DISRUPT BURRUP HUB: CAMPAIGN EVALUATION

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THE COMMONS SOCIAL CHANGE LIBRARY

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INTRODUCTION

The Disrupt Burrup Hub (DBH) campaign is a direct action campaign that is primarily targeting Woodside Energy projects at Murujuga on the Burrup Peninsula. This report has been prepared on behalf of Disrupt Burrup Hub by the Commons Social Change Library. The report is intended to provide an analysis of the campaign's activities from 2023-24. Findings and discussion are primarily drawn from interviews with 10 core Disrupt Burrup Hub campaigners. These interviews have been anonymised to allow campaigners to speak honestly about their experiences in the group. In addition to these interviews, a rough analysis of the campaign's strategy documents, and media coverage was undertaken. Both internal elements of the campaign and its strategic capacity, as well as external measures of the campaign's outcomes and influence have been considered. This report is not designed to be an objective assessment of the campaign's success or failure, but rather provide an internal tool for discussion, helping the campaign team to reflect on their experiences and make plans for the future.

STRATEGIC CAPACITY OF THE GROUP / CAMPAIGN

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Goal: Ending industrial expansion at Murujuga - the Burrup Peninsula, Blocking the Browse project, Damaging Woodside's social licence

Target: Woodside, State and Federal Governments (decision makers)

Tactics: Escalating direct action (media stunts)

Theory of change:

> *"If we **mobilise the public** to join in a campaign of **escalating and innovative direct action** to destroy Woodside's **social licence**, we will stop the company from being able to expand the Burrup Hub, because it will no longer be able to rely on the support of the **public**, **politicians**, and **business partners**.*
> *By highlighting heavy-handed responses and repression of protest from the state, politicians, police and other institutions we will expose **the insidious influence of Woodside** and create a backfire effect to further damage the reputation of Woodside and its political enablers.*
> *We seek to create **dilemmas for politicians** who will risk losing public support if they continue to facilitate Woodside's expansion of fossil fuels and destruction of culture.*
> *Furthermore, **direct disruption** will **materially impact** Woodside's operations and cause **cost and delay**, which will make the company less attractive to investors and business partners and further damage **social licence**." (quoted from DBH Strategy H1 2024 document)*

GOALS

The core members had strong alignment on the goals and strategy of the campaign, with similar understandings of the campaign's goals appearing across interviews. The goals identified through the interview process also match closely with the group's public communications and strategy documents. Comparing interview responses to the campaign's strategy documents, the primary goals, as listed above, were:

- Ending industrial expansion at Murujuga, the Burrup Peninsula (identified by 7 interview participants)
- Blocking Woodside's Browse project (identified by 5 interview participants)
- Damaging Woodside's social licence (identified by 5 interview participants)

Sub-goals can be identified as:

- Increasing community awareness on the issue, "branding the Burrup" (identified by 3 interview participants)
- Reigniting the WA climate movement (identified by 3 interview participants)
- Increasing public awareness of state capture and government/police collusion with Woodside (identified by 2 interview participants)

TARGETS

The campaign targeted Woodside, along with the state (WA) and federal governments. While the state and federal governments were positioned as the primary decision-makers who could prevent further expansion of Woodside's projects, the campaign also sought to target Woodside explicitly through material disruptions of work. The campaign did not attempt to engage politicians directly through lobbying. Instead, the aim was to use escalatory tactics to create "dilemmas" for politicians, making political support of Woodside impossible for both levels of government.

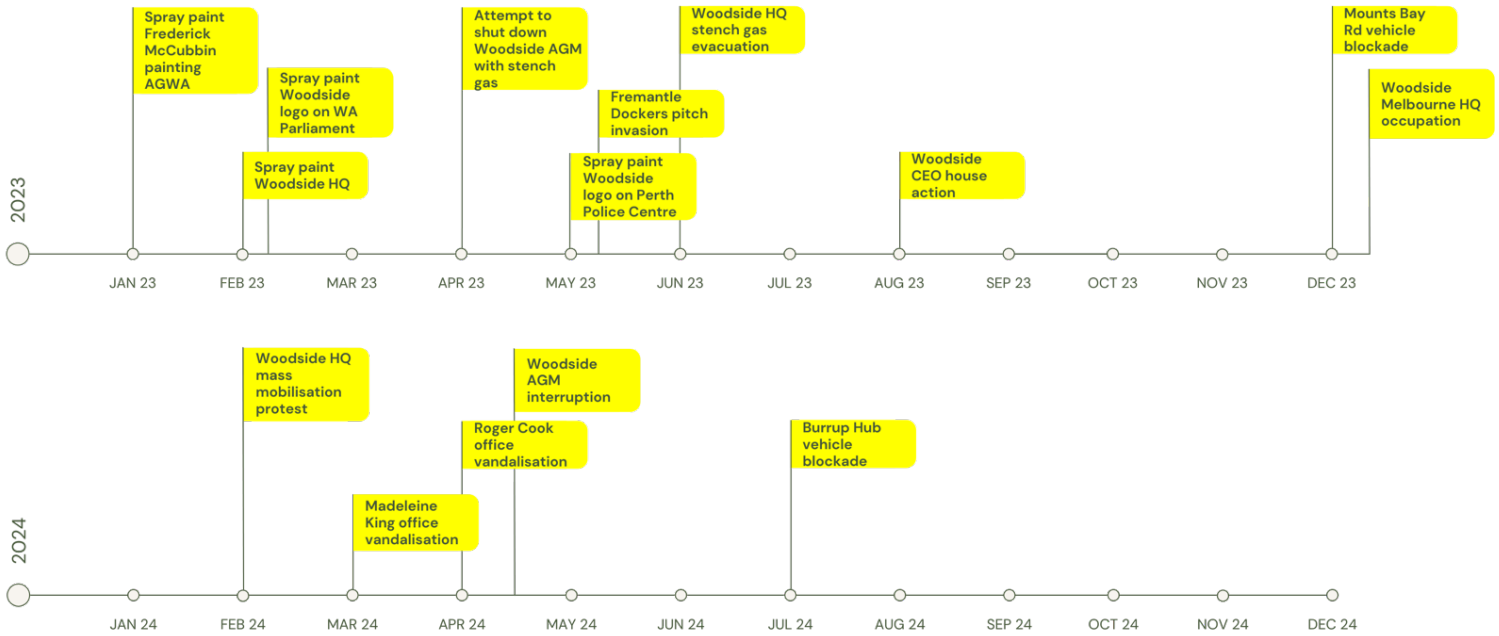
For several activists interviewed, having Woodside as a direct target was an important part of the Disrupt Burrup Hub strategy. This was seen as a distinction between Disrupt Burrup Hub and other activist groups popular in Western Australia, such as Extinction Rebellion. Woodside was cast as the "bad guy" or villain of the story, creating a strong narrative to share with the public. Additionally, by directly targeting Woodside and focusing on stopping specific core projects, the campaign created an achievable, time-bound goal to concentrate its energy on. This is particularly helpful in providing clear indicators for success.

ESCALATING TACTICS

> *"I think for the time and resources we put in; the benefit was maximized doing those sort of smaller quick media stunts." – Participant 1*
>
> *"I think we've done a really good job of creating a narrative, creating a media moment, creating a stunt. Some people criticise us because they say we just do stunts. But it gets cut through, it has had some kind of success" – Participant 3*

Disrupt Burrup Hub relied on escalating direct action tactics. These usually took the form of media stunts, designed to garner as much attention as possible, particularly from mainstream news. There were several core activists within the campaign who came from media and communications backgrounds, and this seems to have influenced an emphasis on strong storytelling and narrative impact within the group.

Disrupt Burrup Hub ran 15 core actions across 2023-24:



Graph 1: Timeline of major Disrupt Burrup Hub actions

Interviewees were generally very positive about the campaign tactics. They felt that the tactics were effective, used resources efficiently, and had a high impact. The main internal critique of tactics was in the process of escalation. Some participants felt that the campaign escalated too much, too quickly, leaving little room for further escalation later in the campaign. Tactics can be escalated in a variety of ways, for example, by escalating the type of tactic or form of non-cooperation, escalating the number of participants, or escalating the length of time for the actions. Disrupt Burrup Hub's tactics escalated from acts of vandalism (spray painting artworks, parliament, and Woodside headquarters), to using stench gas to shut down work (both at the company's annual general meeting, and at the company's Perth headquarters), to directly targeting the CEO's house. Later in the campaign there were instances of blockades used, for example the vehicle blockade at Mounts Bay Road in 2023, and the vehicle blockade at Burrup Hub in 2024. Broadly speaking, these tactics represented escalations in the form of non-cooperation and levels of militancy. The campaign also attempted to escalate the number of participants through the early 2024 mass mobilisation.

> "And I think we just had to keep escalating, because we found, and we knew from the outset that if we kept doing the same thing they would very quickly lose interest, and at one level the raison d'etre of the campaign was media interest, and making sure it was in the media, because that was deemed to be strategically where we could get our political impact. So we had to feed the beast effectively." – Participant 10

Despite the blockade actions arguably being the highest level of tactic escalation reached in the campaign, some of the campaigners interviewed considered the action at the Woodside CEO's house to be the "peak" of the campaign. While the action was disrupted by police, it produced high levels of media, particularly because of the ABC Four Corners episode that followed. This helped the group to achieve their sub-goal of "branding the Burrup" and increasing community awareness of the issue, while also drawing attention to the over-policing of activism in Western Australia.

Interestingly, the road blockade at Burrup Hub in 2024 produced less media coverage.[1] One campaigner observed that because Murujuga is relatively remote, it has been

[1] See the "Outcomes and Influence" section for a rough analysis of media coverage across the campaign timeline.

much harder to maintain community attention on the issue, comparing their efforts to the successful James Price Point campaign against Woodside.

> "Look, I think it's much harder using those tactics here, because the Burrup Hub's up north. I think, James Price Point, they're right there. So, I think that's what's been hard, getting people engaged." – Participant 9

The James Price Point campaign was deeply embedded in the local Broome community, with many of those participating and leading the campaign living locally (Paris 2019). National and international organisations joined in to support the local community to achieve their aims. The closest town to the Burrup Peninsula is Karratha, which has a similar population size to Broome. However, where Broome's top industries of employment are hospitals, accommodation and primary education, Karratha's top industries of employment are mining and oil and gas extraction, suggesting the local community may be less receptive to an anti-Woodside campaign (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021a; 2021b). It appears that members of the Disrupt Burrup Hub campaign have worked with traditional owners of Murujuga, particularly through the Save Our Songlines campaign. However, the campaigners interviewed for this project were largely based in Perth or in the south west of Western Australia. It's perhaps for this reason that the actions that took place in the Perth area achieved greater media attention. The campaign has had to work creatively to build the profile of the Burrup from a distance and give community members a sense of connection to the area.

TACTICAL CHOICES

> "And then, stench gas, the actual product we used being used on mine sites when no other emergency alarm can be heard. And we're using this to sound the climate emergency. Woodside and their investors haven't heard the alarm sounding from the global scientific consensus for the last 20 years. So what else can we do? And it just made like perfect sense to me at the time. I still think it was a very clever action." – Participant 1

Stench gas was used in two primary actions. The first attempt, at the 2023 Woodside AGM, was not successful as the action was interrupted by police before it was completed. The second attempt at Woodside's Perth headquarters, however, was successful, resulting in the evacuation of around 2,000 employees. One campaigner had reservations about the use of stench gas in these actions. They felt that this veered too close to the potential for violence, undermining the group's philosophy of non-violence.

However, others felt that there was a strong action logic and narrative that justified the use of stench gas.

There is evidence suggesting that extreme forms of protest can help to apply pressure to decision-makers and increase the profile of campaigns and movements (Feinberg, Willer, and Kovacheff 2020). However, likewise more extreme tactics are likely to reduce popular support for a campaign (Thomas and Louis 2014; Stephan and Chenoweth 2008). Researchers have described this as the "activist's dilemma", where protesters are forced to make choices between actions that reduce popular support, but may increase pressure and visibility (Feinberg, Willer, and Kovacheff 2020). Mark and Paul Engler identified five key factors that can help to determine if a disruptive protest is more likely to cause a backlash or bring in new supporters, including: how well the action is framed through the movement's demands, balancing disruption with sacrifice, telling a "heroes" and "villains" story with sympathetic actors and unsympathetic targets, having strong media and public relations capacities, and the timing of the action (Engler and Engler 2024). Disrupt Burrup Hub often positioned itself as the "radical flank" of the wider climate movement, helping to shift the Overton window and create space for more moderate demands and actions to appear more appealing (Haines 2022). Despite some of the internal debates about tactical choices, overall, the campaign has tended to maintain strong discipline, with each action undergoing careful planning and development.

In terms of action planning, activists talked about visiting action locations, creating maps, rehearsing stunts and building props in the lead up to each action. Teams appeared to work well together, forming tight bonds and supporting each other before, during and after the tactic was performed. However, there were some issues identified during interviews. For at least two actions, there were delays in building props and equipment needed, risking their cancellation. Importantly however, there were strong debriefs after the actions that allowed the participants to talk through planning issues and develop recommendations for future tactics. Things go wrong in any form of activism, however, giving space for learning and growing from these mistakes is an important indicator of a resilient campaign.

CREATING DILEMMAS AND A BACKFIRE EFFECT THROUGH TACTICS

Disrupt Burrup Hub's campaign theory of change states that they seek to "create **dilemmas for politicians** who will risk losing public support if they continue to facilitate Woodside's expansion of fossil fuels and destruction of culture" (quoted from the DBH Strategy H1 2024 document). Dilemma tactics are an important part of the nonviolent direct action playbook (Hunter 2015, 60). These tactics generally attempt to

create an impossible choice for the opposition, and a win-win situation for the campaign's goals.

> *"A dilemma demonstration is a tactical framework that puts power holders in a dilemma: if the action is allowed to go forward, it accomplishes something worthwhile related to the issue or position being asserted. If the power holders repress the action, they put themselves in a bad light, and the public is educated about the issue or position" (Duhamel 2004, 6)*

While all nonviolent direct action tactics create choices for authorities and oppositions, not all can be considered "dilemma" tactics. For an action to create a genuine dilemma, it needs to create an impossible, or extremely difficult choice for the target, with each choice creating a mix of negative outcomes for the opposition and positive outcomes for the campaign (see for example: Sørensen and Martin 2014, 75–76). If the opposition may, for example, easily choose to ignore the tactic, or even respond with force without inciting any public outrage, then a dilemma has not been created. Sørensen and Martin cite the example of a 1967 action by United States Quaker activists who sent a ship to deliver medical supplies to North Vietnam. In this action, the dilemma posed for the United States government was whether to allow the ship to deliver the goods or to stop the ship by force. In the first instance, the activists would create material benefit to their campaign by delivering aid, and in the second instance, the United States government would receive negative publicity for preventing humanitarian aid, generating greater coverage of the issue for the campaign (Sørensen and Martin 2014, 73).

For Disrupt Burrup Hub's tactics, the dilemma posed has generally relied on the backfire model, developed by Brian Martin (Martin 2012). The tactics have attempted to create situations where the use of force by authorities will create a social and political backlash. In many cases, the police have responded strongly to actions, not just in their immediate response but also in the longer term, often carrying out raids and intimidation tactics well after a Disrupt Burrup Hub action has taken place. As two activists described:

> "But I think the police response really worked in terms of a backfire effect for the campaign, publicity. And all that stuff really illustrates how it is in WA." - Participant 2
>
> "We would never have reached that intense moment that we had last year where there was just so much attention on us and we were really shaping the discourse a lot, that just wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for the way the police treated us and had special operation and surveilled us and what not. So we've been able to use it." – Participant 3

In this way, Disrupt Burrup Hub activists have attempted to use the excessive force they faced from the police as a way to generate greater publicity for the campaign, as well as demonstrating the relationship between the state and fossil fuel interests. As the campaign progressed, this helped to create dilemma moments for the state authorities, where they could either choose to ignore the protesters and allow Disrupt Burrup Hub actions to continue, or to continue responding with force, and potentially generating public sympathy for the activists.

However, in some ways it's hard to say whether these tactics have created genuine dilemmas for the political opponents of the campaign. The state has attempted to represent DBH activists as "extremists",[2] particularly to justify any use of force against the campaign (Ritchie 2023). This framing has often been taken up by large media organisations, such as *The West Australian* newspaper.[3] This makes it easier for the state to choose to respond forcefully without facing the consequences of a public backlash.

MOBILISATION AND BUILDING MASS SUPPORT

While "mobilise the public" was identified in the Disrupt Burrup Hub strategy documents as a core part of the theory of change, interviews revealed less certainty on the role of mass mobilisation in the campaign.

> "I think the attempt to mass mobilise was not successful. And that in hindsight, I think it was good that we tried it, but I don't think that's what our campaign ever was." – Participant 7

Interviewees described how in 2023 the campaigners had attempted to plan for a "moment of the whirlwind" ahead of the potential 2023-24 bushfire season (Engler and Engler 2016). At the time, there were some predictions of a catastrophic bushfire season, similar to the "Black Summer" bushfires of 2019-20. If these bushfires eventuated, the campaigners planned to draw on public outrage on the bushfires to mobilise large public participation in campaign activities, bringing in new members to the campaign and restoring energy back into the WA climate movement more broadly. However, the severe bushfire season as predicted didn't eventuate. Despite this lack of external impetus, the campaigners still attempted a mass mobilisation event in early 2024, through a protest outside Woodside headquarters.

[2] The WA emergency services minister, for example, claimed that the stench gas protest at Woodside's perth offices could be considered "an act of terrorism" (Ritchie 2023)
[3] See for example: Cockburn 2023; Curtis 2023; Hampton 2023

There were mixed opinions on the efficacy of this protest. Some interviewees felt that getting around 200 participants in the protest was relatively successful, however others felt it fell short of expectations for the event. There was a general consensus in the interviews that this protest led to the campaign shelving any further attempts at mass mobilisation, with many reflecting that the campaign was never designed for this kind of action.

In some ways this protest demonstrates a lapse in discipline for the campaign. While the plan was to wait for an external trigger event (Moyer 2001, 54), the campaign jumped the gun early, deciding to bring forward their plans for a mass mobilisation despite there being no public outrage on a catastrophic bushfire season to build on. Because they diverted from their original plan, the mass mobilisation didn't have the intended impact. This had a flow on effect for the campaign, with some interviewees expressing a sense of disappointment and frustration at the lack of momentum. Where many in the campaign were already feeling the effects of burnout and fatigue after a year of heavy police surveillance, the disappointment of this event may have contributed to a further reduction in capacity and energy within the campaign more broadly.

Key **strengths** in campaign strategy and tactics:

- Strong alignment between core campaigners on campaign goals and strategies, demonstrating a shared vision
- Targeted campaign with a strong narrative, clear villain and targets
- Creative escalatory tactics that generated high levels of media coverage for the issue

Key **challenges** in campaign strategy and tactics:

- Escalating too quickly
- Difficulty in engaging in material disruption of work given the distance to Murujuga from Perth
- Challenges in creating genuine dilemmas for decision makers in the face of opposition framing of tactics
- Challenges in mobilising the public and diverting from campaign plan when waiting for trigger events

GOVERNANCE, DECISION-MAKING AND ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

Beyond the mass mobilisation protest attempted in early 2024, there were challenges in more general attempts to bring in new members and grow the campaign beyond the initial core group. For some, the high security culture that came from increased police surveillance in the campaign made integration efforts more challenging. New members needed to be vouched to join, and it was difficult to encourage new people to take action, given the risks involved in participation. Interviewees also talked about being "control freaks" who wanted to maintain a tight narrative around their activities, making it difficult to see the campaign spread out into a distributed network.

One participant, who was involved in mobilisation and integration efforts, described how the campaign struggled to find spaces for new members when the core group worked so well together:

> "It was hard trying to find a pathway that worked to getting these people into some sort of regular commitment that wasn't joining the core group. I guess we all work so well together in the core group, it was like, 'Oh, we've sort of maxed out the number of people we need'. So, it was just finding different things for these people to do." – Participant 6

This core challenge, known as the "dilemma of growth", has been observed in many activist groups (Lakey et al. 1995). Disrupt Burrup Hub began with a "primary system" of organisation, a tight knit group of activists, with a simple structure, mobilising around a core issue (Lakey et al. 1995). In many ways, this is a more straightforward organisational form, that can be appealing in its simplicity, and as a way of forging strong connections between members. However, as the campaign began to build in momentum and attract new members, it was necessary to find a structure that could handle the additional complexity and growth. At this point, a working group structure was developed, with participants divided into core teams working on specific elements of strategy (strategy, actions, media and messaging, and mobilisation and integration). This is a clear example of moving from a primary to secondary system of organisation. As Lakey and colleagues describe, *"In primary systems people tend to feel connected strongly to each other and the group. In effective secondary systems people tend to know their roles, what's expected, and what success is" (Lakey et al. 1995).*

> “Changing it up to have the organisational structure was necessary in so many ways with the working groups and that kind of stuff. But it did kind of put out the vibe a little bit... then you end up only really talking when you need to, to do what you need to do. Maybe got a little bit task-focused, but then who knows, stuff might never happen if you don’t.” - Participant 2

While the working group structure appears to have helped define roles and provide a coherent structure, some participants did identify that spreading the work equitably, and bringing in new members remained core challenges for the group. Despite introducing the working group structure, from interview responses it appears that much of the work remained on the shoulders of the original core group of activists. This led to issues of burnout and exhaustion. Importantly, as these core members each faced legal repercussions for participation in Disrupt Burrup Hub actions, including non-association bail orders, maintaining momentum and capacity was a challenge.

> “The people carrying the bulk of the work, the number of people carrying that work just dwindled over time. And I think the people who were the core original crew, as we moved into the working group model, I think many of us took on those sorts of de facto leadership roles, a lot more responsibility in terms of carrying things out.” – Participant 7

One interviewee felt that this reduced capacity did impact on the campaign’s ability to do larger disruptions. However, others felt that Disrupt Burrup Hub was only ever envisaged as a short-term campaign, that would run between 1-2 years maximum. In this way, they felt the reduction in organisational capacity did not actually impact on the campaign’s ability to achieve its goals.

> “I don't think any of us had been in an activist group before that required the amount of security that DBH did.” – Participant 6

High levels of police repression, surveillance and even infiltration significantly impacted the overall capacity of the campaign. Non-association bail orders made organising as a group increasingly difficult. Campaigners also talked about the need to enact a high security culture, particularly in planning actions. Once the working group structure was enacted, the action planning group was kept separate from other

structures, with plans only being shared on a need-to-know basis. This was partly due to a suspected attempt to infiltrate the campaign by the police, and also due to the way the campaigners were being charged as conspirators to actions. The constant legal proceedings, fines and police repression also took a toll on individuals in the campaign, who expressed their feelings of burnout and exhaustion.

Importantly, however, participants overwhelmingly reported positive experiences of being supported by the group. This was described as a core strength of the campaign. The group intentionally prioritised developing strong bonds between members from the start. The early "climate camp", a weekend spent away together designing the campaign strategy, was reported as a fast and effective way to forge trust between the core team. This flowed through the campaign, with a strong emphasis on team culture and support. Activists who faced challenging legal repercussions from their stunts talked about receiving both symbolic support, in the form of kind messages and anonymous flowers in the mail, and material support, in the form of financial and legal aid. Even where moments of conflict were identified, the activists were able to draw on the strong sense of mutual respect and trust they had built within the group. This helped to increase the resilience of the campaign in the long-term.

The campaign primarily operated via consent-based decision-making. Consent-based decision-making usually calls for participants to think about their "range of tolerance", rather than asking for full agreement to a proposal (Rau 2022). In this way, even if the proposal may not be someone's first choice, it will go ahead unless there are specific objections to it. It asks participants to identify if there is any reason a proposal should *not* go ahead. If objections are raised, then the group will try to address them and amend the proposal as necessary. Interview participants were quick to point out that they had rarely had to deal with major objections, and they found that generally throughout the campaign they had an "easy consensus" to most proposals.

Key **strengths** in governance, decision-making and organisational capacity:

- Willingness to adapt and transform to different structures as the campaign grew
- Strong close-knit core group of activists with high trust
- High levels of support and care between activists (usually informal)

Key **challenges** in governance, decision-making and organisational capacity:

- Challenges in growing the campaign and bringing in new members
- Challenges in adjusting to the new working group structure
- Challenges in spreading the work equitably between campaigners
- Challenges with police repression impacting campaign capacity

LEADERSHIP AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

"I've definitely learnt so much from being involved in the campaign." – Participant 4

The campaign helped to provide skills development and leadership opportunities for many of the activists involved. Numerous participants talked about the skills they had developed from their involvement. This ranged from technical skills, such as using the Action Network platform, to building practical activist skills in planning and executing effective direct-action tactics.

"In terms of empowering/disempowering, I think this kind of stuff is always a bit of a mix of both. It is empowering just in the sense of: it has granted us more power than we had beforehand, to shape discourse and culture and what not. So, I feel like we've all been empowered in a concrete sense. It does take its toll... I've definitely become tired, it's definitely worn me out. And I think I need a break." – Participant 3

There were mixed responses in terms of activists' feelings of empowerment. While activists felt that they had been empowered by the campaign in terms of their voice and ability to affect change, there was also a sense that the legal repercussions they faced had taken a serious toll. Many reported feeling fatigued or burnt out after over a year of campaigning. The overall capacity of the campaign appears to have been impacted by this, with some core members deciding to take time out from the campaign in 2024.

> "..it was never a decree like 'this is what's happening', but very much like, the conversations had been had, with 'mum and dad' behind closed doors, and then once they had had time to establish what their position was, and how they felt about it, and process everything, then that was brought to the group. And what it felt like sometimes is 'this is a decree from us'." – Participant 7

One campaigner did express frustration that power within the group tended to concentrate towards a couple of core members, and this was reiterated by some of the other interviewees. Where the campaign attempted to build a non-hierarchical leadership model, natural leaders inevitably emerged. Similar dynamics have been identified across social movement spaces, famously articulated as the "tyranny of structurelessness" by Jo Freeman (Freeman 1972). For Freeman, formal structures are a strong way to avoid the concentration of power among "elites" within a group. Disrupt Burrup Hub attempted to build these structures through the development of their working groups, but as described above, struggled in the uncertain space between their original primary organising system and the newly formed secondary organising system. The group found it difficult to evolve beyond the original core members and spread leadership responsibilities out further among different members.

Key **strengths** in leadership and skills development:

- Strong skills development among activists
- Opportunities for activists to take on leadership roles in the working groups

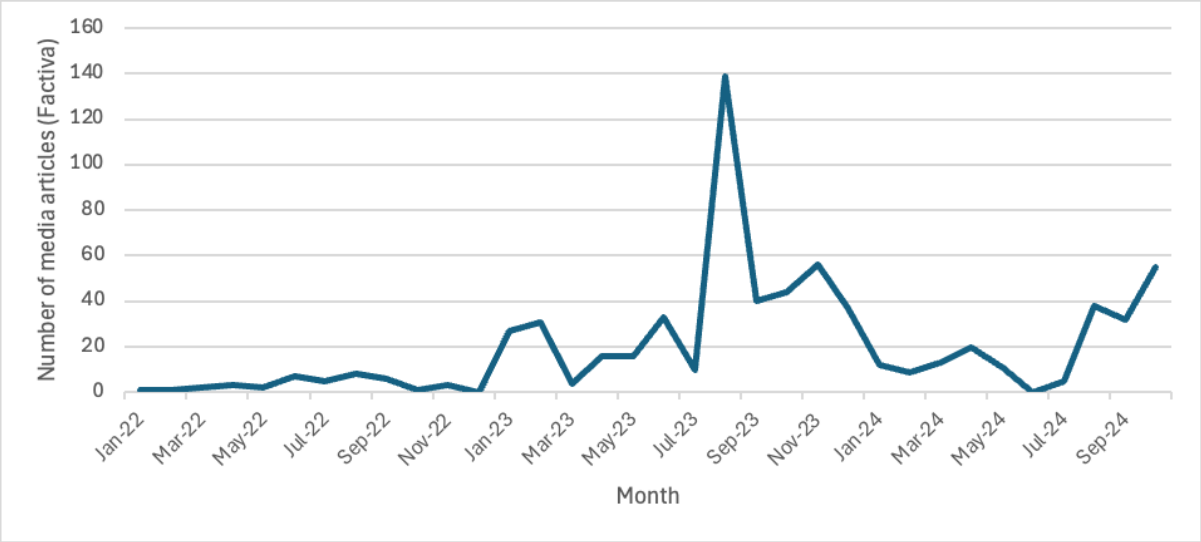
Key **challenges** in leadership and skills development:

- Legal challenges faced by activists causing feelings of disempowerment and burnout
- Concentration of power among a few core activists

OUTCOMES AND INFLUENCE

BRANDING THE BURRUP: INCREASING COMMUNITY AWARENESS

The campaign has successfully helped to improve community awareness of the Burrup Hub. Graph 2 shows the number of media pieces on the topic of "Burrup Hub" from January 2022 until October 2024.[4] Across the year 2022, the numbers remained relatively steady, with limited media coverage of the issue. However, as of January 2023, there was a sudden uptick in the number of articles. This directly coincided with the first major Disrupt Burrup Hub action, where two activists spray painted the Frederick McCubbin painting "Down on His Luck" at the Art Gallery of Western Australia. 93% of the articles on "Burrup Hub" for the month of January 2023 were covering this protest. There was another large swell in media coverage in August 2023, again coinciding with a Disrupt Burrup Hub action, the planned action at Woodside CEO Meg O'Neill's house.



Graph 2: Number of media pieces on "Burrup Hub" by month.

There were many articles that negatively framed the activists and their actions, particularly through the Seven West Media owned newspaper *The West Australian*. However, the campaigners did not feel that this negative coverage of their campaign was detrimental to the issue, instead using it as an opportunity to point out the

[4] The Factiva database was used for this research. While Factiva does not offer a comprehensive view of media coverage, only covering limited publications, it allows for a general analysis of reporting trends over time. Actual numbers of articles and media pieces will be higher than reported through Factiva. Factiva was the database available to the researcher.

influence of the gas industry on corporate media. In this way, even negative media coverage was able to be used as evidence of the broader issues of power and injustice within the Western Australian petrostate.

> "There's often been very negative media... But the way that the campaign has been designed, it hasn't mattered. It's actually kind of been good, and in some ways we've relished the negative media. A key part of the dynamic has been the conflict between us and the West Australian newspaper. And we've used that as much as they have." – Participant 3

Where the issue of Woodside's gas projects at the Burrup Hub had previously struggled to get media cut through, Disrupt Burrup Hub's creative actions helped to bring the issue to the forefront of conversations not just within Western Australia, but nationally.

DAMAGING WOODSIDE'S SOCIAL LICENCE

One of Disrupt Burrup Hub's aims was to damage Woodside's social licence. A social licence to operate refers to "the perceptions of local stakeholders that a project, a company, or an industry that operates in a given area or region is socially acceptable or legitimate" (Raufflet et al. 2013). It is difficult to assess one particular campaign's direct influence on a company's social licence. However, there are some key indicators that suggest Woodside's social licence has degraded somewhat recently. This cannot be attributed directly to Disrupt Burrup Hub but does help to demonstrate whether this campaign goal is being achieved. Some of these indicators include:

- 58% of Woodside shareholders rejecting the company's climate plan at the 2024 annual general meeting (Barrett 2024)
- The WA EPA forming a "preliminary view" that the Browse project was "unacceptable", where it has a history recommending against only two out of 100 oil and gas proposals over the past 40 years (Morton 2024)
- A slight increase in Western Australians who believe the government should stop approvals for all new coal, oil and gas projects in 2023 (63% in 2023, compared to 55% in 2022 and 57% in 2021), with Western Australians standing out compared to other states in 2023 (Morison 2023; Quicke and Venketasubramanian 2022; Quicke 2021)

Despite these positive indicators, Woodside still appears to hold political support within Western Australia. For example, in October 2024, the WA government made significant changes to its environmental policy, which meant the EPA would no longer

regulate emissions when deciding whether to approve highly polluting development proposals (Shine and De Kruijff 2024). This suggests that despite evidence of changing community and stakeholder attitudes, the work to create dilemmas for politicians and power holders remains, as the WA Labor government appears relatively unswayed in their approach to the fossil fuel industry. This is of course not an indication of failure on the part of the campaign. Campaigns and social movements are long processes that undergo peaks and troughs. Building wide public support is often an important precursor to success (see for example: Bill Moyer's "Movement Action Plan" in Moyer 2001). The evidence of shifting stakeholder and community expectations is a positive indication of progress towards the overall campaign goals.

MATERIAL DISRUPTION: BLOCKING BROWSE AND ENDING INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION AT MURUJUGA

As outlined in the previous section, Woodside still holds political influence in Western Australia. Despite some progress towards the overall goal, there has not yet been a definitive win in blocking the Browse project or ending Woodside's expanding operations at Murujuga (as of writing). This section will therefore focus on instances when the campaign was able to materially disrupt Woodside's operations. The Disrupt Burrup Hub campaign materially disrupted the operations of Woodside at three primary moments. First, the campaign stopped work at Woodside headquarters during the 2023 stench gas evacuation. After a Disrupt Burrup Hub activist released stench gas inside the Perth headquarters, employees evacuated the building for around four and a half hours (Burton and Milne 2023). Second, the campaign disrupted the proceedings of the 2024 annual general meeting. Three Disrupt Burrup Hub campaigners interrupted the AGM, addressing Woodside executives and describing the impacts of Woodside's projects on their children. The action resulted in the AGM being halted for "several minutes" (Disrupt Burrup Hub 2024). Finally, the campaign disrupted Burrup Hub site access via a road blockade in July 2024. Two activists locked-on to concrete barrels sitting inside a boat and a car, allowing them to block access to the only road into the Burrup Hub site.

Each of these actions demonstrate how the campaign was attempting to target multiple points of intervention to interrupt Woodside's ability to function (Reinsborough and Canning 2017). The first two, the action at the Woodside headquarters in Perth and the action at the Woodside AGM, represent interventions at points of decision by directly targeting Woodside's executive and headquarter operations (Reinsborough and Canning 2017). Meanwhile the Burrup Hub road blockade represents an intervention at the point of destruction (Reinsborough and Canning 2017). As the location of the Burrup Hub makes it relatively easy for Woodside to keep its operations there out of the public

eye, intervening at this point of destruction was a powerful way to attempt to bring the public's attention directly to this site.

However, it's important to note that these actions also involved only temporary, short-term disruptions to Woodside's operations. Given the size and capacity of the campaign there were no attempts to enact longer-term blockades or disruptions. Some of the activists interviewed were keen to see these kinds of longer-term blockades of the Burrup Hub and Woodside's operations in the future. They particularly noted that given the level of escalation the campaign had already reached, the next "logical step" in the campaign against Woodside would be through long-term blockades. Whether this should come from the original "Disrupt Burrup Hub" campaign group, or from a new campaign that has yet to emerge, remains in question.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE DISRUPT BURRUP HUB CAMPAIGN?

Towards the end of the interviews, participants were asked where they saw the Disrupt Burrup Hub campaign going next. The majority of participants recognised that the campaign was in a transition period. Some saw the campaign winding down, supporting the upskilling of other groups, and perhaps a new campaign taking its place. Others saw the need to escalate tactics further through blockades and direct targeting of fossil fuel sites. The key themes that emerged were:

- Supporting and upskilling other climate activists and groups, and taking opportunities to collaborate and build networks (identified by 5 interview participants)
- Escalating tactics further to longer-term blockades and direct targeting of fossil fuel sites (identified by 5 interview participants)
- Maintaining the community, resources, brand and networks that have been built during the campaign and not letting these go to waste (identified by 3 interview participants)
- Maintaining fundraising and support for legal proceedings (identified by 2 interview participants)
- Claiming wins for the Disrupt Burrup Hub campaign and making sure that Disrupt Burrup Hub's contributions are recognised (identified by 2 interview participants)
- A new campaign taking the place of Disrupt Burrup Hub (identified by 2 interview participants)
- Engaging in snap actions based on trigger events (identified by 1 interview participant)

It was clear that there were some activists who were intending to take a break or wind down their involvement with Disrupt Burrup Hub. Others, however, were concerned about abandoning the campaign before Woodside's projects had been stopped. It's possible that those with the energy to do so will continue to take action, however, whether this happens under the banner of Disrupt Burrup Hub is yet to be seen.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE DISRUPT BURRUP HUB CAMPAIGN

Below are some examples of lessons that might be taken from this campaign. However, we encourage the campaigners to use this review as an opportunity to discuss their own learnings and lessons.

1. When the issue is out of view, the campaign needs to find creative ways to get coverage

2. Use a direct target to tell a powerful story

3. Plan and rehearse actions carefully, and give time for debriefs afterwards

4. Be willing to change organisational structures as the campaign grows to prevent concentration of leadership and activist burnout

5. Building trust is important when engaging in nonviolent direct action

6. Stick to the plan but be ready to pivot as circumstances change

USEFUL RESOURCES TO FACILITATE LEARNING

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- Bruce Tuckman's stages of group development
- Dilemma of growth
- Circles of Commitment / Ladder of Engagement / Engagement Pyramid
- Leaderful Organizing collection

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

- Brian Martin's backfire effect model
- Action logic

- Escalating strategically
- Dilemma demonstrations
- Points of Intervention
- Bill Moyer's Movement Action Plan
- How to make sure your disruptive protest helps your cause
- Movement Power: The science of non-violent direct action
- CounterAct collection on the Commons Library

CASE STUDIES

- Ingredients for Wins: Lessons from Successful Climate Justice Campaigns in North America
- James Price Point campaign case study
- Campaigns that changed Western Australia

EVALUATION

- Understanding and assessing your organization's strategic capacity
- Measuring your impact
- Campaign monitoring and evaluation: measuring what matters
- More evaluation resources

CONCLUSION

Disrupt Burrup Hub has been a small but powerful campaign in the broader Western Australian climate movement. The campaign has focused on three primary goals: ending industrial expansion at Murujuga on the Burrup Peninsula, blocking Woodside's Browse project, and damaging Woodside's social licence. These were supported by three sub-goals: increasing community awareness of the issue, reigniting the WA climate movement, and increasing public awareness of state capture. In order to achieve these goals, the group primarily relied on escalating direct action media stunts to bring maximum publicity to the issue and put pressure on power holders.

There have been many strengths to the campaign, for example:

- Powerful narrative, with clear villains and specific goals
- Well-rehearsed, disciplined actions
- High levels of trust between members of the core group
- High levels of support and care shown between activists in the group, particularly in the face of police repression

- Strong media cut through, that allowed the group to raise the profile of the issue with the public and stakeholders

There have also been some key challenges:

- Challenges in bringing in new members and mobilising the public
- Challenges with burnout and spreading the work equitably between members, and moving from a primary to secondary organisation system
- Challenges in engaging in material disruption of work given the distance to Murujuga from Perth
- Hostile mainstream media environment, particularly from the West Australian newspaper
- Hostile political environment and heavy police surveillance and repression

In terms of the outcomes related to the campaign goals, there are positive indicators that the public is more aware of the issue since the start of the campaign, particularly given the increased media coverage attributable to the campaign. There is also some external evidence of damage to Woodside's social licence, although this cannot be directly attributed to the campaign. The campaign did manage to materially disrupt the operations of Woodside on at least three occasions, however these tended to be short-lived. Overall, in a short amount of time and against a particularly hostile political environment, the campaign has managed to achieve a great deal for the issue. There are valuable lessons from this campaign for activists across the Australian climate movement.

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