

Sheehan, M. & Xavier, R. (Eds.) (2009). *Public relations campaigns*. Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.

Reviewed by: [Damian J. Gleeson](#)

This informative collection of case studies reflects the extensive industry experience and senior academic positions held by its contributors. The editors, Mark Sheehan and Robina Xavier, have made a welcome addition to the otherwise fairly sparse Australian and New Zealand public relations academic literature. Each chapter is clear and well laid out, and supported by a solid set of references. Several chapters include a brief 'practitioner profile'.

The early chapters focus on the nature and theory of PR campaigns, including succinct overviews on contemporary public relations theory and research methodology, which may be mostly applicable for first year undergraduate students. The first chapters framework for campaign planning surprisingly omits reference to funding. Might this omission imply that public relations practitioners are not dominant players in recommending or determining budget for campaigns? The introductory discussion on 'ethical implications of campaigns' (p 8-9) could perhaps have been extended and more fully integrated within some case studies.

Chapter 2, 'Overview of Twentieth-century Campaigns' traces the transition from publicity to strategic campaigns and provides important contextualisation about the development of public relations in Australia and New Zealand. It complements the writings of Clara Zawawi on the professions history in Australia. There remains scope, however, for a fuller study pertaining to both countries. Pleasingly, the significant role played by Sir Asher Joel is mentioned (p. 14).

Research methodology and campaign evaluation are well covered in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

Public Relations Campaigns also includes ten case studies, covering diverse areas of PR practice, including issues, risk and crisis communication, financial PR, community engagement, media and government relations, and employee communications. Space permits comment on just a few.

Dr Kristin Demetrious provides a solid examination of a community relations study of a Victorian provider of disability services. The importance of risk communication is well articulated by Chris Galloway in his study of Toowoomba, a regional Queensland city, facing the imminent danger of inadequate natural water supplies. The close nexus between events management, public relations and lobbying is deftly described by Joseph Peart in his focus on New Zealand's successful bid for the 2011 Rugby World Cup.

In light of ongoing media controversy about James Hardie Industries and relationship its key publics, Dr Gwyneth Howells article is topical and well recommended for students specialising in crisis management studies. This case study clearly demonstrates different approaches taken by Hardie in handling crises in 2001 and 2004, and subsequent impact on organisational reputation. Undoubtedly, Hardie provides further scope for practitioner and academic debate.

Public Relations Campaigns should generate wide interest and is well recommended especially to emerging PR practitioners and academics. In universities with a specific unit/course in PR campaigns it will be a strong contender to become the set text; other educators may find it a useful reference for their capstone PR unit.

If the editors are considering a revised, and hopefully expanded, edition, they might include another campaign from the large, and rapidly expanding, non-government 'third sector'. Anglican, Catholic, and Jewish organisations in the charitable and health policy arenas, for example, have become quite adept at undertaking public relations campaigns that seek to uphold the 'common good' in an increasingly materialistic society.

About the reviewer: *Damian J. Gleeson, BA, M Com (Hons), G Dip Prof Comm, PhD, is Senior Lecturer, Public Relations in the School of Business at the University of Notre Dame Australia (Sydney Campus). He has held senior public relations positions in the corporate and not-for-profit sectors. His teaching and research interests include public relations theory, crisis management and ethical communication approaches.*