see also Barnett and Land 2007), or a “still being here together” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 49). The familiar and everyday practices of care function across a complex assemblage of domains including, but not limited to, spaces of home, work, institutions and states. Indeed, care is engrained in actors’ accounts of their everyday work as part of state institutions, human service agencies, and communities. Across interview responses, actors largely frame the functioning of both Families First and SaCC in the language of care and support. Moreover, these understandings are not the romanticised translations of a utopian ideal but the practices that arise from grounded everyday intersections between people and services and the political practices of human service agencies. Actors here describe such caring understandings of the role of SaCC in terms of communities:

It’s a place where people will listen, and it’s a place where people care, and it’s a place where if you want advice, people will either tell you where to go or can give you advice in a calm friendly empathetic sort of environment.
(Camille—School Principal)

I think they build self-confidence and self-worth in the community about each other … So one of the things that these places do is become a point where you might connect with the girl that lives two streets away. So if you do nothing else other than take your kids in and have a cup of coffee a couple of mornings a week then that’s got to be a good thing.
(Robert—SaCC MC representative)

It improves people’s self esteem … or just being able to move out of an abusive relationship, to have someone say, “well you’re right, that’s not a way to live, this is some options you have”, and that sort of facility there for people … it does make a difference … and it gives the community a focus.
(Sue—SaCC MC representative)
Notions of a need to rescue care from the expansion of self-interested and privatised neoliberal behaviours obscures the quotidian ways in which care is practiced (Barnett and Land 2007). Actors undertake ethical and caring decisions as part of their everyday practices, viewing the potential and practical benefits of genuine engagements with communities. The benefits of their intersections with people are not viewed in an isolated manner, but as part of the broader outcomes of a shared and respectful approach between human service workers and communities, such that “it’s not whether you’ve made the difference but that you’ve been a part of that process for them” (Emma—SaCC Facilitator).

In addition to the prevailing and beneficial presence of care, actors also portray an enjoyment, pride and nurturing of these caring and close engagements with people. Rarely engaged in discussing their beliefs and care for what they do, actors were often initially nonplussed in responding to questions of their own motivations in practising partnership and community-based work. And yet, following this initial apprehension, actors engage in emphatic, passionate and enthusiastic descriptions of their motivations and caring engagements with fellow workers and local communities. Actors identified a range of inspirations including the ability to be independent and creative, the rewards of working collaboratively, and the influence that they felt they had on communities as a result. The sense of being a helpful and valuable part of communities motivates actors within the inherently difficult and complex field of human service delivery (Larner and Butler 2007), as illustrated here:

The rewards that you get for interagency stuff is huge ... because you realise that you're actually bringing people together to work which is how we should be working ... And you're also having an impact on how that community works together ... There's nothing prescriptive about it ... The brief is so broad that you can actually make that programme what you and the community want it to be.
(Adrienne—SaCC Facilitator)
I've never really felt I've had the wherewithal to be able to influence what happens … It's always been handed down, “you will go and do this, you will go and do that” … Whereas this job is completely different because it's all up to you … I used to just feel, but now I know what I'm doing is making a difference … Personally I love this job, it's like I've died and gone to heaven. (Steve—SaCC Facilitator)

The community development stuff is what I really enjoy. So to be involved at a service level, that's what gives me the greatest joy in my job … And it's the stuff you can’t capture. We look at reports of achievements and things like that, it's all very much number crunching. The stuff that you can’t capture is the hype in the room, the activities, and the smiles. (Linda—Families First and SaCC MC representative)

Actors describe the caring connections with community as the ‘real’ and genuine part of their working day. Despite frequent portrayals of these types of practices as informal, unpredictable and insubstantial interruptions to policy and governing, or indeed, the translation of overarching etho-political subjectivisations, actors actually embrace and substantiate caring interactions as a necessary ‘reality check’ in their everyday work. Workers in Families First and SaCC often reiterate that they “don’t feel like public servants” due to their caring connections with communities (see Larner and Butler 2007: 80). As Larner and Butler (2007) acknowledge, human service workers define themselves in complex ways, not merely as public servants but as community and family members, activists, leaders—as feeling and caring people engaged in socially beneficial working practices (Larner and Butler 2007).

In recounting the engagements and enjoyments of care in interagency practices, I am not describing a simple affect or social relation, but a complex political practice or ‘modality of power’ (Barnett and Land 2007). Care then does not portray a singular and unified ‘good’ or “common being” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 85)—to be utilised as a tool in resisting the ‘bad’ of neoliberalism. Indeed, care can be practised as a togetherness that is excluding, and a charitable
provision that is disempowering. Moreover, care can co-exist with self-interest, manipulation and exclusivity, actions that are not entirely inconsistent with notions of togetherness and social support (Barnett and Land 2007). In examining actors’ accounts of interagencies, I suggest that these co-existences and complexities of care are revealed through four key expressions: empathy, practicality, critique and paternalism. Recognising the diversity of care in actors’ descriptions does not discount the ethical potentialities of this political practice in interagency spaces. Instead, this recognition grounds the concept by acknowledging the ordinary practices of care, opening up spaces with which to differentiate and nurture the ethical practices of care already practised in the spaces of social governing.

Firstly, actors engage in a genuine sense of empathy and understanding of the ‘subjects’ of service delivery. Challenging etho-political subjectivisations of activated, responsibilised and often immoral human service recipients, actors attempt to identify with the difficulties faced by people and families within their communities. Moreover, they frequently engage their own life experiences in guiding and shaping their understandings and interactions with the community, as described by these actors:

That’s a personal passion for me around our children. I see dysfunctional estates and I don’t understand how people can grow up in that.
(Katherine—SaCC MC representative)

I just see so many families who are very strong and have survived many policies. I weep for the women who are locked into dangerous relationships, but not yet empowered to leave.
(Debbie—SaCC MC representative)

I have a real belief in family. And I also have an understanding of how hard it is. I’ve been very lucky through my life cycle that I have never really had to want for much ... I also have a real empathy for the fact that [parenting is] not something that comes naturally. It’s a very hard task.
(Jean—SaCC MC representative)
I've got young kids and I'm sensitive to the position of parents and understand their need to be supported ... At some time or another parents need support because it is such a difficult job to do ... Being a parent of young children can be a very isolating experience and a very stressful experience, as well as supremely joyful on many occasions (laughs) ... And so I guess for me, having some relationship with the SaCC programme allows me to kind of marry the things I'm interested in outside of work with my working life. 

(Michael—Families First representative)

An attention to the empathic understandings and enactments of human service delivery exposes the salience of care and ethics in these work spaces. From this perspective, both people and personalities are further instilled in the practices of governing, thus challenging disheartening notions such as McDonald and Marston’s (2005) ‘empathetic authority’ that limits empathetic practice to a type of veiled etho-political translation. Actors are able to understand their work with communities and families through their own life experiences, as these actors explain; “the values and beliefs that I hold as an individual underpin my work, so that’s why I look at the value of community … It’s just a natural progression” (Linda—Families First and SaCC MC representative), or as another actor states “you bring your own life and experiences into [this work]” (Vicky—SaCC Facilitator). Actors identify with the confrontations and problems in their own lives as parents and as part of families, and attempt to understand the added complexities of the people’s lives with which they are working. Actors are able to view the problems and needs of communities and families from a genuinely empathetic viewpoint, such that they can mourn the often harsh conditions they face and celebrate their survival, and potential, despite such difficulties.

Secondly, and arising from these kinds of caring and empathetic engagements with communities, actors analytically examine the policies of service delivery that they are enrolled in, as a means of continually assessing their actual
benefits. As part of their own personal understandings and priorities of care, actors often express the need for practical care, unaffected by the overarching rhetoric, aims and understandings instituted in policy and academic research, as described here:

It’s fine all the other stuff around improving communications and systems, that’ll probably happen some day anyway. But the important thing that I can do is have a nurse out there who can get some kids immunised, or can send people in the right direction, to get them some assistance.
(Sue—SaCC MC representative)

I sometimes wonder if we got rid of half the services that were helping these families and bought them all a house … and had home help in for two hours every morning to get the cooking and washing done, so at least the kids got to school … I feel like a Bolshevik sometimes ... It’s about housing, it’s about getting to school, it’s about getting good therapy ... In communities as complex as the one we live in here, it’s on the ground workers that count ... So all the stuff we fluff around with, if someone’s not there with that 18 year old mother actually driving her to the doctors’ appointment, well what does it all mean?
(Tracey—SaCC MC representative)

The only way I find out what people need is by asking them. So I say what do you really want to know, “we want to know that our kids aren’t going to take drugs, we want to know they’re safe” ... that’s the sort of concerns we’ve all got. And they’re the same, they’ve got the same concerns ... You’ve got to address those things first before you can go off and do the academic thing. That’s your overarching thing, it blots out everything else.
(Steve—SaCC Facilitator)

Actors in community development are very often working, or have worked, at the front line of human service delivery dealing with the very real day-to-day needs, concerns and issues facing the people in their community. While able to pay lip service to the rhetoric of early intervention, responsibilisation and activation as part of overarching policy framings (as seen in opening discussions), when it comes to the actual enactments of their work, actors prioritise the practical, fundamental and essential needs and concerns of communities often occurring at the level of everyday subsistence. Actors
engage in complex understandings of their workplace such that they view policies and procedures as important tools in practising effective human service delivery. Yet if these same policies and procedures are unaccompanied by caring and connected services, they are then viewed as largely meaningless and ineffective. Thus the formal policies and documents so valued in policy and governmental research are disembedded from their often centralised and determining position, with the ethical and knowledgeable working practices of actors intrinsically shaping the contexts of social governing (Smillie and Hailey 2001).

Thirdly, actors engage in critiques of the mode of service delivery in which they are engaged, continually questioning and challenging the extent of its caring capabilities. Actors within Families First and SaCC habitually reassess the approach, structures and outcomes of the programmes and their everyday practices of service delivery more generally. Several actors engage in these types of critiques below:

I often think if I was doing this again would I say let's have six SaCCs [in the region]. Or would I be saying, let's spend the money differently. Because they only service six communities. And you feel like we've put nearly $600,000 into just six communities. Is that fair? Is that equitable? Is that the right thing to do?
(Christine—Families First and SaCC MC representative)

The thing I often think about is how we can deepen our understanding of children and young people's needs. Because I think we have a long way to go there. And I think we do have an edge in being a western country, we have the leisure to think about those things.
(Vicky—SaCC Facilitator)

It's an unfortunate situation that often the families that could benefit most are the ones who are most stressed and therefore not best positioned to benefit from the programme and involve themselves in it.
(Michael—Families First representative)
We have a real issue, and for me it's a chronic problem, about how we engage really difficult to reach parents ... I mean I think our parenting programmes in some senses have been a dismal failure because we're not engaging those parents who we know are parenting so poorly that it is constantly impacting on their kids at school ... So I'm going to really nut through that issue.
(Adrienne—SaCC Facilitator)

Actors take time in critiquing and evaluating their working practices and their ability to care in a full, fair and positive manner. Extending notions of evaluation as a common technique for measuring and controlling neoliberal agendas (e.g. Rose 1999; see also Chapter 6), actors’ aims in appraising approaches to human service delivery are to gain the most caring, suitable and beneficial outcomes for the people with whom they work. Many actors framed this type of assessment as part of professional and ethical working practices in communities: “as a professional you are constantly evaluating your work and reviewing how you did something. That’s just something that’s in-built in me after years of working in the community” (Jean—SaCC MC representative). Moreover, the fact that these actors engage in such critical assessments with a view towards better outcomes suggests that they feel influential within this field of working; that they can effect change in the approach, programmes and outcomes through constant reflection, care and ethical action. Such dynamics of influence and change reinforce notions that workers are indeed crucial in shaping the institutions and cultures of governing (Larner and Butler 2007).

Finally, in illustrating everyday practices of care I suggest it is vital to avoid dominant portrayals of a simple and romanticised affect. Indeed, the actors within Families First and SaCC also display a diversity of co-existing, yet still essentially caring political practices, including paternal and patronising expressions most often relating to the recipients of service delivery. Actors reveal some of these tendencies in caring:
It would be pointless having [a SaCC] in Hunters Hill or something where people can look after themselves.
(Tony—School Principal)

We do a lot of very subtle modelling and teaching … Because they’re impatient, they want everything yesterday and that’s just not possible. We get incredibly frustrated if they don’t learn there are people who are busy and if it’s not critical … we need to be patient … And I am absolutely pedantic about people’s behaviours. I don’t accept bad behaviour and that’s part of our teaching and learning here.
(Maggie—SaCC Facilitator)

You can be working with families and think that you’re gaining the smallest thing and then they fall back about 6 steps … it’s very difficult to change those practices and teach people to parent the way we think they should parent.
(Brad—SaCC SSC representative)

I saw them as little pockets of social capital walking around that were actually part of building capacity of a community.
(Michael—Families First representative)

In caring for the people they work with, actors sometimes rely on clearly paternalised notions of help and assistance and normative constructs of conduct “that seek to reconstruct citizens as moral subjects of responsible communities” (Rose 2000: 1). Subjects of service delivery are framed as often incapable of ‘looking after themselves’ and as requiring education in the ways in which they ‘should’ be behaving. Yet following Hailey (2001: 95), I argue that these notions “are rooted in a genuine commitment to helping the poor and disadvantaged” and are thus rationalities not entirely irreconcilable with the empathetic and understanding accounts of actors. Indeed, such paternalised notions of care co-exist as part of a range of rationalities and emotions experienced and displayed in workers’ everyday enactments. Acknowledging that there are in fact different practices of care in work avoids overly simplified and unified notions of care, allowing paternal notions to be identified and alternative ethical practices to be nurtured as part of social governing settings.
The already existing and diversified practices of care revealed in actors’ accounts suggest that practices of care are indeed everyday features of state institutions, human service delivery and social governing. It is vital to recognise that these everyday practices of care are not limited to the individual enactments of compassionate workers. For actors in Families First and SaCC, caring and supportive practices are enacted by individuals but are also intrinsically sedimented in the performances and enduring traditions of human service agencies and the field of community development more broadly:

This is about everyone having well-being ... Because in the end we all want children to grow up with more resilience and less risk around them. So it’s a bigger picture isn’t it? It’s too big, and too common, and core to be kept in any one area.
(Ann—SaCC SSC representative)

Care is not restricted to informal actions, personal affects and privatised spaces, but can also ‘be at home’ in the spaces of economies, markets, institutions and states (Daly and Lewis 2000; Daly 2002). Reiterating Gibson-Graham (2006), I argue that we need to ‘de-domesticate’ care from the household and unpaid labour. Practices of care can be, and already are, sedimented in diverse ways in state institutions, with a ‘shared ethos’ of caring engrained in the domains of social governing (Smith 1997; Hailey 2001).

Care is not restricted to the social relations between individuals nor is it a simple affect. As was illustrated, care can reveal empathetic, practical, critical and at times, patronising aspects in the enactments of human service delivery. Recognising the significance and complexities of care within these social governing spaces allows both the differentiation of performances of care and the support of ethical practices. From this perspective, ethical service delivery does not necessarily involve the seemingly immense and overwhelming process of resisting neoliberal subjections (see McDonald and Marston 2005), or recreating a ‘caring market’ (see Easterlow and Smith 2004), but can involve
a process of recognition. By recognising care in states, it is possible to engage
and nurture ethical enactments of care as already existing and possible
practices across the institutions and cultures of social governing.

Actors cherish caring and close interactions with communities as a vital tool of
human service delivery, and more personally as the source of inspiration,
motivation and authenticity in their everyday lives. This is not merely a
consoling recognition of isolated and romanticised notions, but an
acknowledgement of the fundamental political practice of programmes. As
Hailey (2001) explains, a programme’s “success depends on their
understanding of and responsiveness to the needs of local communities in
which they work”. Rather than becoming bound by strongly theorised paths of
institutionalised interaction or indeed, etho-political translations, I suggest that
an openness and attention to the prosaics of practice imparts breathing space
to ethical performances of social governing. From this perspective, it is possible
to value the thought, love and care involved in the support of communities and
how these expressions vitally strengthen the capacity of interagencies and the
communities with which they work. By valuing care we also make the ‘time to
care’ (Daly 2002), allowing actors to take time in nurturing their care of
communities and cultivating their ethical practices of working.

6.3 Concluding on the prosaics of interagency working: people,
relationships and care
Practices of governing never unfold in a vacuum but are co-constituted as part
of political and institutional contexts inscribed with the everyday practices and
exigencies of people (Mountz 2003). In practising ethnographic research, the
pivotal and influential role of people in social governing is drawn out. Indeed, the
accounts of interagency workers reveal people, personalities, relationships and
care as crucial features in the everyday practices of social governing. While the acknowledgement of these features is not entirely new to academic thought, it is through ethnographic analysis that the intrinsic vitality in which people relate, work and govern is revived from the insensible accounts of institutional networks and associations. Moreover, valuing the vitality of people necessarily shifts etho-political subjections from a co-opting position to a co-existent and contingent one. From a contingent perspective, etho-politics themselves are subject to the dynamics and performances of institutions and workers in the everyday contexts of governing. An open attention to the prosaic practices of interagency working exposes a core and heart of social governing rarely acknowledged in strongly theorised accounts—the personal, ethical and caring practices and possibilities of everyday governing.

In undertaking a re-reading of the everyday efforts of interagency working, the spaces of social governing are re-peopled and re-affected. Firstly, I suggest people are revealed as heterogeneous, influential and knowledgeable actors who engage a variety of rationalities, techniques and ethics in their everyday work. Workers then are not merely representative of co-opted and moralised interagency managers/practitioners, but exhibit and nurture a diversity of traits often atypical of neoliberal norms (e.g. creativity, humour, care) (see also Hailey and Smillie 2001; Larner and Butler 2007). Secondly, actors frame relationships as the key supportive foundations of interagency working, yet do not describe such relations in the collaborative, associational and moralised rhetoric of social policy and etho-politics. Indeed, actors prioritise relationships in the personalised language of friendships, trust and respect—dynamics that are decisively influential in the day-to-day interactions and success of interagency working (see also Smillie 2001). Finally, complex and inherently political practices of care unfold in actors’ accounts of everyday interagency working. These practices of care are in no simple way the opposing ‘good’ with which to resist neoliberalism. Instead, care co-exists with etho-political priorities and
includes critical, practical and even paternal practices and institutional sedimentations. I suggest that these diverse rationalities of care co-exist in interagency working spaces and this co-existence needs to be recognised in order to; firstly, allow for the ethical engagements of interagency work to be wholly nurtured and supported; and secondly, to avoid the tendency to continually fold interagency programmes back into the strongly defined domain of neoliberalism.

The actors within Families First and SaCC continually traverse institutional, professional and personal connections, relations and rationalities as part of their everyday practices of human service delivery, a process Smillie and Hailey (2001: 170) describe as:

Blending formal and informal systems, old cultures and new cultures, ambitions and hopes and needs, with the very serious business of changing the face of poverty.

Moreover, connections are understood and enacted in personal ways such that they can ‘be together’ with other people, work as part of a shared ethos, ‘like’ people, ‘weep’ for others and ‘respect’ their peers both within the community and their own institutional working spaces.

Attending to the peopled practice of states exposes the individuals, personal relationships and empathetic care that support the motivated and innovative actions of everyday interagency work. Efficient and effective interagency working is not only defined and sustained through specified neoliberal governmentalities, but can also (through spacious questioning) be seen as the creation of people engaging in supportive relationships and caring actions (Hailey 2001). Recognising the potential for, and centrality of, personal and ethical enactments in social governing vindicates actors in their generally caring and professional engagements with communities and other service providers. In
weakly theorising governing, the context and heart of prosaic interagency practices are drawn out, exposing the potential for ethical human service work that supports care, diversity and co-existence in quotidian ways.
Chapter Seven

Conclusion
Chapter 7

Conclusion: hopeful geographies of social governing

It is important, then, not simply to acknowledge incoherence … but to give attention to how it comes to be and in what ways it is generative of new potential.

(Mansfield 2007: 482)

This project sought to enrich geographies of social governing. I have argued for an open and hospitable (weak theory) orientation to social governing; a perspective that widens from the myopic hold of overarching theories of governance to the hopeful visions of prosaic governing practice and possibility. Such an orientation does not necessitate the ‘doing away’ with common conceptions of overarching neoliberal governance. Rather, this research demands that specified concepts of neoliberalism co-exist and reiteratively interconnect with spacious understandings of the incoherence, variability and creativity of social governing practice. This welcoming and dynamic framing of governing provides the foundations to investigate how the diversity of social governing comes to be, and the ways in which these practices may be generative of both new and yet to be nurtured potential.

Interagency modes of social governing formed the entry point to the research, an opening through which to investigate everyday practices and potentialities of social governing. In these everyday interagency spaces it became possible to view the ways in which governing actions deemed neoliberal co-existed with practices that were caring, acts that were political, and behaviours that were institutionally stubborn. The congested clamour of people and practice—historically-formed yet contingently performed—could not be categorised in
neatly exclusive, exhaustive or comprehensive ways. Neoliberalism was not always determinately co-opting, nor care forever progressive and generous (Barnett and Land 2007). Instead, people constantly negotiated their understandings and actions with the ideologies of governing, the sedimented structures of state institutions and the politics of government as part of their everyday work and lives. These contingent negotiations, or everyday materials that people worked with, formed the innately politicised and peopled foundations of these social governing spaces. So how might these prosaic negotiations, politics and practices of social governing be generative of a new or otherwise neglected potential for our thoughts and actions?

7.1 Re-thinking social governing
Throughout the project, I have pointed to the myriad of ways in which the task of thinking about social governing has been undertaken; from the determinate and often despairing framings of neoliberal co-option (Rose 1999; Clarke 2004; McDonald and Marston 2005), to the growing body of researchers acting to broaden understandings of governing by acknowledging incoherence at neoliberalism’s core (e.g. Brenner and Theodore 2002; Radcliffe 2005; Peck and Tickell 2007). As I have argued, this acknowledgement of incoherence in governing is a significant act. Yet we also need to extend this recognition to examine the everyday practices and possibilities of governing in open and welcoming ways, uninhibited by all-encompassing framings of neoliberalism.

At the outset of the thesis, I introduced weak theory as a foundation for enabling such open and hospitable research. I proposed that the practice of weak theorising was vital in addressing the contexts of the research. Both neoliberalism and states are subject to persistently strong theorising. Such theorising emboldens our understandings of neoliberalism and states as only
ostensibly impressed with politics, people and the variability of practice (see Painter 2006; Larner and Butler 2007). Weak theory, however, allows specified concepts of neoliberalism and states to co-exist with diverse practices and possibilities. It acknowledges subjectivities that are institutionally provided, while also listening for the prosaic potentialities or “fugitive energies” that exceed these subjectivities (Gibson-Graham 2006: 51).

These weak theory orientations were then infused and enriched with Foucauldian and prosaic concepts of governing power and states, in ways still attentive to the diversity and potentialities of social governing. This assembled framing offered a re-energised potential for thinking about contemporary social governing and interagency working, particularly through understandings of power and subjection. Accounts of governing are necessarily infused, often implicitly, with ideas of power. For much contemporary analysis, these accounts of power express familiar tales of a centralised and hierarchical governing power that rules and restrains subjects (Mitchell 1999; Painter 2006). Moreover, contemporary governing power is increasingly equated with neoliberalism, such that this mode of governing assumes an almost material and insurmountable place in the actions of governing and the lives of subjects (see Valverde 1996; Lemke 2002).

Drawing on the often estranged Foucauldian concepts I referred to as spacious and specified governmentality, this research sought to activate governing power as diversified and practised (see Foucault 1983; Butler 1997; Rose 2002; Allen 2003), condensed here through several key recognitions:

• governing power is not always enacted in intentional and hierarchical ways, but can also be exercised by individuals through everyday, productive and diverse governing practices;
• individuals are not subject to a homogeneous domination under governing power, but are themselves both exercising and undergoing power; and,

• antithetical notions of resistance paradoxically strengthen and reify a pre-established system of governing power and are thus unproductive in framings of power and subjection.

Rather than follow established lines of power and subjection (from government to locality, from ‘agent of the state’ to citizen), this framing encouraged an analysis of the everyday ways in which governing power was exercised, as much by local agency workers as senior government representatives. Moreover, the framing was attuned to the diversities of power—how governing power might be expressed through practices ranging from manipulation and persuasion to subterfuge and compassion (Allen 2003). In this re-visioned and multiple framing of power, notions of an all-conquering governing project are decidedly less plausible and convincing. Moreover, such a re-visioning enables us to think of governing power as practised in ways that are not necessarily repressive but potentially supportive. Recognising and nurturing these understandings and potentialities of power necessitates research that investigates, in Foucault’s terms, the ‘how’ of governing—how governing power and subjects become in everyday ways.

Indeed, it is how governing power and subjects ‘become’ in the practices of social governing and the settings of state institutions that captured the focus of this research. Too often state institutions and workers have been stabilised as the technical conduits or ‘automata’ through which (neoliberal) governing power is translated (Painter 2006; Larner and Butler 2007; Robertson 2007). From such a strongly theorised perspective, the congested and prosaic institutional spaces of people, politics and practice—political leaders, policies, portfolios, ministers, political parties, agencies, workers, NGOs, citizens—are muted, or at best, subject to post facto rationalisations that would see them systematised or
neoliberalised (Painter 2006). In this research, the aim has been to re-think and re-vitalise these state settings and practices of social governing. It did so firstly by drawing out the innate politics of these settings where everything from the big-power politics of election cycles to the prosaic politics of local workers was significantly embroiled in everyday practices of human service delivery and interagency working. Secondly it did so by valuing state institutions as actively *practised* in ways undetermined by the systematic and bureaucratic rigidity of much institutional analysis, and *peopled* with individuals who are influential in shaping the practices of human service institutions—bringing to their work the commitments, beliefs, relationships and care that infuse their everyday lives (see Jones *et al.* 2004; Larner and Butler 2007). It is only in valuing these congestions of state settings that I was able to unfold the ways in which interagency working was actually practiced. This revealed the multiple politics, institutional practices and people that shape the very settings and enactments of governing.

Weak theorising of governing power and states requires constant vigilance and has been a most demanding task. It is not enough to simply re-think governing—acknowledging incoherence, agency and variability in our understandings of governing (Mansfield 2007; Painter 2006). We need to also re-activate governing—examining how these variabilities act out in prosaic ways, how they might co-exist within agencies, programmes, and even the same person, and the ways in which our own research activities offer the potential for nurturing practices of social governing that are ethical and resilient. As Gibson-Graham (2006: xxx) argue, thinking for possibility mutually supports a “politics of possibility”. If we think and communicate in open and hospitable ways then it is also possible to nurture these same foundations in the practices of governing, the performances of state institutions and the enactments of people as part of these settings. To engage in these hospitable geographies, our thoughts *and* actions must nurture a ceaseless questioning of the diverse
efforts of governing and an open hospitality towards ‘other’ governing practices. By adopting a mindful approach we can unfold investigations of social governing and interagency working in ways that offer hope for future governing practices and research.

7.2 Re-activating social governing

Through the prosaic methodologies of this research—the contingent histories of genealogy and everyday practices of ethnography—the opportunity to re-activate social governing and engage fugitive energies was revealed. From a genealogical perspective, I examined social governing as a co-constituted outcome of multiple governing rationalities creatively negotiated and contingently stabilised at particular historical junctures (Mansfield 2007). Thus I investigated how such negotiations and stabilisations of social governing played out through government agencies, policies, procedures and people, particularly as part of interagency-based programmes.

Through this genealogical analysis, recent Australian histories of social governing policy and interagency programmes revealed neoliberalism as an influential political-economic rationality. Yet neoliberal efforts in Australian governing have been neither exclusive nor exhaustive. Indeed, neoliberal actions were evident at historical junctures predating notions of a contemporary neoliberal ‘commonsense’, and neoliberal efforts were diversified and incoherent in both historical formation and contingent enactment (see O’Neill and Moore 2005). Moreover, such efforts co-existed with unremitting commitments to social democracy atypical of neoliberalism. Thus to simply portray interagency working as translating oppressive agendas of neoliberalism denies the histories and sustained ideologies of this mode of social governing (see Niland 2000; Everingham 2003).
The types of thickly historical yet contingent accounts enabled by genealogical analysis offered a means of maintaining the vigilant questioning of weak theorising and remaining open to fugitive energies of social governing. Genealogies necessarily refine our thinking through ‘gray, meticulous and patiently documentary’ historical accounts (Foucault 1986b). Moreover, genealogical analysis diversifies our research actions by watching not only for the performativity of policy discourse, the materiality of governing subjections, and the sedimenting practices of governing, but also the contingent and always changing ways in which these practices appear, formalise and co-exist together (Gibson-Graham 2006: 49).

Most importantly for future research on social governing, genealogy allows us as researchers to avoid the proclivity to absorb difference into familiar ways of thinking. Genealogy values the histories of particular social governing policies and programmes—the ways they have been formed through vast and vital domains of academic critique, community action, the demonstrative practices of NGOs, the ‘big power’ politics of governments and ministers, and the prosaic politics and traditions of government agencies and workers. By drawing out these contingent histories, genealogy allows researchers to convey a hopeful acknowledgement that policies and programmes do not just form as the outcomes of an unthinking world contrived by ‘veiled relations’. Rather, social governing is recognised as continually (re)produced through historically abundant storylines populated by peopled activities that can be thoughtful, creative and transformative (see Barnett and Land 2007).

The historical abundance of genealogy was supplemented in the research through ethnographic methodologies. Ethnographies provided the means by which to explore genealogical questions of governing practice in prosaic and in-depth ways. Although an often underutilised methodology of governing research, ethnography offers the potential to reveal the undisclosed ‘internal
workings’ of states through an orientation to prosaic practice; a means of furthering our understandings of social governing and nurturing potentialities for its enactment (Painter 2006). Through ethnographic examinations of Families First and SaCC, actors illustrated governing practices primarily shaped by the politics and institutional practices embedded in state institutions, and the people, relationships and care that infuse human service work.

Firstly, actors communicated the highly politicised nature of state institutions. It is in these settings that it was possible to view fugitive and largely overlooked efforts of governing: how people can be powerful in their demands on governments; how demands for human services are regularly met with immediate (although often cursory) political responses; the recognition that governments’ attempts to reduce economic outputs are long-customary and habitual practices; how political representatives may manipulate people and policy for their own political ends; and, the ways in which short-term and recurrent election cycles have very real effects on the everyday practices of government agencies. Re-thinking in politically-oriented ways allows us to view these congested politics of practice. Yet how might such recognitions be generative of a new potential in future research and governing action?

By explicitly acknowledging the everyday, mundane practices of politics, we as researchers can begin to mingle and “muck around” in politics without the usual fears of co-option or collusion (Gibson-Graham 2006: 6). In the understandings of workers, politics are portrayed as prosaic practices that can be identified, experienced, utilised and manipulated in a variety of ways and for a diversity of ends. For example, workers may seize the opportunities created by election campaigns in garnering financial support for programmes. Perhaps, if we are to understand politics in this same way then it may offer similar potentialities. Such possibilities include openings to develop our understandings of how policy is produced—as the effect of ‘small decisions’ made by politicians, parliamentary
drafters and civil servants; and, those who influence them including agency workers, officials, journalists, electors, lobbyists and academics (Painter 2006: 761). But also, these possibilities include the transformative opportunities that ensue from coming into contact with politics—the openings through which to explicitly engage in political practices as workers might and meddle in political habits as politicians do. By re-politicising the thoughts and actions of social governing, we de-exoticise governing power. Through this process it is possible to unmask the often inscrutable ‘internal workings’ of states and reveal the potentialities of its politics.

Secondly, workers in Families First and SaCC illustrated the contingent negotiations and sedimented practices of state institutions. Expanding understandings of government agencies as stable, well-organised and administered institutions, actors revealed the ‘enduring change’ with which these spaces are infused. Their accounts pointed to state institutions as continually re-structured in ways that are not always strategic, complete, wholly controlled or predetermined. Moreover, actors revealed the traditions of institutional practice that infuse agencies. These traditions were not wholly regressive or remnant institutional features, but agency-based practices upheld with pride throughout successive restructures and reorganisations. Indeed, these sedimented agency practices often provided the foundations for effective human service work attuned to the particularities of each agency’s role.

Where such institutional practices and traditions are noted in existing research, they are most often portrayed as the obstinate outcomes of governments behaving ‘badly’; blamed as a result of our underlying confidence in a new unified governance, or our idealistic nostalgia for a former model bureaucracy (see Lee 2005). If we are, in the words of Gibson-Graham (2006: 6), “to shift from victimhood to potency, judgment to enactment, protest to positive projects”, then we must value these habitual changes in similar ways to workers
themselves—as persistent and material features of state institutions to be worked with and negotiated in contingent and reparative ways. In opening up our understandings of state institutions, we are further able to welcome those practices that have become sedimented as institutional traditions. Recoiling from viewing state institutions only with affects of nostalgia or condemnation, institutional practices are revealed as multiply-constituted and sustained. Institutional practices support histories of knowledge, activism and ethical working practices that can be harnessed for the benefit of social governing and the people it supports.

Thirdly, workers in Families First and SaCC introduced the significance and vitality of people, relationships and care in the human service settings of states. These may appear as rather obvious and simple observances. Yet, as I have suggested, our understandings and investigations of social governing remain largely bounded to the idea that these personal and affectual practices are somehow trivial and impotent, to be overlooked in stories of a more spectacular and overarching governance project. In remaining bound by these ways of thinking, the possibilities of governing practice are also bound, evidenced by the guilt that accompanied workers’ accounts of the friendships, ethics, passions and emotions in their work.

As researchers, we often appear reluctant to view settings such as state institutions and practices such as governing as infused with personality, emotions and beliefs. Indeed, we prefer to uphold an abstract expectation that these practices belong in ‘private spaces’ rather than spaces concerned with governing and the political-economic sphere (see Lawson 2007). I argue that we should no longer view research that personalises states and governing as trivial or indulgent. Our theories of governing may be adept at critique yet most often fail to imagine possibilities and capture opportunities to engage the people, relationships and care that make ethical human service work possible.
This is not to romanticise human service workers and their practices. As demonstrated throughout the research, people can act with manipulation as well as care; with care itself being a political practice that can be enacted in practical, paternal and critical ways. Nor do I suggest that such personalised framings of states and social governing are a form of resistance through which to retaliate against a co-opting neoliberal ‘state’. Much more simply, I assert that people, friendships and care are ‘at home’ in the spaces of state institutions. Once we are able to think in this way, then it becomes possible to allow such practices to unfold in multiple, contradictory and co-existent ways. Our analysis then is attuned to the efforts of people, their relationships and caring practices and the ways in which the ethical enactments of these may be nurtured to further support and enhance everyday human service delivery.

Genealogies and ethnographies of interagency working reveal a window on the prosaics of social governing practice as part of state institutions. These prosaic perspectives uncover the frequently overlooked and seemingly ‘irrelevant’ practices of governing: the non-rational, contradictory, emotive and caring practices that are critical to the everyday functioning of states (see Painter 2006). Moreover, it is in attending to these ‘irrelevant’ practices, that the ‘unfinalisability’, uncertainty and fallibility of governing actions become apparent (Painter 2006). For researchers, these uncertain and unrefined congestions of governing actions are most often ignored, resisted or subsumed—a product of preserving the comfort of familiar paths of thought (see Mawdsley et al. 2005). Yet in the contexts of this research, the innate uncertainty of governing practices appears as the natural, accepted and negotiated features of actors’ everyday work. It is time, then, that researchers further engage these prosaics of states and governing, attending to the “countless, small daily actions” through which history is made (Morson and Emerson 1990; quoted in Painter 2006: 762). In becoming familiar with prosaic practice and uncertainty we can foster hopeful geographies of social governing in which the countless everyday actions of state institutions and people can make a difference.
7.3 Nurturing potentialities of thought, research and governing action

The potentialities for thinking, researching and enacting social governing are nurtured by the prosaic perspectives of this research. Yet this is not to suggest that such an approach is the only means by which our thoughts and research actions can be open and hospitable to the diversity of governing (see Painter 2006). Everyday interagency practice represents just one feature of the expansive realm of social governing and research. Moreover, the potentialities I describe undoubtedly arise from the particular settings of the research. The human service sector of state institutions has long been associated with policy activism, caring and dedicated workers, overrepresentation of women and commitment to social justice issues (Watson 1990; Nyland 1998; Roberts 2004; Larner and Butler 2007). Might other state institutions such as the environmental services sector express similar fugitive energies? In what ways might those enrolled in the financial sectors of governments work and interact in personal and emotive ways? How might people who are active in writing policy communicate the diversity and creativity innate to their working lives? These questions of state institutions excite further research with the capacity to challenge stagnant concepts of ‘the state’ through attention to the diversity of affects, understandings and activities that infuse these governing settings. We cannot expect that other state settings will reveal the same particularities of governing practice but, as Blomley (2005: 293) argues, we can expect “that other places will provide equally complex stories”.

To unfold the complex stories of governing is not about acknowledging complexity for the sake of it. Stories of governing ‘in place’ provide the breathing space for imagining and recognising hopeful geographies of social governing as well as nurturing ethical social governing actions. Moreover, these imaginings do not invalidate our existing understandings and geographies of neoliberalism. Rather, it is in placing, practising and personalising governing that a political-economic rationality, or ‘commonsense’ such as neoliberalism, appears less
certain, universal and controlling than we might expect (Gibson-Graham 2006; Larner and Butler 2007). Strong rationalities and ideological categories soften in the congested and dynamic spaces of everyday social governing, disarmed by the interminable fluidities of negotiation, change and contingent political and peopled action. It is in disarming our strong proclivity to tame and categorise our research that we can open up a more intriguing and invigorating set of analytical questions and political and practical possibilities (see Blomley 2005).

In assuming a prosaic research perspective, I suggest that everyday political and peopled practices of governing are, quite strikingly, impossible to ignore. The politics and people of state institutions, the friendships, respect and trust, the care that workers hold for each other and the communities they work with; all these features may exceed our common understandings of governing and state institutions yet are, I argue, already existing in the everyday practices of social governing. As researchers, we too must surely engage in friendships with our colleagues, negotiate the prosaic politics of our workplaces, nurture care in our work practices and relationships, and value the decisive role of genuine and trusting relationships in our work and lives (see also Iveson 2007). So in our research we need to question why these energies seem untenable in state institutions, governing settings and agency practices? How listening for these everyday energies might help in identifying ethical social governing practices? How our re-imagining of these governing spaces can invigorate thoughts and conditions that might nurture their emergence? And, as Gibson-Graham (2006: 7) pose, how we make ourselves a condition of possibility for their emergence?

How we begin to invoke these conditions of possibility may, at the outset of our research, appear a daunting task. Yet for one SaCC Facilitator, it is such a challenging question of “where do you start?” that demands the unadorned, experimental, resilient (and perhaps humorous) response “well, just start where
you can (laughs)” (Vicki—SaCC Facilitator). It is such an attitude, expressed here as a response to the complexities of human service work, that may be practical in our own thoughts and actions as researchers. An open, experimental and resilient orientation in our research allows us to initiate and navigate our explorations of social governing with enthusiasm, curiosity and hope. Moreover, such an orientation sustains and strengthens our thoughts and actions in the unremittingly complex, contradictory and intricate spaces of prosaic governing practice. In this way, an open and welcoming orientation in our research is generative of the new potential that Mansfield (2007) describes at the outset of the chapter; allowing us to identify not only where the potentialities and possibilities of social governing are new, but where they represent the yet to be nurtured practices already existing in everyday governing spaces. An ability to recognise the infinitesimal and possible—the accretion and interaction of “small changes in place” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 196)—offers a vision of social governing that is hopeful, and conditions for social governing practice that are transformative.


New South Wales Premier's Department (2001). Reforming the Public Sector.


Appendix A
In utilising the SaCC programme as a case study, I include four specific sites selected in order to gain further insight into the actual enactments of SaCC policy and its connections with the broader practices of interagency working. The four sites were chosen from the Hunter and Sydney regions: Fennell Bay and Cessnock in the Hunter, and Cabramatta and Glebe in Sydney (see Appendix B for maps of SaCC locations). The process involved in selecting the SaCC sites was influenced by the political and institutional concerns of the partner agencies involved in SaCC. Most particularly, DET and DoCS contributed to the process through a number of agency-specific research requirements together with a range of institutional concerns and sensitivities around research findings and publications. Moreover, the process of selecting SaCCs was informed by my own attempts to gain variation across management structures (e.g. period of establishment, membership of management committee, relationship to school institution), and the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of place (e.g. multicultural, high public housing and indigenous populations; see Table A.1).

I suggest that interagency enactments vary considerably across these four sites due mainly to differences in institutional arrangements, programme management structures and individual government workers engaged in these spaces. The variations in the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of each location are not central to my discussion of social governing due to my focus on the institutional enactments of human service delivery. The explicit aim
of the research is to highlight the ways in which diverse aspects of place and practice help to shape the performances of SaCC and interagency working more generally. Therefore, I only briefly highlight each site to give a background of each SaCC locale and institutional organisation.

Table A.1—Selected census data on the four case study SaCC suburbs^  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cessnock</th>
<th>Fennell Bay</th>
<th>Cabramatta</th>
<th>Glebe</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total persons</td>
<td>17791</td>
<td>2028</td>
<td>19392</td>
<td>10872</td>
<td>18769249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
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<td>5.9</td>
<td>8.8</td>
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<td>Age 5-14</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian citizen</td>
<td>92.1</td>
<td>93.6</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons born overseas</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks English only at home</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>95.1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
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<td>One parent families</td>
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<td>19.5</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public rental dwellings</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income (earning less than $500/week*)</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different address 1 year ago</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^ As percentage of persons over 15 years.

The data is sourced from the Census of Population and Housing 2001 (ABS 2001). I use this census data, although now outdated, as it more accurately reflects the contemporaneous data used by Families First in determining the location of the four selected SaCCs which were all established in or around 2001.
Cessnock SaCC

Cessnock SaCC is located in the Hunter region and based in Cessnock Primary School. Cessnock is characterised by a relatively high child and youth population, indigenous population, unemployment levels, and population transience. The socio-economic characteristics of Cessnock are acutely divided between public housing areas, newcomers/transient families, and wealthy sectors of the local mining and wine industries. The SaCC facilitator describes the community thus:

In an area like Cessnock, there are different groups … there’s the people that have lived here for generations and there are the people that have moved in recently because Cessnock’s a cheaper housing market … there’s also another group, the Department of Housing development section, locally known as ‘sin city’ … then you’ve got some very affluent people because of the mines and because of the proximity to the vineyards. So there are some quite wealthy families but then there are some very, very poor families living in dreadful poverty.
(Rebecca—SaCC Facilitator)

The SaCC was located in Cessnock in 2001 and runs a range of programmes that respond to these local issues, including an early childhood clinic, young parents group, ‘Stories in the Street’, parenting programmes, transition to school programmes, nutrition education and a jointly-located Families First Supported Playgroup.

From the outset, Cessnock SaCC established strong links with the community evidenced in high levels of attendance and community participation in a Local Advisory Group. The SaCC has experienced a relatively firm relationship with Cessnock Primary School and has begun outreaching to Cessnock East Primary School through playgroup activities. The SaCC Management Committee was well-attended throughout the initial period and gained senior membership from the partner government agencies as well as local council. In 2003, the original facilitator left and the centre largely ceased operations during
an extended period of recruitment. The second facilitator began in 2004 and the SaCC, while still described as successful, has experienced significant problems with Management Committee membership, attendance, and input into the functioning of the SaCC. Such shifts in the experiences of one SaCC draw attention to the ways in which even the same programme locations can change interagency practices over time.

**Fennell Bay SaCC**

Fennell Bay is also located in the Hunter region and includes a newly established SaCC (commissioned in 2003 and opened in May 2005). Fennell Bay is characterised by a high youth population (associated teenage pregnancies) and a relatively large public housing population. Aboriginal families are also well-established in the area, representing approximately 60% of the school community (Jane—School Principal). The suburb is described as an isolated area of the sprawling Lake Macquarie LGA that has suffered from disjointed and overworked services. As one local worker describes:

> Because we’re separated by this huge lake, some parts are very isolated and don’t have those service providers and they don’t have the staff in the community to work ... in this area particularly, we’ve got very tired services, you know people that have worked there for a very long time and they’re really set in their ways ... The area has a lot of disadvantage in a confined space ... but also small pockets of advantage which often causes tension and fragmentation in the community.
> (Jean—SaCC MC representative)

The SaCC was actually commissioned as part of Fennell Bay Public School in 2003, but following a series of recruitment problems and delays, did not commence consistent operations until two years later. At the time of research, the SaCC was mainly in a planning stage, developing programmes, undertaking research in the community, forming a local advisory group and mapping existing services.
The SaCC has nevertheless experienced a general interest and involvement from the community, school and local service network. These experiences are attributed in actors’ accounts to the facilitator who has brought extensive knowledge from her previous position as a SaCC facilitator in another location, well-established agency relationships as result of this position, and a well-known reputation as part of the local human service and broader SaCC network. The SaCC has thus enjoyed considerable agency and community support largely due to the lengthy working experiences of one particular actor, emphasising the ways in which individuals are central to constituting the ‘peopled practice’ of state institutions.

**Glebe SaCC**

Glebe is situated in the Inner West of Sydney and is the location of one of the original Families First SaCCs (commencing in 2001). The suburb of Glebe is characterised by large public housing estates, a high indigenous population and significant levels of transience (often associated with an extensive university rental market). Many of the socio-economic issues confronting the area are masked in census statistics due to the co-existence of affluence within the suburb attributed to increasing gentrification, white-collar residents, and ‘trendy’ student populations (see Horvath and Engels 1985). The SaCC facilitator describes the resulting division within the suburb:

> In this area, you'll get people who live on the housing estate who don't see the other end of Glebe as their community. So you've got literally one road that splits the suburb in two ... one end is almost entirely owner-occupied and the other end is a 1200-unit housing estate and we don't have a crossover happening.
> (Adrienne—SaCC Facilitator)
The SaCC is located in Glebe Public School which is characterised by an ongoing attendance of public housing tenants and indigenous families residing in the suburb. The SaCC has instituted many programmes to address local issues and attempt to engage the school community including transition to school programmes, morning bus runs for school children, young parents project, a playgroup, parenting programmes and early literacy projects among others. Despite these attempts, the SaCC has recently suffered from a lack in community involvement, a problem associated with a decline in community attendance at the school itself.

The SaCC has also experienced fluctuations in the relationship with the school, primarily as a result of successive changes in school principals. The current relationship between the school principal and the SaCC facilitator is poor, fostering minimal interaction and support between the centre, school administration and staff. Moreover, recent overloading of local agencies and service providers has resulted in significant problems with agency involvement in the SaCC, leading to a decision in 2005 for the Alexandria Park (Redfern) and Glebe SaCC Management Committees to be combined. The newly formed committee has a small but core group of members that are described as offering effective guidance and support to SaCC activities and the facilitators. These changing constitutions of interagency arrangement and practice reiterate that institutional practices vary over time due to the broader restructurings of government agencies and the shifting of workers across these institutional spaces—pointing to the ever-changing and always incomplete context of interagency working and human service delivery.

**Cabramatta SaCC**

Cabramatta is located in South-West Sydney in Fairfield LGA. Cabramatta is characterised by an immense immigrant population, a well-established Vietnamese community, very high levels of unemployment and low average
weekly incomes. The area has been plagued by negative media representations, often being referred to as ‘Vietnamatta’, the ‘Wild West’, and ‘overrun’ with the Vietnamese community and an associated drug trade (see Dunn 1993). Due to the extensive political and media attention on Cabramatta, the area has been subject to a constant procession of service providers, funding strategies, and programmes from both government and non-government agencies. As the SaCC facilitator describes:

A lot of programmes tend to come into Cabramatta, because it’s fairly high profile in the area.
(Emma—SaCC Facilitator)

The SaCC represents a largely independent service in the local network but is identified as a highly successful, reputable, and well-known SaCC, and an effective point through which local service providers can join-up. The centre has had the same facilitator since its inception and has enjoyed a trusting and steadfast relationship with the school (including the principal, staff and administrative personnel), and with the local community who regularly utilise the range of programmes on offer (e.g. English reading/writing classes, playgroup, transition to school, community development activities with other agencies, and Paint and Play).

The SaCC Management Committee combines four SaCCs located in the Fairfield LGA (Cabramatta, Fairfield, Canley Vale and Bonnyrigg) and meets just twice a year. The committee is described by local workers as unable to respond to each SaCC’s needs due to the extensive differences between the four locations. Subsequently, each SaCC has largely engaged its own support network of agency and service providers in their immediate area, which in turn reveals variable levels of agency engagement and worker involvement. Yet despite these institutional vagaries, the enduring professional and personal relationships sustained between the Cabramatta SaCC and school appears to nurture a particularly successful SaCC programme in this location.
Although only a brief review, this discussion of each SaCC case study site exhibits the innately peopled practice of states. State institutions and their social policies are enacted in both constrained and creative ways by the people who constitute these settings. Thus in the case of SaCC, it is the workers engaged in different geographical locations that help to shape the institutional arrangements of the programme and its everyday practice; revealing the dynamics of sedimentation and change always inscribing state institutions. Ethnographic analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 further explores the contingencies of peopled practice across the human service delivery settings of Families First and SaCC. Through these ethnographies, the vitality of institutions and individuals are explored. Attention to the everyday practices of human service delivery opens up state spaces to the possibilities of ethical governing and community engagement across the diverse scales and spaces of social governing.
Appendix B.1
Map of SaCC locations NSW
Appendix B.2

Map of SaCC locations Hunter and Sydney Regions
Appendix C
Appendix C

Timeline of methodological processes and events

October 2004
I conduct meetings with Families First staff and the Hunter Project Management Group (PMG) about my project aims and the selection of a case study programme. SaCC is suggested as a well-established and widely located programme. After investigating various options I confirm SaCC as the case study and seek further advice from Families First on the relevant agency contacts. I begin analysis of Families First and SaCC policy and related documents and begin a field diary noting contacts, meetings and phone calls.

November 2004
Preparations for the University of Newcastle Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) begin. I also contact the Regional DET and Families First representative in order to gather further information on the SaCC programme and to refine the case study by selecting 4 SaCC sites across the Hunter and Sydney regions.

January 2005
I meet with a SaCC SSC representative to discuss the DET process for research approval, the relevant DET contacts in SaCC, and possible case study SaCC locations. I subsequently begin preparing the application for DET’s State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP). The HREC application is submitted with a short list of possible case study SaCC locations.

February 2005
I receive response from HREC and make amendments mainly regarding anonymity of participants, language usage, and the use of standardised university information sheets. I then submit the SERAP application that contains similar ethical procedures as the HREC application but with particular attention to sensitivities around anonymity of DET staff and interactions with schools.

March 2005
HREC approval is granted. Amendments are requested from DET including ensuring anonymity of respondents, clarity of programme structure, family participation, and Families First approval. I follow up on Families First Research approval through the state Families First office but no official process is required. I thus respond with most other amendments excluding family participation due to my focus on government institutions and their prosaic working practices.

May 2005
SERAP approval is granted. This period I continue with policy analysis and the development of a theoretical framework.
June 2005
Discussions resume with regional staff in both DET and Families First about the final selection of four case study SaCC sites. Ongoing discussions between representatives of DET and Families First result in an extended period of negotiation.

August 2005
Final selection of case study sites is agreed upon by Families First, DET and myself. I subsequently seek permission from SaCC facilitators in each of the four locations and the school principals at each of the associated schools to be involved in the research. They all agree to be involved.

September 2005 – March 2006
I conduct my first semi-structured interviews with SaCC Facilitators. I continue attendance at Families First PMG meetings and organise to attend local SaCC Management Committee (MC) meetings in the four selected locations, which in some cases, draw in other closely located SaCCs (see Appendix A). From contacts gathered from facilitators I organise interviews with agency representatives on local SaCC MCs, relevant regional Families First representatives and SaCC SSC members. I experience some difficulties in gaining participation due to agency restructures and lack of agency participation at some sites. I conduct 45 interviews with Families First and SaCC members in all levels of the programmes.

March 2006
Final interview and observation at meetings is concluded. I undertake analysis of interviews and observation notes through an inductive approach to coding.
Appendix D.1

Semi-structured interview schedule: SaCC facilitators

Theme 1: Practising an interagency approach

1. How long have you been involved in SaCC? Have you ever been involved with SaCCs before? What is your role in the SaCC project?

2. What is your role in facilitating interagency work in the SaCC?

3. How is interagency working practised in the programme?
   • management structures, meetings, reports, personal communication

4. What do you see as important to interagency working within the programme and how do you see this at work in this SaCC?
   • leadership, best practice, trust, friendship

5. Are there any local factors that shape interagency practice in the programme?

6. How do interagency priorities of efficiency and effectiveness shape what you do in the SaCC? Have other priorities arisen from the interagency approach and how do they shape what you do in the SaCC?

7. What do you see as the role of state level agencies in facilitating interagency work in this SaCC? What do you see as the role of agency representatives on the management committee in facilitating interagency work in this SaCC?
   • level of commitment, equal commitment from each department, participation of agency representatives

8. Do you feel that the regionally-based organisation of SaCCs is an effective organisational tool?

9. What are the aspects of interagency working that are monitored? How are these interagency aspects of the project monitored?
   • by whom, how often, guidelines, Families First/DET evaluations
10. What is required of you in reporting on the performance of SaCC?
   • types of indicators, adequacy of indicators

11. How does the budgeting for SaCCs work and how does it influence the
everyday practice of the SaCC programme?
   • variance between regions or particular SaCC locations

**Theme 2: Perceptions of community and school**

1. What do you see as the issues attempting to be addressed by this SaCC
   locally? And the SaCC service model as a whole?

2. What is your understanding of the term community as it is used in SaCC
   policy, is this different to the understandings of community utilised in your
   approach to service delivery? How are these understandings translated
   in this SaCC?

3. How do you think children feature within the SaCC programme?
   • central target group, part of achieving broad outcomes, future aims

4. How are parents targeted and engaged in the SaCC programme?

5. How do you appeal to/recruit participants? Are these techniques
   customised to meet the needs of the locality? Any measures to limit or
   select participants?

6. How is your relationship with the participants facilitated and practised?
   Are there any expectations of participants or the community at large?
   How are these expectations practised within this SaCC?

7. How is your relationship with the school principal, teachers and school
   community facilitated and practised?
   • everyday operational interaction: operation at separate times, SaCC
     noted/promoted in school newsletters, assemblies, P & F meetings
     etc, any changes physically or in functioning of the school for SaCC
   • everyday relationships: between principal and facilitator, facilitator
     and other staff

8. Has the school’s position and role in the community in general changed?

9. How does being in a school shape how you practise project aims?
Theme 3: Outlook

1. Do you see the SaCC service model as indicative of a new and ongoing approach to service delivery? If so, why? If not, why not?

2. What are the main kinds of difficulties encountered in the SaCC? How helpful it is for SaCCs to be located in schools as opposed to another location?

3. What are your motivations for being involved in the project? How have your previous qualifications/job experiences helped in this work? What particular areas of expertise aid this type of work?

4. How has the community responded to the SaCC project? How has the school responded to the SaCC project? Have these responses shaped the practice of this SaCC?
Appendix D.2

Semi-structured interview schedule: SaCC MC representatives

Theme 1: Practising an interagency approach

1. How long have you been involved in SaCC? Have you ever been involved with SaCCs before? What is your role in the SaCC project?
2. In your view, how is interagency working practised in the programme?
3. What do you see as important to interagency work?
4. Are there particular local/regional features that shape how interagency goals work out in this SaCC?
5. In your view, how does the organisational structure of the SaCC model shape interagency work?
   • issues of restructuring
6. Do you feel that traditional responsibilities and reputations of agencies influence the functioning or perception of the programme? Is there equal representation from each of the agencies and their workers?
7. Do you have a role in evaluating interagency working in SaCC?

Theme 2: Perceptions of community and school

1. What do you see as the issues attempting to be addressed by this SaCC (i.e. locally)? What do you see as the issues attempting to be addressed by the SaCC service model as a whole (i.e. government delivery of services)?
2. What is your understanding of the term community as it is used in the SaCC projects, and is this different to the understandings of community adopted in your agency?
3. How do you think being in a school affects the practice of the SaCC?
4. How does the programme appeal to/recruit participants? Are there any measures to limit or select participants?
5. Are there any expectations of participants in the project (i.e. parents and children)? Are there any expectations of the community at large?
Theme 3: Outlook

1. Do you see the SaCC service model as indicative of a new and ongoing approach to service delivery? If so, why? If not, why not?

2. What are your motivations for being involved in the project?

3. How have your previous qualifications/job experiences helped in this work? What particular areas of expertise are important in interagency work?

4. How has the community responded to the SaCC project? How has the school responded to the SaCC project? Have these responses shaped the practice of this SaCC?
Appendix D.3

Semi-structured interview schedule: school principal

Theme 1: Practising an interagency approach

1. What is your role in facilitating interagency work in the SaCC programme?
2. In your view, how is interagency working practised in the programme?
3. What do you see as important to interagency work?
4. Are there particular local/regional features that shape how interagency goals work out in this SaCC?
5. In your view, how does the organisational structure of the SaCC model shape interagency work?
6. Do you feel that traditional responsibilities and reputations of agencies affect the functioning or perception of the programme? What are the similarities/differences in the approaches taken by the agencies involved in the programme? Is there equal representation from each of the agencies and their workers?
7. What are the aspects of interagency working that are monitored in the SaCC? How are these interagency aspects of the project monitored? What is required of you in reporting on these aspects of the SaCC?

Theme 2: Perceptions of community and school

1. What do you see as the issues attempting to be addressed by this SaCC (i.e. locally)? What do you see as the issues attempting to be addressed by the SaCC service model as a whole (i.e. government delivery of services)?
2. What is your understanding of the term community as it is used in SaCC, and is this different to the understandings of community adopted in the school?
3. How do you think being in a school influences the practice of the SaCC? How do everyday school operations interact with SaCC? Does the school play a role in appealing to/recruiting participants?

4. How is your relationship with the facilitator practised and maintained? Has the school’s position and role in the community changed as a result of having a SaCC? Did you have a role in determining the location of SaCC in this school?

**Theme 3: Outlook**

1. Do you see the SaCC service model as indicative of a new and ongoing approach to service delivery? If so, why? If not, why not?

2. What are your motivations for being involved in the project e.g. your school selected, personal interest, benefits to the school?

3. How has your previous qualifications/experience helped in this job? What particular areas of expertise, as a facilitator, are important in meeting project aims?

4. How has the community responded to the SaCC project? How has the school responded to the SaCC project? Have these responses shaped the practice of this SaCC?
Appendix D.4

Semi-structured interview schedules: Families First PMG and SaCC SSC representatives

Theme 1: Practising an interagency approach

1. How long have you been in this position? How many SaCCs do you oversee? How often do you visit each SaCC?

2. How would you describe your role in the SaCC project?

3. What do you see as the role of state steering committee in facilitating interagency work in this SaCC? What do you see as the role of department representatives on the management committee in facilitating interagency work in this SaCC?

4. What do you see as important to interagency work?

5. How does the organisational structure of the SaCC model shape interagency work? Do you feel that the regionally-based organisation of Families First is an effective organisational tool? Are there particular local/regional features that shape how interagency goals work out in this SaCC (e.g. restructuring)?

6. Do you feel that traditional responsibilities and reputations of agencies influence the functioning or perception of the programme? Is there equal representation from each of the agencies and their workers?

7. How do interagency priorities of efficiency and effectiveness shape the programme? Have other priorities arisen from the interagency approach?

8. What are the aspects of interagency working that are monitored? How are these interagency aspects of the project monitored? What is required of you in terms of reporting on these aspects of the SaCC? Appropriate/adequate indicators? Involved in any overall FF/DET evaluations?

9. How are SaCC locations decided upon?

10. How does the budgeting effect the practice of the SaCC programme? How do these interagency budgeting issues vary between regions and/or particular SaCCs?
Theme 2: Perceptions of community and school

1. What do you see as the issues attempting to be addressed by this SaCC (i.e. locally)? What do you see as the issues attempting to be addressed by the SaCC service model as a whole (i.e. government delivery of services)? Do you see this as fitting in with the traditional roles and aims of state government with regard to community development and social service delivery?

2. What is your understanding of the term community as it is used in the SaCC projects, and is this different to the understandings of community adopted in your agency?

3. How do you think being in a school affects the practice of the SaCC?

4. How does the programme appeal to/recruit participants? Are there any measures to limit or select participants?

5. Are there any expectations of participants in the project (i.e. parents and children)? Are there any expectations of the community at large?

Theme 3: Outlook

1. Do you see the SaCC service model as indicative of a new and ongoing approach to service delivery? If so, why? If not, why not?

2. What do you think are the main kinds of difficulties encountered in the SaCC programme? How helpful do you think it is for SaCCs to be located in schools as opposed to another location?

3. What are your motivations for being involved in the project?

4. How have your previous qualifications/job experiences helped in this work? What particular areas of expertise are important in interagency work?

5. How has the community responded to the SaCC project? How has the school responded to the SaCC project? Have these responses shaped the practice of this SaCC?