

# The Development of Field Campaigning in the Australian Greens Party

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## Glossary of Abbreviations

AGV                      The Australian Greens Victoria

ECC                      Election Campaign Committee

GNSW                      The Greens NSW

GOTV                      Get Out The Vote

gVIRS                      Greens Voter Interaction Recording Software

HTV                      How to vote card

MP                      Member of Parliament

QG                      Queensland Greens

# Abstract

Election campaigns are an important mechanism of political communication for political parties and candidates to help voters decide on their elected representatives. Following the US example, mass field campaigns are an emergent part of electoral party campaigns in Australia. Yet, despite the increasing role that field campaigning plays in elections, it is understudied and poorly defined. This thesis contributes new knowledge about the development of field campaigns and the factors that influence this development in Australia using a detailed case study of the Australian Greens party.

The study is situated within a political communications framework of 'eras' in political campaigning (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck 2006; Norris 2000) and incorporates theory defining the sources of these developments (Plasser & Plasser 2002; Semetko & Tworzecki 2017). The methodology combines in-depth interviews with 20 professional field campaigners from state and federal offices of the Australian Greens using the principles of grounded theory. Data are analysed thematically using manual and computer coding (NVivo software) to examine the development and history of field campaigns in the Greens since 2008, its use in political communication and the role that data and technology have played in this development. The study's findings detail the relationships between field campaigning and party organisation and identity. The thesis contributes a new typology of the civic functions of field campaigns to show that its role is much broader than simply the aim of winning elections. An original threefold definition of field campaigning is developed. In doing so, the thesis contributes to political communication scholarship and offers a more comprehensive definition and understanding of field campaigning from an Australian perspective.

## Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the relevant Ethics Committee or authorised officer.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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### Background

In the years since United States President Barack Obama's 2008 election to office, field campaigning has developed significantly, and Australian political parties have adopted many of the United States' campaigning insights. Yet, there has been little research on how Australian political parties have developed field campaigning as a significant element of contemporary political campaigns. This thesis addresses this critical gap in academic knowledge of electoral campaigning. Field campaigning has the potential to influence the relationship between citizens and their electoral system and sway the outcomes of elections. It is therefore vital to understand what field campaigning is, how it works, where it comes from and why parties believe in its effectivity. This thesis takes a case study approach and analyses how field campaigning has developed in the Australian Greens between 2008 and 2021 and identifies the main factors that have shaped this development.

The term 'field campaign' lacks a clear and unified definition within academic literature; its meaning is typically implied by context. This thesis builds upon existing scholarship to marry academic definitions of field campaigning with campaigners' understandings. In brief, field campaigning is defined here as the activities of a political campaign that intend to have a one-to-one conversation with a voter or directly support this purpose. The relationship between the activities and



purpose of field campaigns is shaped by the strategy. Discussions of field campaigning have typically referred to traditional activities of field campaigning, such as door-knocking (Nielsen 2012, p. 14). However, contemporary field campaigns have evolved alongside technology and the mass use of data (Nielsen 2012, p. 37). Direct voter contact may take place across any medium that supports one-to-one communication, including phone calls, texting and social media, and is supported and enabled by a range of digital tools. This thesis' approach is to define field campaigning by its purpose, activities and strategy. In doing so, this approach accommodates changes across time and campaigns.

## **The Australian Context**

The differences between electoral systems and cultural norms between countries cast doubt on whether international findings translate to the Australian context. Australia's mandatory voting system gives field campaigns a fundamentally different purpose than in many other countries. Mandatory voting removes the need for parties to identify and then encourage supporters to vote; known as mobilising or get out the vote (GOTV) campaigns. Instead, political parties have historically focused on influencing voter choice through media and advertising (Ward 2003). However, in recent years persuasive campaigning has been increasingly conducted through direct voter contact.

Media accounts and scholarly literature indicate that field campaigning efforts have become a significant focus of Australian political campaigns, developing in line with

campaigns in Western liberal democracies (Kefford 2021; Mills 2014a; Ward 2003). The 2013 federal election marked a turning point where a significant, targeted, and data-driven field campaign became the new standard within Australian electoral campaigns. The Australian Labor Party's then National Secretary, George Wright, saw these changes as a way of modernising Labor's campaign efforts by adopting methods of 'direct and individual, one-on-one conversation and voter engagement' (Wright 2013, p. 7).

Data from the Australian Electoral Study<sup>1</sup> further evidences this shift towards field campaigning. The number of Australians contacted by a candidate or campaign rose from 29 per cent in 2004 to approximately 60 per cent from 2013 onwards (Cameron & McAllister 2019, p. 11). In turn, the rate of volunteering or working for a candidate or party jumped significantly from two per cent in 1998 to 10 per cent of Australians in 2019 (Cameron & McAllister 2019, p. 13). Australian political parties have intentionally shifted to field campaigning, changing the way Australian citizens engage with and experience their electoral system as both voters and volunteers.

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<sup>1</sup> The Australian Electoral Study is a national survey conducted after every federal election since 1987 and intended to provide data on voters' opinions and electoral choices. For more information, see <https://australianelectionstudy.org/>.

## Theories & Frameworks

To explore field campaigning and its development, this thesis draws upon a variety of theories and frameworks. These are employed to analyse the sources of change in field campaigning and the eras of development of political campaigning.

The development of political campaigning is described and categorised by theorists through a framework of 'political eras'. These frameworks consider the different areas of a campaign — such as media or party structure — and describe the degree to which they develop over time and in different contexts (Plasser & Plasser 2002, p. 4). Campaigning does not shift from one era to another in a single move across parties and within all countries (Norris 2000, p. 149). Era frameworks are intended for use in comparing the development of political campaigns internationally by accounting for their contextual differences and adaptations (Plasser & Plasser 2002, p. 5).

The sources of change in political campaigning have been understood variously as Americanisation, modernisation, and globalisation (Mills 2014b; Plasser & Plasser 2002). These theories are used to describe the evolution of political campaigning, offering differing accounts of how new campaigning practices emerge and spread internationally (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck 2006, p. 12). Notably, these theories can overlap. For example, proponents of Americanisation do not dismiss the role of technology and professionals in political campaigns, but argue that the methods created by US campaigners using this technology are then mirrored internationally (Plasser & Plasser 2002, pp. 16–17).

The literature review in Chapter Two explores theories of field campaigning in greater depth. These concepts are used to discuss field campaigning's development in the last twelve years within the Greens.

## **The Importance of this Research**

Recent scholarly work, such as that of Kefford (2021), has detailed contemporary field campaigning in Australian campaigns. However, there is an absence of detailed knowledge of how and why field campaigning efforts have changed over time, and how Australian political parties aim to persuade voters through field campaigns. Understanding the nature of electoral field campaigning and its evolution through the perspectives of professionals in the field is vital due to its potentially significant influence on elections (Mills 2012, p. 145). As the general public is the target of these campaigns, and campaigns contact a large proportion of voters during each federal election, an understanding of the field methods used and their intended effects is essential as it may impact the 'relationship between citizen and state' (Mills 2012, p. 145). Field campaigning is the most direct form of contact many voters have with the electoral system and their potential representatives, so it is crucial to understand the nature and function of this contact. Moreover, field campaigning requires the engagement of thousands of volunteers, shaping their understanding of political parties, electoral processes and the role of citizens in democracies.

## The Research Approach

This research uses semi-structured interviews with practitioners of field campaigning from the Australian Greens party. The Greens are chosen as a case study as they have relied heavily on field campaigning throughout their modern history. This is due to the party having comparatively small budgets and low media coverage, yet a large and active membership with a focus on local issues (Throsby 2018, p. 159). The professionalisation of campaigning has been well documented in Australia (Mills 2014b; Throsby 2018). This existence of campaign professionals indicates a significant and ongoing body of working knowledge to be captured through interviews. Through these interviews, this research contributes an understanding of how contemporary field campaigning has developed in the Australian context. It examines the type of campaign activities adopted by the Greens, their scale, and the usefulness ascribed to them by party campaigners. Furthermore, the findings are used to develop an original definition of field campaigning and a typology of contemporary field campaigning's functions for the party.

## The Research Aim

This research aims to analyse how field campaigning has developed in the Australian Greens since 2008 and to identify the main factors that have shaped this development. To understand this development, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1: How do field campaigning practitioners within the Australian Greens understand the concept of field campaigning?

RQ2: How were contemporary field campaigning practices originally adopted by the Australian Greens?

RQ3: To what extent have the Australian Greens incorporated new forms of technology into their field campaigning?

RQ4: Has the organisation of the Australian Greens affected the way field campaigning has developed, and has field campaigning had any consequences for party organisation?

RQ5: What are the major benefits and limitations of field campaigning, according to practitioners within the Australian Greens?

These questions are systematically addressed by each of the results chapters and the academic literature that has informed these questions is discussed in depth in the literature review in Chapter Two. This research uses semi-structured interviews with practitioners of field campaigning within the Greens to answer these questions. These interviews were conducted until they reached the point of data saturation, after which the data collected was analysed following grounded theory methods (Corbin & Strauss 2008). An in-depth discussion of the methodology follows in Chapter Three.

## The Scope of this Research

While the purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of field campaigning in Australia, there are some limitations. It should not be assumed that the methods and understandings of Greens field campaigners are shared with campaigners from other parties. However, there will be overlap.

The intention of this research is primarily to understand the experiences of field campaigning practitioners, and their perspectives on field campaigning. Some campaign methods are considered proprietary by political parties and their members, and it is likely that interviewees will withhold information that they consider sensitive. While a significant limitation, this is widely documented as being an issue in researching political campaigning (Lilleker 2003, p. 212). The historical focus of the research is expected to lessen this limitation, as older information regarding field campaigning will likely be less sensitive. Additionally, by triangulating information across several interviewees and publicly available party documents, the impact of any omission should be minimised.

This research is not intended to answer 'outcome questions' regarding electoral field campaigning, such as whether field campaigning is an effective method for persuading voters. Instead, by understanding field campaigning as its practitioners understand it, this research creates a typology of contemporary field campaigning, and the functions and efficacy attributed to it by campaigners. The motivation for conducting field campaigns is formed from their perceived functions and efficacy. Without evidence for, or belief in, these methods, parties would not continue to commit significant resources to field campaigns.

## Outline of the thesis

Chapter Two proceeds with a literature review, placing this study within the broader context of existing campaign scholarship. This overview shows the gaps in academic knowledge of Australian field campaigning and gives context to the research questions posed by this study. Chapter Three explains the methods used to answer these research questions.

Drawing from interview data, Chapter Four describes the sources of field campaigning methods and how practitioners understand field campaigns, developing an original definition with three elements. The voter interaction at the heart of field campaigning is discussed and used to elucidate the differences between the strategies employed by the Greens. Chapter Five focuses on the use of data and technology in field campaigns, analysing the drivers of change. In particular, the adoption of technological tools is found largely to be driven by attempts to make field campaigning an increasingly efficient and user-friendly process. This chapter's discussion addresses the role of data and technology in the centralisation of power within the Greens party. It considers the use of technology and data to situate the party's field campaigning efforts within the framework of eras.

Chapter Six focuses on the relationship between field campaigns and party organisation, indicating how each has influenced the other. The process by which field campaigning decisions and strategies are made is described and discussed in relation to professionalisation and centralisation. Three of the state Greens parties – Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland – are detailed case studies, used to



analyse the impact of context, party organisation and culture on the development of field campaigning. The last of the findings chapters, Chapter Seven, focuses on the themes that emerge from the interviews regarding the benefits and limitations of field campaigning's functions. An original typology of the functions of field campaigning is developed, and the efficacy and limitations of field campaigning considered.

Finally, Chapter Eight draws out the findings of the previous chapters, summarising and synthesising the answers to each research question. It discusses this thesis' contributions to scholarship by expanding upon understandings of the development of field campaigning and indicates the value of this knowledge. Lastly, this chapter considers the limitations of this research and important avenues for future research.

# Chapter 2

## Literature Review

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Field campaigning is the most direct form of contact between voters and political campaigns and operates as both a personal and highly strategic interaction. This chapter refers to research regarding 'field campaigning' and 'political campaigning'. These terms are *not* used interchangeably. Political campaigning is a broader discipline encompassing all aspects of an electoral campaign, including the use of media, party structure and leadership. Field campaigning is one element within this.

Field campaigning relates to several other areas of study. Farrell and Schmitt-Beck (2006, pp. 1–2) note that political campaigns sit at the intersection of political science, communication studies and sociology. As such, field campaigning is a sub-discipline of this intersection. To understand its development, this chapter draws upon a range of literature and disciplines to frame the research questions of this thesis. This literature review discusses the stages of development in political campaigning and the sources of these changes. It considers field campaigning's conceptual underpinnings in mobilising voters and community organising principles and looks to studies of field campaigning's impacts and efficacy in other electoral contexts. Party organisation and its relationship to field campaigning is examined. Finally, this chapter discusses what has been established regarding the use of field campaigning by the Greens.

# Defining Field Campaigning

Before continuing this discussion, a fundamental question must be addressed. What is a field campaign? There is no explicit definition of what activities are included in field campaigning within existing scholarship. It is generally characterised as the activities of a campaign that establish direct contact with voters, and the background work that supports this (Burton & Shea 2010, p. 191; Kefford 2018, p. 665; Mills 2013). Within political communication literature, these activities are described as personalised political communication (Nielsen 2012) or direct voter contact (Burton & Shea 2010, p. 191; Kefford 2021, p. 94; Mills 2020, p. 465). Traditional methods of campaigning, such as door-knocking or handing out how-to-vote cards (HTVs), are typically included in this category (Burton & Shea 2010, p. 191; Kefford 2021, p. 7; Mills 2013).

In recent years, field campaigning has grown in scale and has increasingly made use of data and technology. These developments have attracted renewed scholarly attention (Kefford 2021, 2018, p. 670; Mills 2014a; Nielsen 2012, p. 37). Contemporary field campaigning activities include peer-to-peer texting, voter contact phone-banks, and data entry. The scale and effectiveness of field campaigning is largely invisible to the public and academia due to its reliance on one-to-one communication (Young 2015, p. 104). To establish a firm understanding of the scope of field campaigning, its activities, and its development in the Greens, this research poses the following question:

**RQ1: How do field campaigning practitioners within the Australian Greens understand the concept of field campaigning?**

# Sources of Change in Political Campaigning

This thesis uses three theories for understanding the sources of changes within political campaigns: modernisation, Americanisation, and globalisation. The significant difference between these theories is in what they propose to be the cause of these changes (Table 2-1).

Modernisation argues that developments in political campaigning are the result of – and a response to – ongoing developments in media, society, and politics in democracies (Plasser & Plasser 2002, pp. 16-17). Americanisation runs counter to modernisation in viewing these developments as the product of a distinctly US system, spread from the US to other states – for example through the work of US campaign consultants overseas (Plasser & Plasser 2002, p. 16). According to Plasser and Plasser (2002, p. 19) Americanisation can occur in one of two ways: ‘implementation’, meaning the selection and use of particular US campaigning techniques alongside existing ones; or adoption, where the entirety of US campaign strategy and tactics are transposed to a foreign context.

*Table 2-1: Sources of change in electoral campaigning*

<b><i>Modernisation Approach</i></b>	<b><i>Americanisation Approach</i></b>	<b><i>Globalisation</i></b>
A consequence of the <b>Modernisation</b> of media systems and voter-party relationship, often first occurring within the US	A consequence of the <b>Transnational Diffusion</b> and implementation of US concepts and strategies of electoral campaigning	A consequence of the increasingly <b>International Diffusion</b> and implementation of concepts and strategies from a wide range of sources and political systems

*Source: Author adapted from Plasser & Plasser (2002, p. 17) and Semetko & Tworzecki (2017, p. 302).*

The last proposed source of change — globalisation — is less well established in academic literature. Globalisation is strongly associated with Semetko and Tworzecki's (2017, p. 302) and Roemmele and Gibson's (2020, p. 605) fourth era of political campaigning, which links contemporary campaign methods to an 'increasingly interconnected world' in which parties and candidates draw methods from a wide variety of international contexts. As with Americanisation, this model can involve either 'shopping' for individual tactics or adopting them in their entirety. This thesis seeks to explain the development of field campaigning within the Greens, drawing on these three perspectives in an Australian context. This leads to the next research question

**RQ2: How were contemporary field campaigning practices originally adopted by the Australian Greens?**

## **Frameworks for Understanding the Development of Political Campaigning**

Political communications scholarship divides political campaign developments into three distinct eras (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck 2006; Norris 2000). The first is defined by localised and direct communication. The second is defined by the use of mass media and advertising to broadcast a unified campaign message. The third era is a hybrid – combining elements of the previous two by synthesising advertising efforts with direct voter contact, both now informed by a highly targeted and data-driven campaigning approach (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck 2006, pp. 10–11; Norris 2000,

p. 138; Plasser & Plasser 2002, p. 6). Despite its focus on the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK), this scholarship was developed to compare political campaigns internationally (Plasser & Plasser 2002) and its applicability in the Australian context has been demonstrated (Ward 2003).

More recently, there have been assertions that political campaigning has entered a 'fourth era', although there is little consensus regarding its features beyond noting the rise of digital media and the increasing use of campaign methods from an array of international sources. Roemmele and Gibson (2020, p. 602) and Semetko and Tworzecki (2017, p. 302) define this era by the extensive use of data and micro-targeting; and by campaign methods such as the use of misinformation, populist rhetoric and the undermining of traditional media, originating in illiberal states (Roemmele & Gibson 2020, p. 602; Semetko & Tworzecki 2017, p. 302). Magin et al. instead define the fourth era by direct communication between candidates and voters and by a focus on the individual; whom the campaign seeks to inform, interact with via direct communication, and mobilise (Magin et al. 2017, p. 1701). Although the authors view this interaction and communication as taking place online, its focus and principles may be applied to contemporary field campaigning.

An additional framework for understanding political campaigning developments is the notion of 'professionalisation'. Mills (2014b, pp. 6–13) defines professional campaigns as campaigning that involves paid roles requiring technical competence, experience and commitment. Targeted field campaigns have also been included as an indicator of professionalisation (Tenscher, Mykkänen, & Moring 2012, p. 163). This mirrors the conclusions of the era frameworks; that targeted field campaigning is an indication of the development and sophistication of a

campaign. The techniques and development of the Greens' field campaigns are considered in the first research question (RQ1). The use of data and technology, and its impact on the development of field campaigns is considered in the next research question:

**RQ3: To what extent have the Australian Greens incorporated new forms of technology into their field campaigning?**

## **Field Campaigning & Community Organising**

Contemporary field campaigning relies on practices and concepts drawn from community organising. However, there are meaningful differences. Community organising intends to build power within communities over years by collaborating with communities to define and fight for their needs (Tattersall 2015, p. 382). In contrast, field campaigning typically seeks short term electoral mobilisation to effect political change, placing less emphasis on building long-term relationships within communities (Ganz 2018; Ganz & McKenna 2017; Tattersall 2015, p. 382). Electoral field campaigning is typically thought to require a more centralised campaign structure to achieve unified and clear messaging, undermining the decentralised nature of community organising methods (Green & Gerber 2015, p. 21; Schutz & Sandy 2011, p. 119).

The methods of two community organisers— Marshall Ganz and Saul Alinsky — serve as the foundation for most contemporary practices. Alinsky has been described as the 'father of community organising' and trained community

organisers across the US (Schutz & Sandy 2011). Amongst these was Ganz, who in turn trained Obama during his years as a community organiser in Chicago. Ganz was appointed to train community organisers for Obama's 2008 US presidential campaign (Schutz & Sandy 2011, pp. 114–115). Following Obama's success, the use of community organising principles and practices proliferated globally.

The principles taught by Alinsky and Ganz have remained remarkably unchanged for decades. They are summarised as a belief in the power and strength of building communities, personal relationships, and entrusting volunteer leaders with significant responsibility (Bond & Exley 2016; Ganz 2018; Tattersall 2015, p. 382). The belief in personal connection as a tool to effect change is demonstrated through the use of techniques such as Ganz's (2011) personal narrative or 'story of self', in which a speaker shares a personal narrative with a voter in order to communicate shared values and form a connection.

Recent literature has defined community organising in contrast to mobilising. The distinction between these two approaches to campaigning is the focus of works by Han (2014) and McAlevey (2016). Their descriptions agree on the primary difference; where community organising focuses on building the power of the base, mobilising is defined by centralised control and shallow, or even performative, grassroots involvement. The major distinctions are illustrated in Table 2-2.



*Table 2-2: Mobilising and Community Organising Differences*

	Mobilising	Organising
Strategy	Take people where they are, allowing for immediate and low barrier involvement in isolated campaigns.	Build leadership and power. Isolated campaigns fit into a broader strategy to build collective power over time.
Structure	Primarily elite. Centralised responsibility in the hands of staff or a few key volunteers.	Primarily grassroots. Distributed responsibility out to a large network of volunteers.
Approach	Choose strategies that use quick engagement or rely on messaging.	Choose strategies that build people's engagement over time. Mobilising techniques can be used as a strategy, but not a defining approach.
Asks the campaign makes of volunteers	Focus on discrete requests allowing people to act quickly and alone.	Focus on interdependent asks that are often more time-intensive, require working with others and give people strategic autonomy.
Support	Minimal resources or staff time needed for training and reflection.	Requires extensive resources and staff time for training, coaching and reflection. Develop skills and leadership in the grassroots.

*Author adapted from Han (2014, p. 9) and McAlevey (2016, pp. 10–12).*

There are differences in Han and McAlevey's accounts as to whether mass-scale campaigns should be understood as mobilising or as community organising. McAlevey's definition of organising emphasises the idea of mass recruitment and involvement. In contrast, Han understands mobilising as mass, if shallow, engagement. Due to the short-lived nature of electoral field campaigns and the need to garner the support of a majority in each electorate, it is reasonable to suspect that elements of both mobilising and community are employed by political parties.

Scholarly literature does not typically detail the use of mobilising and community organising concepts in electoral campaigns. Some exceptions include the works of McKenna and Han (2014), Nielsen (2012) and Ganz (2012). Within election campaigns, community organising is described as the effort to recruit and retain volunteers who are encouraged to take on significant campaign responsibilities (Ganz 2012). However, unlike traditional community organising, power is not built within the community and is not maintained outside of election periods. Literature regarding community organising in Australian elections is limited primarily to Kefford's (2021, p. 106) discussion of Alinsky and Ganz's influence on the Greens and the Australian Labor Party; Stephen Mills' news commentary on election campaigns (Mills 2016, 2014a, 2014c); or confined to discussions of the union movement and civic organisations (Beck & Purcell 2013; Holgate 2015; Tattersall 2015). Therefore, while the use of community organising principles in party electoral campaigns has been established, the role that these principles play in the electoral campaigns of political parties is not well understood. Whether these concepts underpin the Greens' field campaigns is considered in RQ1.

## Party Organisation Theory

The relationship between party organisation and campaigns can be considered through Katz and Mair's (1994) three 'faces' of political parties: the party in public office, the party on the ground, and the party central office. The second face, that of the party on the ground, refers to a party's members and activists (Katz & Mair 1994, p. 594). This face forms the 'foot soldiers' of field campaigns. However, when

considering the relationship between party organisation and field campaigning, we are essentially considering the relationship between the party on the ground and the party central office; 'the national leadership of the party organization which... organizes and is usually representative of the party on the ground' (Katz & Mair 1994, p. 594). To understand field campaigns, it is vital to understand the roles and responsibilities of these 'faces' in planning and conducting campaigns.

There are a number of differing perspectives on how power or decision-making functions in party organisation theory. Power may be theorised as being held absolutely by a level of the party or as shared, with levels holding overlapping decision-making powers. However, these powers do not need to be thought of as mutually exclusive. As put by Carty in his discussion of parties as stratarchies, 'mutual autonomy does not necessarily imply either indifference or independence: the very idea of mutuality suggests interdependence' (Carty 2004, p. 7). Deepening our understanding of stratarchical power structures, Cross argues that these levels may hold each other to account: 'a 'checks-and-balances' approach in which no single level has absolute authority within any of the party's principal decision making areas' (Cross 2018, p. 208). In his discussion of the relationship between electoral campaigns and stratarchical party structures, Kefford (2018, p. 668) finds that campaigns encourage power-sharing, mutual interdependence, and most notably, mutual autonomy. While localised campaigns shift power to the sub-national level, the increasing role of digital campaigning leads to a further concentration of power in the hands of the national party, and therefore leads to increasingly stratarchical power structures (2018, p. 669). This suggests that rather

than fundamentally shifting power from one level to another, developments in campaigning alter the roles and responsibilities of different layers of the party.

The activist genesis of the Greens party has shaped the party's structures, rules and institutions, and these have in turn likely influenced the way in which field campaigns have developed. In their work tracing the transition of Green parties in various countries, Rihoux and Frankland (2016) describe how Green parties develop from activist-amateur origins. From activist beginnings, they assert that Greens parties adapt and often professionalise as part of this process (Rihoux & Frankland 2016, p. 280). However, Rihoux and Frankland argue that this adaptation occurs more slowly for the party on the ground (Rihoux & Frankland 2016, pp. 280–281). The stratarchical structures common to Green parties leads this adaptation to result in what Rihoux and Frankland describe as 'centaurs': the party in public office and party central office professionalise, while the party on the ground maintains amateur-activist features (Rihoux & Frankland 2016, p. 281).

The Australian Greens party is typified, both by academics and in its own publications, as a confederation of state parties, a form of federation in which greater autonomy is given to the separate parts of the whole (Australian Greens 2021; Miragliotta 2012, p. 104). Federal party organisations are expected within federal political systems such as Australia's, due to the need to contest elections at a subnational level (Miragliotta 2012, p. 100). The history and formation of the Greens has led to a further devolution of power to the subnational level. As Miragliotta discusses (2010), the party was formed through the confederation of a number of independent Green parties at the state level. This led to great variation in the values and procedures of each state, and the national constitution still allows

for significant autonomy. There is evidence that electoral success has driven the party to centralise further (Miragliotta & Jackson 2015). However, as Miragliotta (2010, p. 419) notes, while hierarchies may be present on paper within the Greens, those at higher levels of the party are largely representatives of the subnational levels and are unlikely to be willing to enforce this hierarchy. Even if they had the will, they lack the power to do so because of the division of powers within the confederation. Under the Greens' constitution, the state parties retain members' dues and the power to determine policy, which is then coordinated and organised by the national party (Miragliotta 2010, p. 149). This view corresponds with that of Jackson (2016) who argues that 'while the Greens have a national structure... as a party that places a high importance upon local activism there is an implicit bias towards the local group/branch' (Jackson 2016, p. 99). As noted by Lilleker (2005), even when faced with centralising pressures, ultimately the leadership of parties relies on members and supporters as foot soldiers in their electoral campaigns (2005, p. 573). This notion is extended within the Greens, and manifest in the party's core pillar of grassroots representative democracy ('The Four Pillars' 2021).

The organisation of the party and the various roles and responsibilities at the national, state and electorate levels is likely to have had a significant influence on the Greens' development of field campaigns. Understanding how party structure has influenced the development and type of field campaigns conducted by the Greens will also allow for considerations of how widely applicable the findings presented here are. The influence of party organisation on the development of field campaigns, and the potential impact of field campaigns on party organisation is considered in the next research question:

RQ4: Has the organisation of the Australian Greens affected the way field campaigning has developed, and has field campaigning had any consequences for party organisation?

## How Effective are Field Campaigns?

Although Australian parties have adopted field campaigning methods, their use is potentially limited due to the nature of the Australian electoral system. Ward (2003) argues that the combination of preferential voting and mandatory voting in Australia may cause parties to concentrate campaigning efforts in marginal electorates where there is a high likelihood of success. This makes it unlikely that Australian parties will adopt US-style, nation-wide field campaigning, as there is little political advantage in doing so. The main goal of campaigning in a system with mandatory voting is voter persuasion rather than voter mobilisation, and there is little evidence that field campaigning is effective at the former (Kefford 2018, p. 657). However, Kefford (2021, p. 110) has noted that Australian party campaigns are beginning to engage with GOTV campaigning – intended to mobilise voters – in an effort to combat low voter enrolment and turnout.

There is reason to doubt the effectiveness of field campaigns for persuading voters, despite the success often attributed to them. Gerber and Green's (2015) comprehensive review of existing research on field campaign practices – such as door-knocking – primarily assesses field campaigns' ability to produce voter mobilisation. Mobilisation is the subject of most research due to the prevalence of

US scholarship. The findings of field experiments designed to measure the effects of voter contact in persuading voters range from positive to negative impacts (Bailey, Hopkins, & Rogers 2016; Kalla & Broockman 2018). In their review of 49 field studies of voter persuasion in US electoral field campaigns, Kalla and Broockman (2018, p. 163) concluded their effects amounted to 'essentially zero'. However, recent work by the same authors (2020) considering how exclusionary attitudes may be reduced through conversation suggests that persuasion efforts are most impactful when drawing upon emotion and values. Their findings are supported by other recent scholarship, such as Kubin et al.'s (2021) study indicating that personal experiences bridge partisan divides and disagreements more effectively than facts. These findings lend empirical weight to community organising methods, and in particular, the use of personal narrative. However, it is important to note that neither was applied to an electoral contest.

Farrell and Schmitt-Beck's book *Do Political Campaigns Matter?* answers the titular question with "it depends". They list several factors that may impact a campaign's effectiveness, including strategy, context, policy, voters and media (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck 2006, pp. 186–192). This list alone suggests the difficulty in researching field campaigning due to the significant role of context and the number of influences that may contribute to a voter's decision, coupled with the difficulty in studying one-to-one interactions. Further, there has been no extensive academic research into the effects of party field campaigns in persuading voters in Australia. Most detailed writing on this development arises from journalistic efforts, and its facts are sourced from the parties themselves. There is therefore a need to question the size and efficacy of field campaigning efforts in Australia (Nielsen 2012, p. 230).

Despite the lack of conclusive or local evidence, parties continue to dedicate significant and increasing resources to field campaigns. This is likely driven by their belief in its efficacy. Kefford (2021, p. 109) summarises the assessments of campaign efficacy as described by Australian party campaigners as 'between 1.2 and 1.6 per cent of the two-party preferred vote'.

There are suggestions that field campaigning possesses effects other than, or in addition to, voter mobilisation or persuasion. Farrell and Schmitt-Beck (2006, p. 13) note that potential campaign effects may encompass the intentional and unintentional, and impact voters, volunteers, and parties. Norris (2000, p. 318) identifies what she describes as 'a virtuous circle' through which attention or interaction with politics is reinforced by positive engagement. She speculates — somewhat optimistically — that as increasingly diffuse and niche audiences are exposed to news and politics this leads to increasing civic engagement (Norris 2000, p. 389). This raises considerations of what — if any — other impacts may be produced by field campaigning and how effective persuasion efforts are. Among the aims of this research is to understand what effects practitioners believe field campaigning has on political behaviour, particularly voter choice. As such, the next research question is:

**RQ5: What are the major benefits and limitations of field campaigning, according to practitioners within the Australian Greens?**



## Field Campaigning & the Australian Greens

Field campaigning has long been a defining feature of the Greens, due to the party's activist genesis and lack of campaign funding in comparison with the major parties (Throsby 2018, p. 159). Since 2008, the party's field campaigning methods have become increasingly complex as the Greens embraced data management systems and increased the use of well trained, semi-professionalised volunteer organisers (Kefford 2018, pp. 661–662).

In Jackson (2016) and Manning's (2019) works describing the history and development of the party, field campaigning is mentioned in passing. Jackson (2016, p. 144) refers to a belief amongst Greens volunteers that electoral activities are the most important contributions they can make. Manning (2019, p. 309) attributes the Greens' success in the federal electorate of Melbourne in 2013 to organising and data-management practices introduced to the party by a campaigner who had been on exchange with Obama's 2012 campaign. The Australian National University's election reviews have also noted a US influence (Bartlett 2015, p. 218) and have commented that 'a key element of Greens' campaigning has to be the ground campaign' (Jackson 2018, p. 305). However, little detail or evaluation of the Greens' field campaigns has been presented in this literature.

The academic literature discussing the Greens' field campaigning practices in the greatest depth has been conducted by Kefford (2021, 2018), and Throsby (2018). Kefford's earlier (2018) work sought to understand the role of party structures upon campaigning, whilst Throsby's (2018) thesis examined the role of undecided voters

in Australian elections. Each of these studies employed interviews with members of Australian political parties, including the Greens. The results provided new knowledge of the sophistication and strategic importance of field campaigning within the Greens but were limited in scope. This is largely because while each considers field campaigning, it was not the primary concern.

Kefford's (2021) book is to date the most extensive original research regarding field campaigning in Australia. This book explores contemporary campaigning as conducted by the Australian Labor, Liberal and Greens Parties, and investigates the role of data-driven campaign practices. Kefford refers to field campaigning as 'the dominant mode of campaigning in Australia' and notes its impact on the increased role of non-member supporters in political parties (Kefford 2021, pp. 12–13). His work offers insight into contemporary field campaigns and the role played by data and theories of change such as community organising, before concluding that Greens field campaigns are best understood as a form of community organising (Kefford 2021, p. 111). Kefford also notes that in addition to helping parties win elections, field campaigns were seen by his interviewees as a way for parties to engage with communities, suggesting additional impacts that require further exploration (Kefford 2021, p. 112).

While Kefford's (2021) work signifies a substantial scholarly contribution to knowledge of Australian field campaigns as they are currently conducted, this is a rich topic with many areas yet unexplored. Using the research questions developed in this chapter, this study seeks to provide a detailed case study of the development of the Australian Greens party's field campaigns over time. In particular, there remains little understanding of *how* Australian field campaigns have developed and

what factors have shaped this development, and this research addresses these gaps in knowledge. To do so, this research project explores the changes to field campaigning through interviews with field campaigning professionals within the Greens.

## Conclusion

While there exists wide-ranging international literature that can be drawn upon to inform this research, there is limited scholarly knowledge regarding electoral field campaigning's development in the Australian context or within the Greens specifically, despite it being a crucial form of civic engagement and political participation.

Drawing upon existing understandings of the development of political campaigns, community organising and contemporary field campaigning, and considering what has already been shown of the Greens' focus on field campaigning, it is evident there are unanswered questions about the development of this form of political campaigning in Australia. The existing literature discussed in this chapter informs future work by identifying where further research is required, and in developing frameworks and theories that are used to discuss new findings. Due to the limited information available, the ensuing research is qualitative, offering rich detail that seeks to fill gaps in existing knowledge. The following chapter discusses the case study and method chosen and why in-depth interviews were considered fit for purpose.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology

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### Introduction

This study aims to understand the development of field campaigns in the Australian electoral context. To do so, it undertakes qualitative research using the exploratory case study of the Australian Greens, conducting semi-structured interviews with campaigners. Interview questions were framed by the research questions developed in the previous chapter:

- RQ1: How do field campaigning practitioners within the Australian Greens understand the concept of field campaigning?
- RQ2: How were contemporary field campaigning practices originally adopted by the Australian Greens?
- RQ3: To what extent have the Australian Greens incorporated new forms of technology into their field campaigning?
- RQ4: Has the organisation of the Australian Greens affected the way field campaigning has developed, and has field campaigning had any consequences for party organisation?
- RQ5: What are the major benefits and limitations of field campaigning, according to practitioners within the Australian Greens?

These research questions inform the methodological approach. A political party case-study using semi-structured interviews can answer 'why' and 'how' questions due to their exploratory and evaluative functions (Ritchie & Lewis 2003, p. 28; Yin 2014, p. 29).

As Chapter One outlined, this research seeks to discover the experiences and beliefs of campaigners over years and elections. The subject matter is deeply rooted within the knowledge and experiences of party campaigners with specialised roles, and therefore a single approach qualitative research model is most appropriate (Ritchie & Lewis 2003, pp. 32–33). In-depth interviews were chosen as this method affords insider knowledge of actions and events that take place out of public sight (Lilleker 2003, p. 208). This model is used in similar research and is best suited to creating knowledge and exploring case studies in which there is little existing publicly accessible information (Kefford 2021, 2018; Throsby 2018).

## **The Interviewees**

After attaining university ethics approval, prospective interviewees were sought. They were contacted via email through publicly available information published on the Australian Greens Victoria website. From these initial interviewees, chain sampling – in which interviewees were asked to suggest prospective interviewees – was used to reach more potential participants (Ritchie & Lewis 2003, p. 94). Chain sampling was the most appropriate method available, as Australian party campaigners are typically difficult to publicly identify (Mills 2014). Despite being a

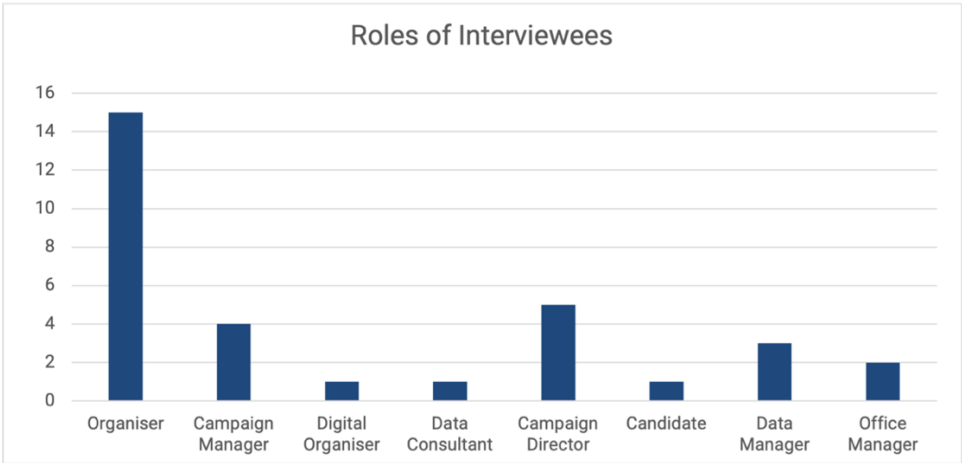
useful way to identify prospective interviewees, particularly those considered important or influential with the party, chain sampling had some limitations. Each interviewee only provided one or two prospective interviewees to contact, and each further interview took around two weeks to secure, making this a slow process. Additionally, chain sampling is limited by the interviewee's contacts within the party, which are often limited to their region or state. These limitations were overcome by persisting until interviewees from a wide array of contexts were found. In total, 22 interviews were conducted with 20 individuals with professional experience and insider knowledge of the Greens' field campaigns. Interviews were conducted in two distinct rounds in July to early August of 2020 and April to June of 2021. Selection criteria for interviewees were developed to ensure they had sufficient campaign knowledge and experience:

- a) Held a core position in the Greens between 2008-2021
- b) Involved in a minimum of three campaigns involving extensive field campaigning
- c) Held a role directly relating to field campaigning, either through strategy, resourcing or organising

The interviewees represented a wide range of experiences related to field campaigning. They had held a range of roles including, but not limited to, campaign manager, lead organiser, data manager, candidate and elected representative. The roles are summarised in Table 3-1. The numbers represented in this table exceed the total number of interviewees, as many interviewees had changed roles over the course of their time with the Greens. This allowed for an overview of field

campaigning as viewed from different perspectives and specialisations. The majority of interviewees had volunteer experience in field campaigning before holding core organisational positions. Consequently, their experiences spanned both professional and volunteer work. Interviewees were each assigned a random number, such as Interviewee 12, to protect their anonymity. These numbers do not reflect the order in which they were interviewed, due to the risk of identification from the use of chain sampling. Where relevant specific roles have been mentioned, care has been taken to ensure that this does not identify the interviewee. Consent to the use of quotations was also reaffirmed prior to submission.

Table 3-1: Table outlining the roles of interviewees

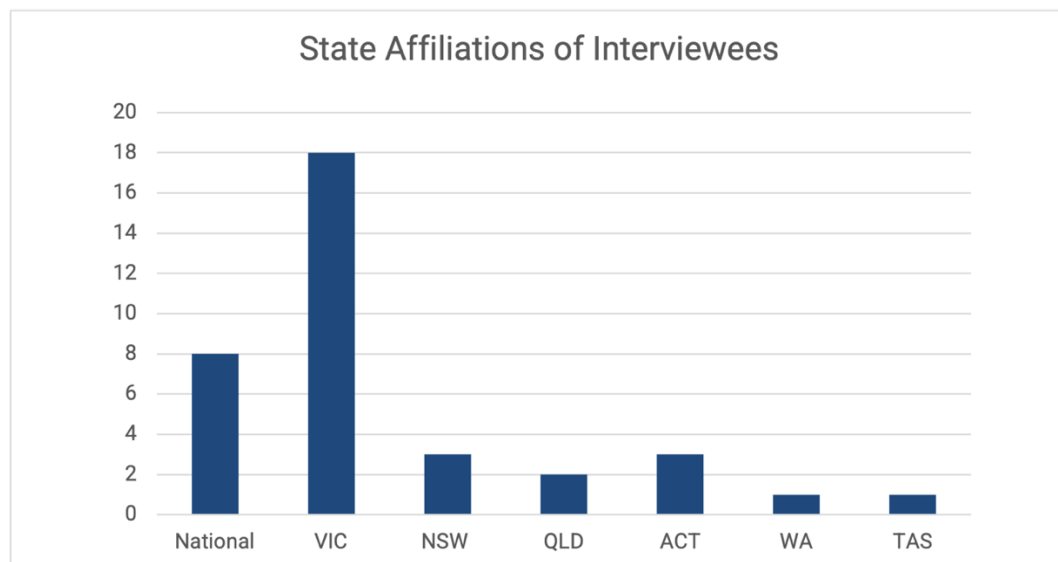


Source: Author using data from interviews.

In addition to the variety of roles and experiences, the interviewees’ had worked in the majority of the states and territories of Australia (see Table 3-2). The representation of states and territories is approximately proportionate to the number of staff hired by each, leading to the significant representation of Victoria. Additionally, interviewees with experience working at the national level have given insight into field campaigning’s role and development nationally. Most interviewees were from metropolitan areas, with only two interviewees having primarily worked

in a rural setting. While this could be considered a limitation, it is reflective of where field campaigns are conducted by the Greens.

*Table 3-2: Table outlining the state affiliations of interviewees.*



*Source: Author using data from interviews.*

*N: 30*

*Note: Numbers here exceed total number of interviewees due to multiple roles held.*

The expertise and diversity of experiences represented by the interviewees meant a relatively small sample size was sufficient, as rich qualitative data and expert interviewees with diverse experiences typically lead to data saturation with smaller samples (Mason 2010, p. 2). Whether saturation – the point at which no new data emerges – had been reached was judged through ongoing analysis and coding of themes throughout the interviewing periods. As 'data saturation is not about the numbers per se, but about the depth of the data' (Fusch & Ness 2015, p. 1409), few new themes emerged after six interviews in the 2020 round and after five interviews in 2021.



## The Interviews

The interviews were conducted over Zoom in two rounds in July to early August of 2020 and April to June of 2021. Each interview had a typical duration of one hour. Zoom was used due to the Covid-19 pandemic and practical considerations regarding what was appropriate and possible. The disadvantages when using online video conferencing software are access to and aptitude with the required technology (Archibald et al. 2019, p. 5; Nehls, Smith, & Schneider 2014, pp. 146–147). The use of Zoom was not a significant barrier for this cohort of interviewees. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Anonymity was a concern for many interviewees, and therefore, interviewees were deidentified prior to transcription. Anonymity was discussed with the interviewees at every stage of the interview process and relied on their informed and ongoing consent (Heggen & Guillemin 2012, pp. 474–475).

The interviews were semi-structured, using open-ended questions and allowing for follow up questions to gain further detail or clarity as needed (Morse 2012, p. 197). The interview questions were refined prior to the second round of interviews to reflect a slight shift in the research focus and to remove questions that did not result in usable data (see Appendix A for all interview questions). While this improved the quality of responses in the second round of interviews, it meant that some questions were posed to fourteen of the twenty interviewees, reducing the sample size. However, many interviewees from the first round commented on topics that were added to the interview questions for the second round, such as party organisation, leading to their later inclusion. As such, this limitation is not considered substantial, and data saturation was reached.

The flexibility of semi-structured questions was appropriate because, as shown in the literature review, the broad scope of this topic is known, but the detail is not (Morse 2012, p. 197). This allowed the interviewer to adapt to the variety of perspectives – and therefore answers – offered by participants from different professional backgrounds in field campaigning, and to engage in active listening with appropriate follow up questions.

## Data Analysis

Transcriptions and recordings were reviewed and analysed throughout the research process using a grounded theory method drawn from Corbin and Strauss's *Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (2008). Grounded theory methodology is understood by Corbin and Strauss as building theory from qualitative data. Through the iterative analysis of data, patterns and structures emerge, and are defined using the participants' understandings of phenomena and language. The first round of interviews was annotated and coded by hand, but once the research was expanded in 2021 to include a second round of interviews, this process was assisted by the qualitative analysis software tool, NVivo. This choice was made in response to the difficulty of manual analysis. Transcripts were inductively coded using NVivo. For a full list of codes used in NVivo and their relationships see Appendix B. Themes were identified and reviewed throughout the process for relationships and redundancies. This was appropriate as thematic codes were added based upon each transcript individually, rather than seeking only themes that had already been identified. As the process continued,

some of these codes were found to be functionally the same or to require further detail. For example, rather than using separate codes for “National Election Campaign Committee” and “Victorian Election Campaign Committee”, these were merged into the broader category of “Election Campaign Committee” and coded with the relevant level of the party. Other themes were found in only one or two interviews and were only kept when they represented a significant development. For example, themes regarding online volunteering from the only digital organiser interviewed were considered representative of a significant and ongoing development. Coded themes were then further developed into categories to consider their relationships. For example, “fundraising” and “expressing party identity” were included in the parent code “impact to party”. Following grounded theory methodology (Corbin & Strauss 2008), notes, memos and transcripts were kept throughout and periodically reviewed during the research process to inform and develop analysis. Notes included key points of interest, topics for further exploration and the process by which themes were identified and which transcripts best exemplified the emerging themes. This iterative and reflective form of analysis allowed for inductive findings — as is appropriate for this research’s exploratory purposes — and ensured any findings were supported by multiple sources (Yin 2014, p. 142). From these findings, the typologies and theory (discussed in the following chapters) were developed.

## Conclusion

The research questions developed in the previous chapter were intended to encourage detailed answers drawn from the expertise and experience of Greens field campaigners. The methodology described above is an appropriate research choice due to the depth and detail required to explore field campaigning. This chapter has outlined how this thesis intends to answer the research questions through interviews with campaigners. The following four chapters detail the interview findings and discuss these in relation to the research questions and scholarly literature, while the final chapter summarises the contributions of this thesis and how it has advanced theory.

# Chapter 4

## What is a field campaign?

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*"It's all part of the campaign, but where do you draw that arbitrary line? So, is it voter contact? In which case it's the tip of the spear... If you want to broaden it out then it's, to a certain extent, everything we do is involved in field campaigning, because all of it, the whole purpose of it all is to lead up to people on doors, on the phone, using their persuasive conversation techniques to shift votes" (Interviewee 1).*

### Introduction

As the above quote illustrates, defining field campaigning is not always straightforward. The ultimate goal of any party campaign is to win votes, and to win elections. If field campaigning is one of the primary methods by which this is achieved, as it is with the Greens, then everything the party does contributes to the field campaign. The party's policy platform gives volunteers policy to promote, campaign strategy decides which suburbs they door knock, and preselection provides a candidate to rally support behind.

To provide definitional clarity this chapter uses interview data to develop a detailed classification of field campaigning from the perspective of Greens campaigners.

This definition is found to have three distinct elements that this chapter will examine. They are *purpose*, *activity*, and *strategy*. Purpose is the intent of the field campaign: to achieve direct voter contact. Activity refers to the activities a field campaign conducts to achieve this purpose. Strategy is the thinking that shapes how the purpose and activity interact. Although field campaigning is primarily intended to gain votes, there is disagreement within the party about whether the best way of achieving this is by focusing on the volunteer or the voter. The two field campaigning strategies identified in this chapter highlight this difference in emphasis.

This chapter begins by outlining the international sources of the Greens' field campaigning strategies and practices. Particular attention is given to the influence of US campaigns and community organising, before considering how field campaigning methods have since diffused globally. The three elements of field campaigns –purpose, activity and strategy – are then defined in detail. This chapter then examines the voter interaction itself, illustrating how it relates to the strategies and how the Greens' field campaigners view the voter and their motivations. These findings are then considered in relation to the broader literature. This discussion highlights the contribution of this definition of field campaigning to existing scholarship as a more multi-faceted definition than previously asserted. Finally, the similarities and relationship between the field campaigning strategies of the Greens and the documented campaigning strategies of unions and civic associations are identified and discussed.

## Sourcing, Adapting and Diffusing Field Campaigns

Field campaigning strategies and methods used by the Australian Greens have been significantly influenced by US field campaigning approaches. This influence has been actively sought by the party, and US campaigns and campaign strategists continue to be the most dominant source of new field campaigning practices. Every campaigner interviewed noted US campaigns and thinkers as a source of new field campaigning practices, far outstripping the influence of any other country (see Table 4-1). When affiliated with a party, these US sources were always related to the Democratic Party.

The Greens' field campaigning methods were identified by the majority of interviewees as sourced and adapted from the practices used in Obama's presidential campaigns. From 2012 onwards the Greens hired campaigners with experience in US elections and sent campaigners on exchange to the US. This shift to more US-style campaigning had two major outcomes: an increased emphasis on data and strategy; and the use of Obama-style field campaigning methods. The increased emphasis on data was evident in 'win' or 'field numbers' used to calculate the number of voters to be contacted and persuaded in order to win a campaign (Interviewee 19; Interviewee 15). This more quantitative way of thinking about field campaigning is evident in the Greens' Voter ID strategy, discussed later in this chapter. Interviewees also considered Obama's campaigns as having influenced the Greens' adoption of databases and technology, the focus of the next chapter.

Obama's field campaigning methods were initially used to develop a more structured approach to field campaigning. Prior to 2010, Greens campaigns had

often relied on the personal networks of party members and therefore varied significantly between local branches. Methods sourced from Obama's presidential campaigns included the use of neighbourhood teams, the 'organising circle' and the 'snowflake model'. Neighbourhood teams are originally a community organising practice and consist of volunteers who would be responsible for field campaigning in their area. These teams meet regularly and are responsible for recruiting more supporters:

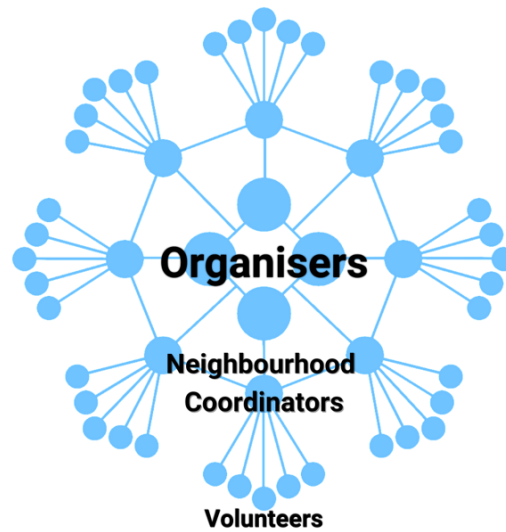
*Neighbourhood team meetings... where you present "Well, this is the goal of how many votes we want to get ... this is how many conversations we need to have; thus, this is how many doors we need to knock or phone calls we need to make ... You guys are the people who bloody bothered to turn up. So, you're who we have, how are we going to make this happen together?" And you basically put the responsibility on to the group (Interviewee 7).*

These neighbourhood teams are drawn directly from the local area or suburb in which they campaign, a principle used in Obama's campaigns and Ganz's teachings. Campaigners with US experience also introduced the "snowflake model", partially illustrated in the above quote. The snowflake model assumes that involvement increases in proportion to responsibility and that there are more volunteers required for tasks with less responsibility (see

Figure 4-1). This model of organising then works through 'stepping up' volunteers towards the centre of the campaign, giving increasingly significant responsibility to these volunteers (Interviewee 7).



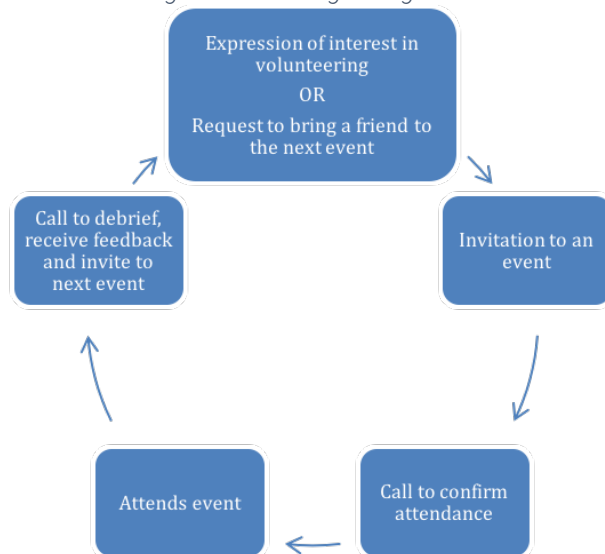
Figure 4-1: The Snowflake Model



Source: Author using data from interviews and Thompson and State Department (2016).

Finally, the organising circle is a process for ensuring volunteers remain involved in the campaign, or 'volunteer retention', and was adapted from the Obama campaigns' method of 'leapfrogging' volunteers from one activity to the next (Interviewee 7; see Figure 4-2).

Figure 4-2: The Organising Circle



Source: Author using data from interviews.

More recently, Bernie Sanders' campaigns for presidential nomination have been the source of new thinking underpinning the Greens' field campaigning strategy (Interviewee 10). In addition to developments in texting, discussed in the next chapter, Sanders' campaigns were noted for their more decentralised 'Big Organising' approach. According to Becky Bond and Zack Exley, strategists and advisors behind Sanders' 2016 field campaign, Big Organising is defined as a mass, inclusive, movement-building approach which seeks to give volunteers greater autonomy and decision-making power (Bond & Exley 2016). One interviewee contrasted this to the 'relatively rigid, structured organising' of the snowflake model (Interviewee 11). Instead, Big Organising is conceived of as a centralised plan, executed in a networked way that gives autonomy, access to systems and responsibility to volunteers. Big Organising also seeks to connect with *all* voters — not just those likely to be supportive — and therefore eschews targeting. While the methods used in most Greens campaigns still resemble those developed from the community organising employed on Obama's campaigns, more recent developments borrow much of their thinking and focus from Big Organising. There are limits to this decentralisation, as will be discussed in further detail in Chapters Five and Seven.

Although US campaigns have been a significant influence on the Australian Greens' understanding of field campaigns, this understanding is not solely defined by the practices of the US Democratic Party. Field campaigning strategies and approaches are sourced and spread through research and conferences, through the movement of campaign staff and within the party through training and the apprenticeship-like nature of field campaigning. The first, research and

conferences, occurs through field campaigners seeking academic research and attending events such as the Australian Progress conference.<sup>1</sup> This can also occur more directly, such as in the example of Australian Greens campaigners contacting academics from the psychology department of a major Australian university for advice on how to connect with voters and overcome tribalism (Interviewee 20). The second source, the movement of campaign staff, occurs through the Australian Greens either sending campaigners to work on field campaigns in other countries or by hiring campaigners with international experience.

Interviewees described instances in which the Australian Greens have been a source of field campaigning practices for other Global Greens<sup>2</sup> parties (See Table 4-1). The New Zealand Greens, referenced by eight interviewees as a source of field campaigning practices, was described as a reciprocal influence, with campaigners crossing back and forth across the Tasman Sea, moving new practices and thinking between the parties. In contrast, the influence of the Australian Greens on the UK Greens party was described as occurring in one direction, with Australian campaigners going to the UK to pass their methods on. Other Global Greens parties directly influenced by the field campaigns of the Australian Greens included the South Korean Greens, the Mongolian Greens, and the Taiwanese Greens (Interviewee 10). This suggests a strong regional network in which campaigning practices are shared and diffused. Furthermore, this suggests that the field

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Progress is a conference for civil society organisations and campaigners intended to share skills and knowledge and to foster social change ('About — Australian Progress' 2021).

<sup>2</sup> The Global Greens are an international partnership or network of Greens parties, united by a charter outlining their shared principles and values and a commitment to cooperation (Global Greens 2017).

campaigns of the Australian Greens party are considered more developed or advanced by other Greens parties in the region.

*Table 4-1: Countries identified as a source of field campaigning practices for the Australian Greens*

Country	N interviewees identified as a source
US	20
New Zealand	8
UK	2
Central Europe	1
Canada	1

*Source: Author using data from interviews*

Finally, field campaigning practices are then spread through the Australian Greens through training sessions and 'Campaign Schools', and through the development of new campaigners. Campaign schools are intensive training programs for would-be campaigners, covering the process and methods used (Interviewee 15). Many Greens campaigners begin as volunteers. Their training as volunteers working under more experienced campaigners shapes their understanding of what a field campaign is and how one ought to function. Interviewees described this process as 'mentorship', 'apprenticeship' or through situations best summarised as learning on the job (Interviewee 13; Interviewee 12; Interviewee 4). It is through these training processes that new practices are diffused and replicated throughout the party, shaping campaigners' understandings of what a field campaign is.

It must be clarified that most interviewees believed that field campaigning practices are adapted as they move through different electoral and cultural contexts. For example, while considered culturally quite similar, one interviewee noted that phone

banking practices from New Zealand are adapted to Australia's federal system to focus on particular electorates, while Australian voter texting practices are adapted to New Zealand's more restrictive regulations regarding voter privacy (Interviewee 11).

Other adaptations were described as more party-specific, shaped in part by the capabilities and resources of the Australian Greens:

*Field campaigning can be done across the whole state. I mean, it was done across the whole of the United States... you can do it, but it's a lot in Australia. Because it's hard, we've tended to limit it to geographic suburbs, or geographic electorates, I should say, which then means that we tend to focus and consolidate our resources into areas that are already strong (Interviewee 7)*

This suggests that the need to persuade voters, coupled with the Greens' more limited financial resources, makes national field campaigning more difficult and limits the party to campaigning in winnable electorates. By focusing on geographical areas, the party is adapting field campaigning practices to its own limitations, while attempting to increase its chances of electoral success. However, this may also be accounted for as an adaptation to the Australian electoral context, as preferential mandatory voting encourages parties to concentrate their efforts in marginal seats.

## Defining Field campaigns

This research identified three distinct approaches to interviewees' definitions of field campaigning: the purpose, the activity and the strategy. Interviewees unanimously defined field campaigning by its purpose, but their understanding of this purpose differed. When asked to define field campaigning every interviewee referred first to direct voter contact, or one-to-one interaction with a voter. Descriptions of the nature of this contact varied and can be understood as either a focus on the party volunteer or the voter as the key figure. The majority focused on the voter as the key actor, and emphasised voter contact as dialogic. Interviewees referred to the importance of listening to the voters' concerns and the issues that they cared about (Interviewee 8; Interviewee 3; Interviewee 9; Interviewee 17). The first purpose of this is to document voter concerns, and to gather information on individuals and constituencies to inform campaign strategy. The second purpose is the need to persuade the voter through the interaction (Interviewee 16; Interviewee 6; Interviewee 12; Interviewee 7). These two purposes do not necessarily conflict, but as will be discussed in relation to the strategy, they are often viewed as distinct.

For the smaller number of interviewees that focused on the role of the party volunteer, there was greater variation in answers. Some defined field campaigning as direct contact in which the volunteer operated as the medium for the campaign message, or in one case, as a substitute for the candidate themselves (Interviewee 20; Interviewee 5). However, others focused instead on the organising of volunteers to carry out these tasks, a definition of field campaigning that sits more squarely within the activity definition (Interviewee 18; Interviewee 2).

The second approach interviewees had to defining field campaigning was through listing the field campaign's activities (see Table 4-2). As the opening quote illustrates, it can be argued that everything that the Greens do is in service of the field campaign. However, for the sake of simplicity, whether an activity is considered field campaigning here will depend on whether interviewees defined it as such. The activities listed in Table 4-2 are those directly referred to by participants in response to the question "What are the activities included in Greens field campaigns and have you seen these change?". Activities were coded as either core or peripheral activities of the field campaign.

Some activities were widely agreed upon. Chief among those were door knocking and phone banking, which every interviewee listed as a key aspect of the Greens' field campaigns. The emphasis on door knocking and its characterisation as a core activity was evident through the language used by interviewees:

*'Door knocking, obviously' (Interviewee 6).*

*'The big one's door knocking, that's the majority of it' (Interviewee 1).*

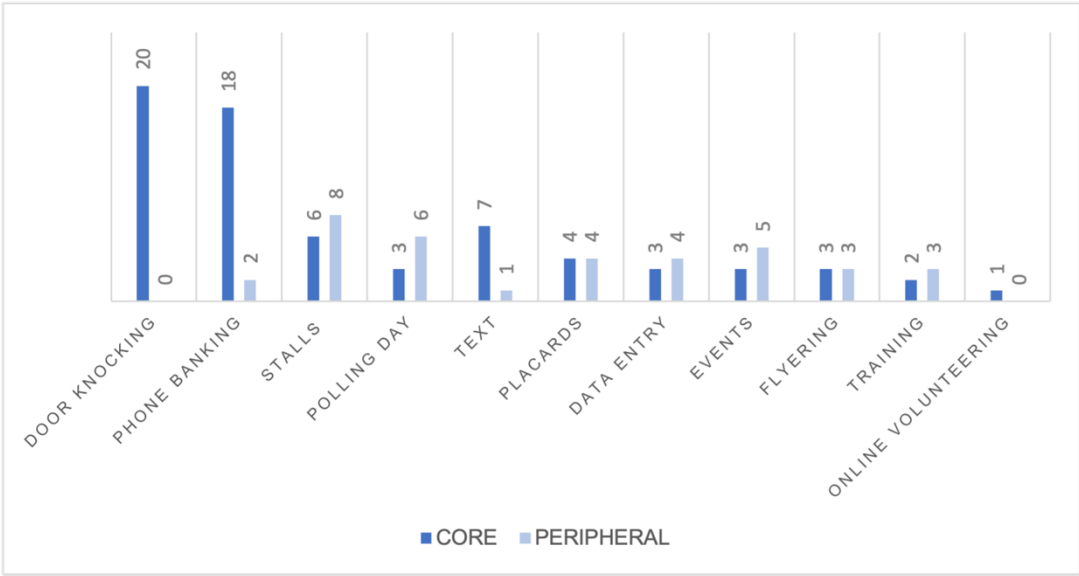
*'Australian Greens field campaigning is really heavily dominated by door knocking' (Interviewee 17).*

*'Obviously, we have door knocking' (Interviewee 7).*

Door knocking is an activity that is entirely aimed at voter contact and therefore fits the purpose definition of field campaigning well. As shown by Table 4-2, activities that primarily fulfil the purpose were more likely to be considered 'core', while those that focus instead on volunteers were mentioned less often and were more likely to be considered peripheral. As one interviewee who considered this to be a firm divide

put it, '[field campaigning] often then gets conflated with the mechanism to make that happen' (Interviewee 7). It is worth noting that where activities were *not* mentioned or were mentioned infrequently by interviewees is also illuminating. This suggests that the activity is either not considered by the interviewee to be part of field campaigning, is considered peripheral, or is simply not frequently done. For example, few interviewees mentioned data entry, suggesting this activity is not typically considered part of field campaigning.

Table 4-2: Field Campaigning Activities coded as "Core" or "Peripheral"



Source: Author using data from interviews.

Moving beyond door knocking and phone banking, it is evident that many of the activities listed by interviewees were not widely agreed upon. While the dominant activities of field campaigns typically fit the purpose definition, other activities such as placards, flying, and training do not. This suggests that for some interviewees, the purpose is not the only measure by which the field campaign is defined.



Other activities do fit the purpose but were less frequently mentioned by interviewees. Texting was listed by less than half of all interviewees but is a form of direct contact in which a volunteer attempts to engage with a voter. Online volunteering was mentioned by a single interviewee. These activities are both relatively recent and centralised, meaning that electorate campaign staff are less likely to have had direct experience with these activities. In sum, the variety of activities expressed, even if only by a minority of interviewees, suggests the potential for evolving practices and therefore flexibility in understanding what is an activity of the field campaign.

So, how then to decide what activities to include? The third element used to define field campaigning, the strategy, determines the way in which the purpose and the activity come together, by establishing the nature and medium of voter contact and the activities that therefore need to be conducted to achieve this. The strategy simply refers to the concepts and approach that underpin field campaigning. Changes within the strategy therefore shift not just how field campaigns are thought of by campaigners, but the day-to-day workings of the campaign. How a field organiser trains, manages, and supports volunteers is determined by the strategy, as it impacts the role volunteers play within the field campaign. Whether a campaigner chooses to organise a pub trivia night or a door knock depends on the strategy used. Therefore, the different field campaigning strategies employed by the Greens partially account for variation as to whether activities such as campaign events are considered core aspects of the field campaign.

The differences between strategies are primarily evidenced through the foremost goal expressed by interviewees, to identify the voter or to persuade the voter. These

goals are not mutually exclusive. As mandatory voting makes persuading voters vital, most campaigns aim to both identify voters and to persuade them. However, which is considered the most important goal is what shapes the campaign strategy and thus we see two distinct campaign strategies emerge. These will be referred to as the Voter ID strategy and the Voter Persuasion strategy. There are a number of other differences stemming from this primary distinction. It is also possible for campaigns to adopt these strategies in their entirety or in part, using strategy from one and methods from the other. Despite this malleability, it is the difference in their priorities which typically shapes the difference in their actions.

These strategies have been sourced from and influenced by US campaigning practices and community organising. The Voter ID strategy was derived from the experiences of Greens campaigners on Obama's 2012 election campaign, whereas the Voter Persuasion strategy has been influenced significantly by Bernie Sanders' field campaigns in 2016 and 2020. One interviewee characterised this change as 'away from just sheer numbers to very high-quality conversations, better training for volunteers and removing the false barrier between voter ID and persuasion' (Interviewee 5). This change is currently occurring, if unevenly, across state parties and constitutes the biggest shift in the Greens' thinking around field campaigning in the last decade.

## **The Voter ID Strategy**

The Voter ID strategy was the earliest model of contemporary field campaigning adopted by the Greens and was primarily developed in Victoria before spreading to

other state parties. This is largely due to field campaigning in the Greens being developed initially in the federal lower house seat of Melbourne, and is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Six. Under the Voter ID strategy, the voter is the primary concern and focus. The field campaign's principal goal is to efficiently contact and identify the voting intentions of as many people as possible. Voting intentions are used to understand individuals and electorates, and swing voters – voters who are not firmly committed to any party – are prioritised for future contact. That is not to say that persuasion is not attempted, but rather, that it is typically viewed as an entirely separate activity. Attempts to persuade voters usually take place late in the campaign, targeting voters identified as persuadable, and these interactions are reserved for the most experienced and trusted volunteers (Interviewee 3).

This ensures that most field campaigning activities require minimal volunteer training and are often quite simple. As one interviewee put it:

*We became very focused on a quantitative view of field. Massive targets. Very data driven, but the kind of fake data that is field campaigning. We had this many conversations, this many answered, that kind of thing. So, I think Victoria had led this 2013 shift in the party that was about large-scale field efforts. And part of focusing on large scale meant that we really wanted to reduce the barriers of what it took to be involved. And so, we tried to make it that having a conversation with a voter is easy as, we'll give you everything you need (Interviewee 5).*

The emphasis is on making volunteering as easy as possible, to help ensure a large volume of volunteers, and therefore more efficient Voter ID. This in turn leads to a more centralised campaign, in which decisions are more likely to be made by staff, with simplified tasks then delegated to volunteers. US organising methods such as the snowflake model are more likely to be used to delegate centrally decided upon tasks and encourage rapid volunteer recruitment. This strategy also runs the risk of devaluing the volunteer experience, as more focus is placed on recruiting volunteers than retaining them. The worst versions of this were described as a 'churn and burn approach' by one interviewee (Interviewee 10).

## **The Voter Persuasion Strategy**

In contrast, the Voter Persuasion strategy gives volunteers a more substantial role in field campaigning and makes more effort to improve volunteer experience. This strategy is a more recent development and one primarily credited to campaigners from the Queensland Greens, although contributions from the ACT and WA Greens parties were also noted. While the voter remains the ultimate focus of the field campaign, volunteers are important as the means by which voter persuasion is achieved, and therefore more of the field campaign's activities centre on their experience. As one interviewee put it, 'that's when you're able to persuade voters, when you've actually got a genuinely grassroots, organic, self-sustaining, rewarding and meaningful movement of people who are coming together to make change' (Interviewee 18). Rather than efficiency, the priority here is efficacy. Persuasion conversations require more volunteer training, and fewer can be conducted within

an hour. Despite these limitations, proponents of the Voter Persuasion strategy within the party consider it more effective way of winning votes. In part, this is due to a belief in the Greens as a movement-based party, and in the importance of field campaigns in engaging both voters and volunteers with politics, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

To reiterate, much more is asked of volunteers under this approach. According to one interviewee 'to be able to go door knock they would need two days of training, for example' (Interviewee 16). The priority is to have a very experienced, well-trained group of volunteers, even if it is smaller. To compensate for the greater efforts being asked of these volunteers, there is a significant emphasis on ensuring that volunteers find this a rewarding and positive experience. To achieve this, campaigns run more social events, and seek and respond to more volunteer input and feedback (Interviewee 3). More attempts are made to decentralise power, giving volunteers greater leadership opportunities and input in decisions within the field campaign. Methods such as the snowflake model and neighbourhood teams are more likely to be employed as a way of strengthening volunteers' connections to each other and therefore improving their experience, and to give teams of volunteers some autonomy and decision-making powers.

While volunteer experience is important, it follows that volunteer retention is a key consideration too. As put by one interviewee, in this strategy the party is 'placing volunteer wellbeing at the centre of what people are doing, as a very conscious cultural decision that keeps people engaged' (Interviewee 10). If volunteers require significantly more training under the Voter Persuasion strategy, they become far

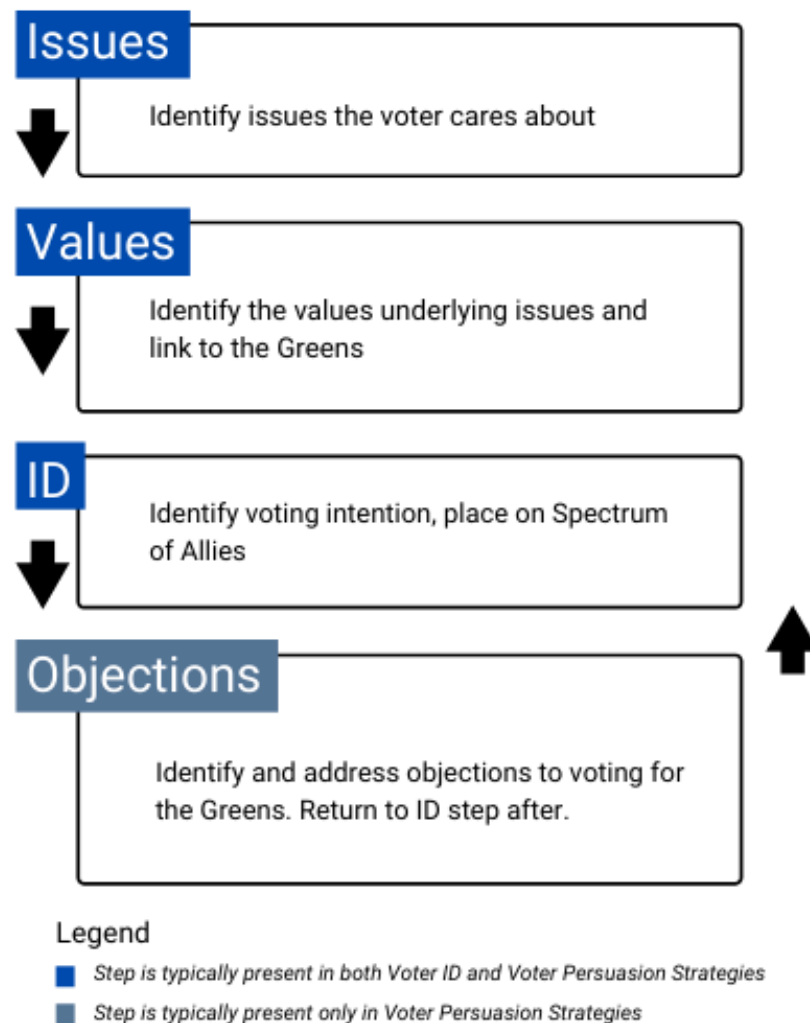
less interchangeable and replaceable. Field campaigners therefore have a significant stake in ensuring they keep coming back.

## The Interaction

As established, everything begins and ends with the volunteer's interaction with the voter. These interactions vary depending on the medium of contact and the strategy of field campaigning used. In any case, despite being designed to reflect the non-linear feel of an organic conversation, these interactions are scripted (Interviewee 7). Volunteers are trained in how to talk to voters, and scripts are used, however loosely volunteers follow them. Over time, these scripts and the thinking behind them have become more complex, and the Greens are 'constantly refining how we go about talking to people. The script, our methods of persuasion and how we are following up' (Interviewee 19). Some key changes include the introduction of a flow-chart script in 2013, intended to fit the flow of an actual conversation more easily (Interviewee 7).

The basic structure is illustrated in Figure 4-3. Voters are first asked what issues they care about. The values expressed through these issues are then identified and linked to the Greens and their policies. Finally, voters are asked who they intend to vote for. If the volunteer is using a voter persuasion approach, the voter's objections are explored and responded to, before returning to asking who they intend to vote for. Each of these steps will now be explained in further detail.

Figure 4-3: Voter Interaction Structure



Source: Author using data from derived from interviews and Crook (2010).

The first part of the conversation is to learn more about the voter, which issues are important to them and could sway their vote. This information is later stored in the party's databases for potential future contacts. Volunteers contacting a voter can see the notes made by every volunteer who has previously talked to the same person. These issues are used as the basis for a conversation with the voter, whether this is linked to a Greens policy, the candidate, or the value expressed.

The second step, the values-based conversation, requires more explanation and has been an influential development within the Greens. This step is used as a tool for persuasion, a way of linking the party and its policies to the voter in a more

personal way that builds a deeper connection. A detailed example of a value-based conversation was given by one interviewee:

*Her number one thing, this elderly lady, she just hated bike lanes, right? And at first, I thought it was maybe a car thing, she drives a car, and sometimes you get people that don't like bike lanes. No, no. She didn't drive but she hated bike lanes. It turned out the reason why she hated bike lanes is a few weeks prior her granddaughter, she was four, was playing in the yard, wandered out, almost got hit by a bike... So, it's not that she hates bike lanes or bikes. It's she values safety. She's concerned about her granddaughter. So, with the Greens' theory of change when it comes to voter contact is you can shift that value of safety. To talk about an issue the Greens are championing, such as refugees in Manus and Nauru. "I care about safety, that's why I'm out here, I'm concerned about refugees in Manus and Nauru" (Interviewee 19)*

As shown in this example, the goal is not to argue or convince voters of a policy, but to identify the values underlying their concerns and pivot the conversation to an issue the Greens are campaigning on. The introduction of values-based conversations has been part of the trend away from a Voter ID strategy of field campaigning and towards a Persuasion strategy, as this type of script is intended to shift a voter's thinking. It is unclear as to when this approach was first adopted, but it was more evident in the second round of interviews, in 2021, than in the first. As interviewee described it:



*A values-based conversation connects with people on the things that motivate them... if you connect with values, you can better motivate them to vote for your candidate (Interviewee 8).*

One of the ways in which values are connected is with personal narrative, also called a 'story of self'. A story of self is a communication concept drawn from Ganz's work (2011), in which a volunteer shares a personal narrative with a voter in order to communicate shared values and form a connection. Interviewees who explicitly referred to this approach did not comment on its prevalence within Greens field campaigns. However, the majority of examples interviewees gave of conversations with voters included the use of values or personal narratives to form a connection. This suggests that the use of these methods is widespread within the party, and their use has also been noted in the Australian Labor Party (Kefford 2021, p. 107; Mills 2014c).

In voter persuasion effort, there is one more step that follows the identification of voting intention: objection handling. This step was often described as one of the most significant aspects of persuading voters. As one interviewee put it:

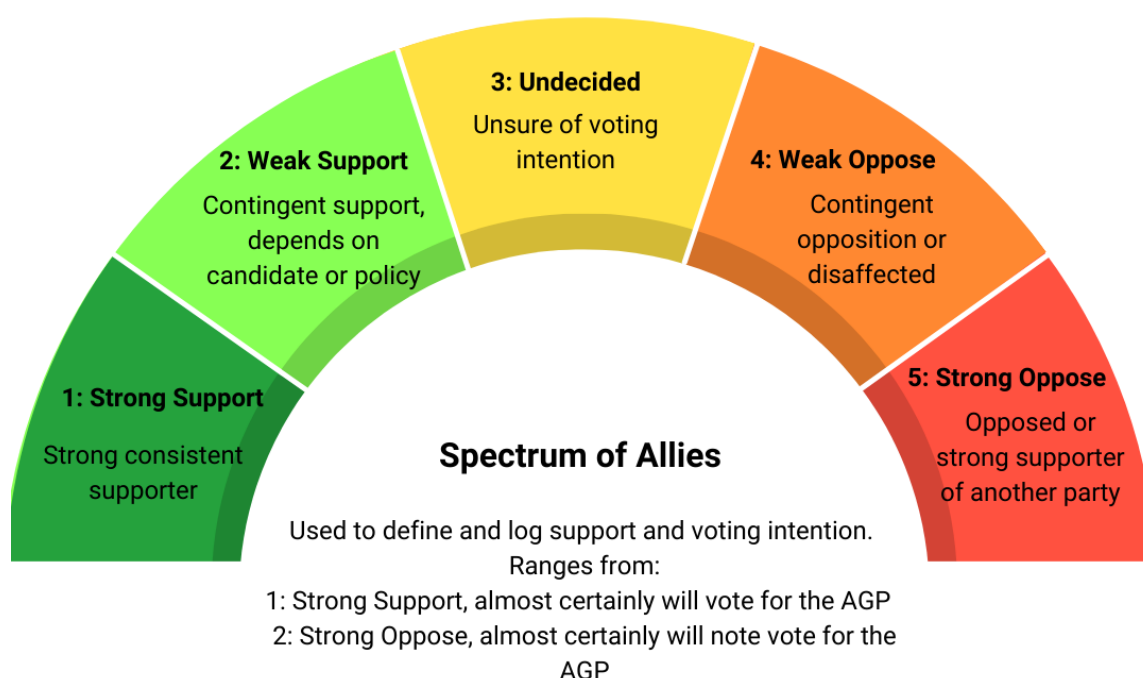
*Persuasion isn't just "Refugees are important so, vote for refugees". It's noting that people have really clearly identified concerns with voting for us and trying to overcome those actual concerns, not just talking about policy. One of the main reasons people don't vote for... non-major parties is because they don't think they can achieve anything. So, just really clearly having embedded in your language and the way you approach conversations, "We're really excited, we*

*might win this election, and then imagine, we're going to achieve all this" (Interviewee 3).*

This quote is typical of interviewees' understanding of why voters may not vote for the Greens. It is not a lack of positive beliefs in the party that is the issue, but negative beliefs, and these are viewed as legitimate, if erroneous, concerns that the field campaign can combat. The thinking then follows that by overcoming these objections, the volunteer can persuade the voter.

As discussed above, the primary goal of the volunteer's conversation with the voter depends on the model of field campaigning employed. However, the final step of identifying the level of support is critical, regardless of whether the goal is to persuade. This information is entered into the party's databases, informing their understanding of voter support, and allowing them to exclude voters who are strongly opposed to the Greens from future contact attempts, resulting in greater efficiency and a better experience for volunteers. This is done by simply asking who the voter intends to vote for, typically at the end of the conversation. For a conversation to be a 'meaningful interaction' a voter's support level must be placed along what interviewees term the 'Spectrum of Allies', illustrated in Figure 4-4. While answers such as "I always vote Greens" are clearly identifiable as Strong Support, others are vaguer. As noted by Kefford (2021, p. 57), this identification can suffer from being largely an intuitive choice made by a volunteer.

Figure 4-4: The Spectrum of Allies



Source: Author using data from interviews.

The distinctions between the Voter ID strategy and Voter Persuasion strategy in practice are evident in the differences between these scripted voter interactions. The two strategies employ different approaches to interacting with voters due to their differing priorities.

Due to their different histories and sources, the Voter ID strategy first originated in Victoria in 2012 before spreading with field campaigning practices to other states. For this reason, it is still the prevalent approach in Victoria, Tasmania and large parts of NSW. Voter persuasion however has had a more complex history. While most interviewees credited its development to the Queensland Greens – who certainly formalised this approach in the 2020 state election campaigns – influences have been drawn from elsewhere (Interviewee 15; Interviewee 3; Interviewee 5). In particular, the ACT and WA state parties are noted as having

maintained a significant focus on volunteer experience and wellbeing even when employing a Voter ID strategy. This suggests that the underlying thinking and the methods of these strategies may be separated and applied selectively. Although it has not yet been adopted comprehensively across the country, many of the approaches associated with Voter Persuasion are now being used across the party as this strategy grows in popularity. A detailed discussion of the state parties and the contexts that have influenced their field campaigns is found in Chapter Six.

## Discussion

This chapter has discussed the sources of field campaigns and how field campaigns are understood by those who conduct them. By exploring the sources of field campaigning practices and how Greens campaign practitioners understand field campaigning, this chapter has addressed RQ1 and RQ2. Three primary elements to constructing a definition of field campaigning have been identified. The purpose and activities of field campaigning, neatly fit within existing definitions. However, the inclusion of the strategy and exploration of all three elements expands the scholarly understanding of field campaigning. This enriches existing understandings of field campaigns and indicates that to understand a party's field campaign in its entirety requires a multi-faceted approach.

## Political Communication

The first of these approaches is through the lens of political communication scholarship. The findings made here support existing scholarly work that field campaigning may be understood as “personalised political communication” – premeditated practices that use people as media for political communication’ (Nielsen 2012, pp. 14–15). In addition, as illustrated in this chapter, the interaction fits with contemporary accounts of persuasive campaigning through direct voter contact. While the effectiveness of field campaigns will be discussed in Chapter Seven, recent scholarly work indicates that persuasion is at its most effective when it is affective; that is, based on emotion and values rather than facts and figures (Kalla & Broockman 2020; Kubin et al. 2021).

## Field Campaigns & their Activities

The field campaigning activities established in this chapter build upon those typically referred to in scholarly literature. The development of newer, technologically supported activities such as texting will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter, focusing on the role of data and technology. However, it is notable that the activities often considered traditional are still those considered most central to field campaigning. This suggests that more recent additions, such as online volunteering or texting, are less integral to interviewees’ understandings of field campaigns. This is not to say that the Greens view these activities as peripheral, but that they may either be emerging or used in other parts of the campaign. While field campaigning is the dominant aspect of Greens

electoral campaigning, it is not the *only* aspect, and these activities may fill other roles.

These findings build upon existing accounts of the activities of field campaigns, which have typically focused upon door knocking and phone banking (Burton & Shea 2010; Kefford 2021). However, it has been established here that while these remain the most prevalent activities of field campaigning, far more variation exists, and new activities and mediums are being trialled and adopted. This lends further support to the proposition that field campaigns cannot be defined by one approach alone. By defining field campaigning as purely direct contact, or by traditional activities, evolutions such as those described above would be rendered invisible.

## **Community Organising & Mobilising**

This chapter has established two distinct field campaigning strategies used by the Greens, and has exposed the differences in implementation and in the thinking underpinning them. The difference between the strategy outlined here aligns with the literature regarding community organising and community mobilising. While the Greens' Voter ID strategy has primarily been influenced by the 2012 Obama campaign, which was purported to have a community organising approach, it is better understood as mobilising. As discussed in the literature review, community organising is built on the idea of building up power and leadership in volunteers and communities over time and was not originally developed for electoral campaigns. This differs from mobilising, which is characterised by more centralised control and the shallow engagement of volunteers. The Voter ID strategy of field campaigning

draws some practices from community organising, but is characterised by its mass scale, constant recruitment, low barrier involvement and centralised control of strategy. Similarly, with its increased focus on building capacity and relationships with volunteers, the Voter Persuasion strategy described here fits well with existing understandings of community organising.

It is notable that for both of the Greens' field campaigning strategies, the definitions that align best are from Han's work, focused on civic associations (2014, p. 9). The strategies fit less well with McAlevey's more union-focused descriptions of community organising that include mass-scale participation and recruitment as defining characteristics (2016, pp. 11–12). This is likely because these practices and strategies came to the Greens from the US Democratic Party and attendance at events such as Progress, primarily concerned with civic associations. These findings also concur with accounts of the use of community organising tactics and models being adopted by Australian campaigners (Kefford 2021; Mills 2014c; Tattersall 2015), and contribute greater detail to the understanding of these approaches and their use by political parties in Australian elections.

## **Sources of Field Campaigning Practices**

In response to RQ2, this chapter has established that the field campaigning strategies used by the Australian Greens have been initially sourced from field campaigning practices as used in US presidential campaigns. Supporting Ward (2003), these practices have been adapted to the Australian context and limitations of the Greens, and to focus upon persuasion efforts and marginal electorates. It has

also been found that the Australian Greens have in turn influenced the field campaigning practices of Global Greens parties. The methods by which field campaigning practices are sourced have been identified. This occurs through research, conferences, and the movement and experiences of campaign staff. These findings address RQ2.

This chapter's findings suggest that the source of change in field campaigning for the Australian Greens was in the first instance Americanisation: practices originated in the US before being adopted, either partially or entirely (Plasser & Plasser 2002). However, the ensuing diffusion of the Australian Greens' field campaigning practices to other Global Greens parties, and the reciprocal influence between the Australian Greens and the New Zealand Greens suggests that Globalisation is a better fit here. As discussed in Chapter Two, Globalisation is a defining element of Semetko and Tworzecki's (2017) fourth era of political campaigning, in which campaigns source methods from a variety of international contexts. This chapter's findings indicate that this global diffusion occurs through the Global Greens network, and it is unclear as to whether this is replicated by parties outside this network. The final theory explaining the causes and sources of change in political campaigning, Modernisation, does not fit these findings. Modernisation argues that democracies with similar media environments experience increasingly similar campaigning methods without these changes emanating from a single state. These findings show that campaigners viewed this process as one with definable sources, who then adapt and evolve campaign practices, before spreading them again.



## Conclusion

This chapter has drawn from the insights of field campaigning practitioners to develop three elements to defining what it is that they do. These are to be understood as typically working together, and the nature of the relationship between purpose, activity and strategy has been illustrated here. In doing so, this chapter expands upon how field campaigns are defined and understood within scholarly literature. Where previously field campaigns have typically been defined as direct voter contact via door knocking or phone calling, this chapter has proposed that to form a holistic definition of field campaigning the purpose, the activity and the strategy must all be considered. The two strategies outlined here have also formed a case study of the ways in which political parties have sourced and adapted field campaigning practices from international contexts and from the work of civic associations and unions.

Finally, much has been made of the modernising of field campaigns and their development as data driven practices. Indeed, the next chapter is devoted to the topic. However, the findings discussed here have indicated that despite these changes, field campaigns remain about the human interaction at the heart of it all, and for most campaigners, technology is a supporting tool at best. As put by one interviewee, 'At the end of the day, it's actually all about people' (Interviewee 18).

# Chapter 5

## Data and Technology

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### Introduction

The Greens' field campaigns collect data on volunteers, supporters and voters, and much is made within the party of their data-driven campaigning. However, in practice, the use of data is limited. There are exceptions and experiments, which suggest the party is attempting to expand the role of data.

This chapter begins by examining the databases the Greens use and their functions. These databases, although differing between states – and occasionally electorates – act as a centralising force within the party organisation. A discussion of the technological tools used by the party follows, focusing on their development and impacts. Much of the Greens' application of data and technology centres on efficiency and the rise of texting is used as a case study to illustrate this. The following discussion of targeting refers to the differing strategies of field campaigning outlined in the typology developed in Chapter Four and foreshadows some of the themes regarding the role of party identity discussed in Chapter Six. The various limitations to the party's use of targeting are considered. Finally, this chapter's findings are discussed in relation to academic literature, addressing this thesis' research questions regarding the activities and development of data and technology in the Greens' field campaigning. This chapter concludes that the

Greens' use of data and technology for field campaigning is driven by efficiency, encourages centralisation, and is shaped by its limitations.

## Databases

When discussing the role of databases, interviewees were more likely to refer to data as assisting in efficiency rather than in making field campaigning more effective. This aligns with the ways in which the Greens use – or do *not* use – technology and targeting, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Within the Greens, there are three primary databases in use: NationBuilder, CiviCRM and gVIRS. Each has its own history of development and is used by different sections of the party in different ways. Although one person may have a profile in all three databases, they are used for two different sets of data. NationBuilder and CiviCRM are used for data pertaining to members and supporters who volunteer on campaigns, sign online petitions, or attend events. gVIRS is used for information regarding the voting intentions and concerns of voters. This fragmentation of databases has a number of issues, but typically the state or federal parties oversee these databases, and the trend is towards increasing centralisation.

## Supporter Databases

As supporter databases, NationBuilder and CiviCRM share many functions. These databases are used to capture supporter experience, such as event attendance, training in field activities, and prior volunteering. Additionally, these databases collate information regarding supporter's interests, drawn from self-reported information or which online petitions they have signed.

NationBuilder was first used by federal MP Adam Bandt in his 2013 Melbourne campaign. It is a web-based program developed in the US and purpose-built for campaigning. Following this election, NationBuilder became the database of choice for the Victorian Greens. However, some difficulties have arisen from this history of adoption as Bandt's office maintained a separate NationBuilder account to that of the state party (Interviewee 19). These databases were only unified between the first and second round of interviews, either late 2020 or early 2021.

From its initial use in Victoria, NationBuilder has spread to other state parties, in particular those with a heavy Victorian influence such as New South Wales and Queensland. However, this requires financial resources from either state offices or local branches, as NationBuilder is an external system that is paid for through a subscription (NationBuilder 2021). It is for this reason that states with less resources depend on CiviCRM.

CiviCRM is an open-source customer relationship management software (CiviCRM 2021) for which the Greens developed a plugin, called Rocket, which functions as a user interface. The plugin and CiviCRM are maintained by the national party, and so are one unified database nationwide. Interviewees were less clear on when CiviCRM

was adopted but referred to it as 'old' and as having undergone 'improvements over the years' – although more improvements were still noted as necessary (Interviewee 1; Interviewee 19). Others referred to campaigns choosing to use NationBuilder over Rocket in 2015, suggesting that it was in use at this time (Interviewee 14).

Both databases are used to store and generate information about supporters, including their previous volunteer activities or training. To do so, they may be integrated with supporter events listed on party websites, noting RSVPs and attendance (Interviewee 17). This allows campaigners to easily call up lists of those who have volunteered in the past, and are likely to do so again, making volunteer recruitment more efficient. Similarly, as the databases keep track of event attendance, volunteers who have been through specialised training are easily identified and contacted. Contacts are then logged, storing who contacted the supporter, on what date and time and by what medium. This includes details such as whether they answered and the quality of this answer, alongside any additional notes. These databases may also be used for mass contact of supporters via email.

There are, however, some differences in their functionality. NationBuilder is widely considered more user friendly, an important consideration as volunteers use these programs and difficulties are considered a barrier to their involvement (Interviewee 19). Although CiviCRM's interface was described as requiring dramatic improvement, it possesses several additional functions (Interviewee 6). As the national database, CiviCRM stores party membership and financial information, such as the donation history of a supporter. This offers further insight into the commitment of a supporter, and therefore, their likelihood in participating in a field

campaign (Interviewee 19). CiviCRM, or more specifically the Rocket plugin, is also used to record polling booth shifts for volunteers handing out HTV cards. Even in those states that primarily use NationBuilder, CiviCRM is still relied on for these functions.

## gVIRS

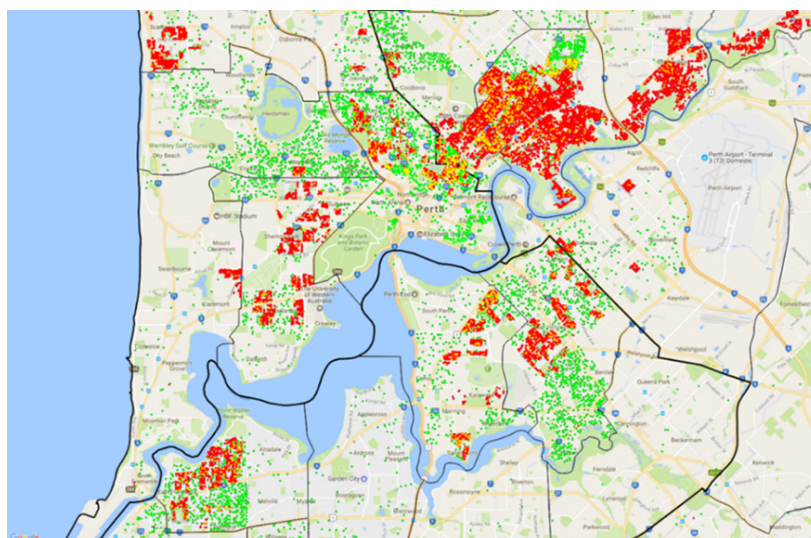
gVIRS, or the Greens Voter Interaction Recording Software, differs from the other databases significantly. This database was developed by a volunteer during former West Australian Senator Scott Ludlam's re-election campaign in 2014 and is used to document interactions with voters. It has been improved upon repeatedly in the years since. In particular, the Victorian by-elections leading up to the 2018 state election and the 2019 federal election were used as an opportunity to fine-tune gVIRS. The focus on one field campaign at a time made it possible for the developer to work closely with campaigners. This allowed the developer to make 'updates to the software from the feedback that we got from door-knockers, from data entry people, from people that would use gVIRS to cut walk lists' (Interviewee 9). Every interviewee who worked in a role interacting with the database commented on its improvement over this period. One interviewee with extensive experience with gVIRS described its function as:

*We take a full electoral roll and upload it into gVIRS. So, we have everyone's home, everyone's age, everyone's name... that is enrolled in a premises. We can use that to contact them for door-knocks. We*

*then buy phone numbers from Sensis<sup>1</sup> and crossmatch that data against the electoral roll (Interviewee 17).*

As voters are contacted, their profiles in gVIRS are updated to reflect the nature of that interaction, the issues discussed, and the stated voting intention (Interviewee 17). If voters move between elections, this information is matched to their new address. When calling voters, this information is added directly to their profiles in gVIRS. However, for door knocks paper 'walk lists' are printed. Following each door knocking session, data entry volunteers enter the information recorded on these sheets into gVIRS. Heat maps of voter contacts created in gVIRS (Figure 5-1) may then be used to compare field campaigning efforts with polling booth results at the end of an electoral campaign. In this way, gVIRS data is then used to inform the strategy of the next campaign.

*Figure 5-1: "gVIRS heat map showing door-knocking and phone banking activity in Federal 2019 campaign" published in the Greens WA magazine.*



(Bulbeck 2021).

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<sup>1</sup> Sensis is an Australian marketing business that specialises in consumer data and data validation ('Sensis Data Solutions' 2017).

Decentralising innovations to this very centralised system have been resisted, as exemplified by opposition to door knocking apps. These apps allow for greater decentralisation – volunteers could download an app on their phones and door knock when and where it suited them. Rather than filling in notes on a paper walk sheet, notes could be added directly to the app by the volunteer and immediately be synced with the voters gVIRS profile. While more efficient, there are concerns in the party regarding the impact that this could have on the quality of data and the risks inherent in losing oversight of volunteers (Interviewee 1). Despite being common in US field campaigns, these innovations have therefore not been implemented by the Greens. It was believed that this is in part a cultural difference; as noted, the US has a longer history of decentralised and large-scale field campaigning. It is thought less likely that a single rogue volunteer would be thought of as representing the campaign as a whole in the US than in Australia (Interviewee 1).

### **How many databases are too many?**

A significant influence on the development of these databases has been the resources of state parties and the Greens' party organisation. Databases cost money to maintain and require staff to ensure the quality of data and to oversee systems. There are overlapping databases in use across Australia by the Greens, though efforts are being made to centralise and unify this. As put by one interviewee 'trying to change systems across the Federation is an absolute nightmare... we've been trying to get everyone to move CRMs to CiviCRM and people are still using NationBuilder, and it causes all sorts of problems when you're trying to update



anything' (Interviewee 6). Another interviewee offered further insight into the impacts of these multiple systems: 'CiviCRM and NationBuilder, they're not integrated... you can do batch uploads where you set the record straight, you just run that every so often... but it won't catch everything. You might have a different number or email listed in CiviCRM compared to NationBuilder.' (Interviewee 19).

This issue is compounded when considering the organisation of campaigns in states that are more decentralised. For example, it is not uncommon for campaigns in different electorates in NSW to organise their own NationBuilder subscription, or to pool their resources for a regional account (Interviewee 14). This may lead to issues such as campaigns in neighbouring electorates repeatedly attempting to recruit the same volunteer and is more costly than a single state-wide NationBuilder account. As will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Six, overlapping databases are one of the negative impacts of Greens party organisation and culture.

## Technological Tools

As with the use of data, the Greens' use of technology is intended to improve the efficiency of field campaigning. Technology has rarely altered *what* is done in field campaigns, but rather has shifted *how it is done*. As put by one interviewee,

*There's been tweaks that we would engage in with things like phone banking and trying auto-diallers and those kinds of tools we have around. So, engaging or testing new tools within the space, but no real deviations from what are the traditional things (Interviewee 10).*

This section will consider the technological tools of field campaigning. The first and longest standing of these, auto-diallers, captures the theme of efficiency. More recently, the rise of texting to voters' mobile phones has further contributed to the efficient contact of voters and volunteers alike. Finally, although a recent development prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic, the early impacts of the use of Zoom will be considered. This software has accommodated the geographic decentralisation of rural campaigns, while encouraging greater centralisation of methods nationally.

## **Auto-diallers**

The first technological tool of the Greens field campaigns, the auto-dialler, was introduced in the 2014 Victorian state election. Auto-dialler software automatically calls through lists of voters' phone numbers drawn from gVIRS without the need to manually dial each number, minimising the time lost, particularly on disconnected numbers. This allows volunteers to contact many more people in the same amount of time; 'Suddenly, we were actually talking to people' (Interviewee 7). This development did not change the activity of the field campaign, calling voters, but greatly improved its efficiency.

Auto-diallers were further developed in the 2015 NSW state election. The auto-dialler used in the previous year had been complex for callers: 'we had a separate dialler system and then we had a separate phone system and then we had gVIRS. So, we had three systems running on each computer and it was really technically difficult' (Interviewee 20). During the 2015 campaigns in NSW this convoluted

system was simplified, and the gVIRS auto-dialler was created, bringing together these three functions. Organisers worked closely with software developers throughout the campaign to test and improve the software, responding in real time to feedback from volunteers using it. Where previously three separate systems had been used to decide who to call, to make that call and then to record the interaction, auto-diallers had 'evolved amazingly to be a one stop shop' (Interviewee 20).

This was the most significant shift in the evolution of auto-diallers to date. The software has improved since, and the version of the gVIRS auto-dialler used in 2016 is now considered out of date, but its basic functions have not altered. Further improvements were made over the course of the 2019 federal election, to improve the experience and ease of use for volunteers. These changes were in large part prompted by GetUp! and the Australian Conservation Foundation's electoral efforts:

*Everybody was hearing about this calling tool... And I was like, we've got to have something like that... I had an opportunity to use the GetUp! dialler, and it was terrible. It was glitchy, it was a terrible experience for the caller... Organisations like GetUp! push us to use tech more, to try harder, to try and look for the cutting edge of organising, but I don't think that we necessarily get very much from them. It's more that we want to do better than them. Not to beat them, but I suppose for volunteers to want to organise with us (Interviewee 4).*

This sentiment was applied by other interviewees to various technological developments. Rather than directly adopting software used by other Australian

parties or organisations, the Greens are motivated by their persistent – and sometimes accurate – perception of others as more technologically savvy, and by a need to compete with others for not just voters, but volunteers. Consistent with other findings in this chapter, much of the development of technological tools has been intended to lower the barriers that may prevent volunteers from getting involved in Greens’ field campaigns.

## The Rise of Text

The 2018 Victorian state election saw the introduction of voter texting software. Interviewees identified the primary inspirations as GetUp! and the Australian Labor Party, and in particular the latter's campaigning around Medicare in 2016.<sup>2</sup> Interviewees noted that in either case, the use of texting had been drawn from the US Democratic Party, and most recently and particularly, Bernie Sanders’ presidential nomination campaign (Interviewee 19; Interviewee 11; Interviewee 6). The web-based open source tool used by the Greens for peer-to-peer texting, Spoke, was developed by the 2016 Sanders campaign and has been maintained since by MoveOn, a US organisation (MoveOn 2021). The adoption of Spoke for mass peer-to-peer texting was centrally driven, coming from the Victorian state office before being adopted by campaigns around the country (Interviewee 12). Despite lacking

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<sup>2</sup> The Medicare text was sent by the Queensland branch of the Australian Labor Party to voters on the day of the federal election in 2016 and was arguably the most significant use of text messages in an Australian campaign at the time. The text message stated that Malcolm Turnbull was planning on privatising Medicare. It was the source of significant controversy due to arguments that the name of the sender – ‘Medicare’ – and its arguments were misleading (Moore 2016).

the more personal quality of phone calling and door knocking, texting was viewed by most interviewees as a growing part of contemporary field campaigning, mentioned at some point in three quarters of the interviews. It helps that texting is affordable, considered a cheaper option than phone calls (Interviewee 11).

The 2018 Victorian state election campaign 'was the first time, at least on a mass scale, that we've done voter texting. Where we sent out 10,000 texts and responded to people who texted back' (Interviewee 15). Typically, a mass text is sent out, and volunteers manage and respond to the ensuing replies. Spoke allows for the inclusion of scripted responses that may be selected or adapted where appropriate, simplifying this task, and the numbers can be segmented into smaller groups suitable for management by a single volunteer each. While texting was used for voter contact, its primary use was and is in contacting supporters and prospective volunteers. The use of texting grew in the 2019 federal election and spread beyond Victoria before hitting new heights from 2020 onwards. The difficulties in running a field campaign during the Covid-19 pandemic contributed significantly to this growth.

In particular, the Victorian council elections of 2020 were used as a testing ground to research the use of texting in mobilising younger voters. This election took place entirely during lockdown, using postal ballots (Ross 2020). The party was particularly concerned about the number of younger voters who may have moved without updating their electoral details and so would be unable to vote in the election (Interviewee 18). It is worth noting that this context is not typical of Australian campaigns, and while mobilising younger voters may play a role going forward, interviewees acknowledged that GOTV style campaigns are unusual. Texts

were intended not to persuade this group, but to encourage them to vote despite the additional barriers the pandemic presented. This experiment was centrally run by the Victorian state office, and in exchange for the resources to text a significant number of younger voters the state office controlled the messaging. Those campaigns that had the volunteer and financial resources to run their own texting did so, giving the party the ability to compare the messaging and results for the state-run texting with those of the campaign-run texting.

*In 2020 we definitely did the single biggest voter texting blast. We sent 115,000 texts to I think about 75,000 individual voters across targeted electorates based on where we thought we were most winnable, and we thought it would have the biggest impact (Interviewee 18).*

The campaigners involved viewed this experiment as successful: 'of the 36 that were elected, 33 of those 36 texted. So, massively strong correlation between which campaigns texted and which campaigns were successful' (Interviewee 18). Only eight of the campaigns that used texting did not win. Limitations were acknowledged, as the campaigns targeted by this experiment were chosen because they were judged to be the most winnable. For this reason, other interviewees doubted this as proof of the efficacy of texting in gaining votes through voter mobilisation.

Despite these doubts, this experiment led to an uptick in the use of texting nationally. The ACT party used these methods for their 2020 territory elections. This texting was described as not particularly strategic or effective, taking place in the

final stretch of the campaign where the campaigners were 'trying anything because the election's almost here' (Interviewee 6). Over the next year texting would be a significant tool in the 2021 Western Australian state election campaign and most interviewees viewed it as a key part of future field campaigns.

Texting was often cited as a solution to various problems. Interviewees attributed part of the growing importance of texts to voters and volunteers increasingly not answering phone calls from unknown numbers (Interviewee 8). This was particularly an issue when attempting to contact younger people, and so texting operates as a rough form of vote segmentation. As one interviewee said, 'our voter base is younger, so therefore, if you happen to meet them where they consume information that's just better' (Interviewee 11). Texting was also viewed as addressing the increasing number of people living in apartment buildings that are not accessible to door-knockers (Interviewee 13). As such, the Greens' adoption of texting can be considered as less of an innovation, and more as keeping up with shifts in communication.

Despite being regarded as a potential solution to these problems, interviewees' responses varied significantly as to whether texting is particularly effective for voter contact. Those involved in the Victorian 2020 council election viewed their experiment as a success, but described texting 'as a digital leaflet with the opportunity for some engagement, sort of coincidentally' (Interviewee 18). Interviewees from other states were often more sceptical. For these campaigners, texting was viewed as a useful tool for identifying potentially persuadable voters, so that they may be contacted through a phone call or door knock at a later date, but alone was not thought particularly impactful (Interviewee 15). It was also noted that

texting was an activity volunteers enjoyed, as it was easier and less intimidating than other forms of voter contact (Interviewee 6). The references many interviewees made to other views within the party suggests that the efficacy of texting is internally debated in some quarters.

The efficiency gains from texting were considered to be greater when communicating with supporters and volunteers. As one interviewee said texting is 'a very good recruitment, mobilisation strategy, but if you want to get beyond that, you have to go out and talk to people, and be physically in a place. So, I think technology has primarily impacted how we organise internally rather than externally' (Interviewee 3).

These findings suggest that texting voters fits with the Voter ID strategy discussed in Chapter Four, due to the low barriers for volunteers, and its efficiency. There are those who think it may become more useful for persuasion in future, but as yet, this has not occurred. As with other uses of data and technology, texting has been shown to have a centralising impact for the state parties as the software and messaging is typically run by state offices.

## **Zoom**

The use of video-conferencing software, and particularly Zoom, is still emerging, but is nonetheless worth discussing. The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic prompted the party's use of Zoom, but there is reason to suspect that this will continue in a post-pandemic context. Interviewees noted wide-ranging benefits to its adoption, such



as the inclusivity of webinars targeted at prospective volunteers, 'because you don't have to organise people to be in a place, and I think it also means that people can come to stuff without fully committing... Zoom's made it a lot more inclusive for people with very busy lives or other challenges to get places' (Interviewee 3). Video-conferencing's ability to overcome these challenges was also important to those organising field campaigning activities in rural areas, where bringing volunteers together in one location to call voters is far more difficult (Interviewee 14). In rural areas, the use of Zoom has led to Virtual Phone Banks, a practice used in the 2020 Victorian council elections for calling and texting (Interviewee 18). Rather than sitting together in a campaign office making calls, volunteers join a Zoom call where they can be trained in speaking to voters, get support from campaign staff or those with more experience, and keep track of their collective progress. This is hoped to create the same camaraderie and quality of voter contacts as in-person phone banks achieve.

Finally, video conferencing has contributed to greater connection and communication between campaigners nationally. Zoom has been used by the national party to 'convene and facilitate spaces where state directors have conversations about learnings and share learnings and kind of what's working, what's not, what's confusing' (Interviewee 10). This shift was commented on as significant by the majority of campaign directors interviewed. The state parties, and even neighbouring electorate teams have sometimes operated independently and with little communication or sharing of skills. Zoom's use in bringing together campaigners across the country is likely to persist and highlights the growing role of the national party which will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Six.

## The Limitations of Targeting

Reports from interviewees regarding the use of targeting for data driven campaigning varied. The view from those best positioned to assess its use, such as data managers and analysts, was that the Greens do less than other parties, and perhaps less than the party and its databases are capable of. The volume of data the Greens possess is not insignificant, but its use was typically described as limited. Limitations were raised regarding other aspects of data and technology, but targeting was often the primary example given and is therefore used here to examine the barriers to further development of data driven campaigning in the Greens.

Interviewees differed in the reasoning ascribed to the limited use of data. Frequently, as with all limitations to field campaigning, it was attributed to the party's limited financial resources (Interviewee 3). Others described the limits as due to party culture, viewing extensive use of data as an unethical trespass on voters' privacy. In particular, commenting on other parties' integration of existing databases with social media profiles of voters, one interviewee said 'that's getting into creepier levels that I think we would not get signed off on by our governance bodies' (Interviewee 10). Linked to this were views that targeting to exclude voters ran counter to the party's ethos, and that there was a responsibility – and potentially an electoral benefit – in attempting to communicate with every voter (Interviewee 3; Interviewee 9). This, and other civic functions of field campaigning will be discussed in depth in Chapter Eight.

Other identified limits to the use of data and targeting were more practical in nature. In cases where specific areas are being focused on for door knocking, targeting is then limited by the way in which these door knocks are conducted. Greens' door knocks require somewhere to train and debrief, typically the home of a volunteer or supporter. If volunteers are primarily from one suburb within an electorate, this leads to issues in finding an appropriate location for these activities to take place.

*There's 10 door knocks happening this weekend. I need to find out where they're all going to be. And so, someone would say, "Oh, yeah, that's great. You can use my house for six weeks, or whatever, three weeks". And you're like, "Awesome, that solves that problem"... And then it's only on reflection on the third week when you going to the data guy "Draw me a list", and he's like, "There are no more houses".*

*(Interviewee 1)*

There are also difficulties for the Greens in targeting based on electorates. The party only seriously contests a handful of electorates nationally, and one interviewee noted the difficulty in targeting within such a small pool:

*It's just practical, if you're looking at a small subset of the population, say an electorate of 100,000 people, it's just harder to identify Greens voters. And it's harder to use data and analytics to narrow down that group. You can use age but it's much harder to get high quality phone number data at such level (Interviewee 11).*

This example indicates how the various limitations feed into one another. While the difficulties in granular targeting are practical, this reasoning can lead to the

hesitance and privacy concerns discussed. Regardless of the reasoning ascribed, the limitations to targeting result in a situation where the party adopts and champions a mass approach, attempting to contact every voter. The field campaigning strategies employed by the Greens have likely stemmed from this limitation. As the party has committed to contacting every voter, it must either do so efficiently as in the Voter ID strategy, or effectively as intended by the Voter Persuasion strategy.

## The Uses of Targeting

When targeting is used, its use is typically restricted, and not always for the reasons one might assume. Interviewees made many references to targeting for the sake of volunteer experience as opposed to effective voter contact.

*'You want volunteers to keep coming back. And it's much easier to do that if they have a good experience. And they're going to have a good experience if they're talking to people who already like the party'*  
(Interviewee 15).

This use of targeting is usually applied early in the campaign and is intended to build the number of volunteers involved, while reinforcing and confirming the support of existing Greens voters. However, this approach is used in other cases, such as excluding unpleasant or deeply opposed voters. Targeting for the sake of volunteer experience, or ease of volunteering fits within both strategies used by the Greens.

There have been some experiments by the party in increasing the use of data for targeting both voters and prospective volunteers. In particular, Victoria trialled the use of machine learning for targeting during the 2018 state and 2019 federal elections (Interviewee 11; Interviewee 18). Machine learning was used to build a profile of who was likely to volunteer on field campaigns. These profiles were primarily used to increase efficiency. If a supporter had a high probability of engagement, the Victorian campaigners found that texting could be very effective for event attendance; 'the result was that it was a 42 per cent increase in volunteer recruitment' (Interviewee 11).

Efforts were made to use machine learning to build profiles of supportive voters also, although this was described as incomplete. A profile of what makes someone likely to be a strong supporter was constructed (Interviewee 11). This was used to exclude committed Greens voters from door knocking efforts. The intent was to increase both the efficiency of voter contact by increasing the amount of time that volunteers spent interacting with undecided voters rather than preaching to the choir. The result was a 15 per cent decrease in the number of strong supporters encountered (Interviewee 11).

Despite machine learning being a far more sophisticated use of data than the Greens have employed previously, its primary function has been to increase efficiency, rather than target specific voters on specific issues. It is largely de-personalised and does not employ micro-targeting. Its use so far has been restricted to experiments conducted in Victoria, likely due to the larger resources of the Victorian Greens and their propensity for Voter ID strategies that prioritise efficiency.

As discussed in the following chapter, one of the strongest drivers of change in Greens field campaigning is campaigners selling their success to other campaigners. Data is an instrumental tool in this, and in persuading volunteers that what they are being asked to do is strategic and will make a difference. As put by one interviewee, data is 'less valuable, in a scientific sense than it is as a tool of motivation and persuasion internally' (Interviewee 18). Regardless of whether it is used effectively or not, data gives field campaigns a more scientific feel, and this role, while less measurable, is an important one.

## Discussion

The findings discussed in this chapter have enriched existing understandings of the role and development of data and technology in field campaigning and addressed RQ3. Considering the role of data, this study has explored the impacts of confederated party structure and contributed new evidence to existing accounts of data use in the Greens. Looking to the eras of political campaigning, the findings of this chapter suggest the limitations of this model when considering financially limited parties with strong ethical convictions. The findings presented here have also built upon existing scholarly work regarding the centralising influence of data and technology in political parties. The application of this work to a confederated party offers further insights. Finally, the wider application of these findings must be considered, as many may be attributed to the particular characteristics and limitations of the Greens.

## Data Driven Campaigning?

Data and technology have not so much shifted what the activities of field campaigns are but changed how they are conducted. Developments are in line with broader societal technological advances, and in some cases spurred by the perceived success of other parties and organisations. This development has typically continued across the states, with software developers working closely with field campaigning staff, with the intended aim of improving efficiency and lowering technological barriers for volunteers.

The Greens' use of data is broadly in line with the accounts and analysis of other scholars. Kefford's (2021) recent account and analysis comparing the Greens' use of data with that of other Australian parties will be the focus of this discussion due to its strong insights and relevance. The account of the types of data collected by Australian parties is supported by this chapter's findings (2021, p. 47). However, whether due to differences in interviewees' answers or the confederated and sometimes fragmented nature of development in the Greens, some findings differ from Kefford's (2021). Here, the party has been found to have developed its own bespoke voter database, gVIRS, in addition to the CiviCRM plugin, Rocket. The party may be better described as having too many databases than not enough. While developments in the use of this data may be slower in the Greens than in other parties, they are occurring. More recent developments such as machine learning tests, while limited, suggest that Kefford's finding that the Greens' do not use modelling or targeting is beginning to change, at least in some states (Kefford 2021, p. 51).

None of this is to say that the Greens' use of data or technology is sophisticated. It is not, and this chapter has shown an awareness within the party of its limitations. Despite the differences in findings, this study concludes that Kefford's (2021, p. 61) description of the Greens' campaigns as 'not consistent with most definitions of data driven campaigning' is apt. While this chapter's findings indicate that some within the party are attempting to change this, there is evidently a long way yet to go.

Supporting and building upon Kefford's (2021, p. 48) account of the limitations to data collection in the Greens as due to limited resources, this chapter's findings suggest that this limitation has fostered further impediments by shaping the party's approach to data and field campaigning. The Greens have in some ways embraced this limitation, and now view extensive data use as unethical and antithetical to their identity. Moreover, this limitation has encouraged the party to embrace field campaigning strategies intended to contact every voter, removing the need for extensive targeting.

## **Eras of Political Campaigning**

The frameworks of political eras are used to compare the sophistication or modernisation of political campaigning, and to categorise its development (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck 2006; Norris 2000). These eras were discussed in the literature review and can be found on page 14. This study indicates that the use of data and technology in the Greens' field campaigns is drawn from across eras.



From the second era, the Greens can be accurately described as attempting a 'catch-all' approach and 'trying to mobilise voters across all categories' (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck 2006, pp. 10–11). However, from the third era, the Greens draw personalised, direct contact with voters, assisted by the use of databases and some targeting (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck 2006, pp. 10–11; Norris 2000, p. 138). The fourth era, as Roemmele and Gibson (2020) and Semetko and Tworzecki (2017) outline, is defined by the extensive use of data and micro-targeting. This definition does not reflect the Greens' field campaigns to date. However, the focus on the individual and their interaction or involvement with the campaign aligns with Magin and colleagues' description (2017, p. 1701). Despite the party not targeting at the individual level, the Greens attempt to talk to all voters as individuals and focuses on interaction and mobilisation, combining individual interaction with a mass or catch-all approach. The methods are distinctly different to those Magin and colleagues describe, but the target audience is the individual (Magin et al. 2017, p. 1688).

The findings here show that the Greens either are limited in their ability to target or eschew targeting due to party culture and the potential civic functions enabled by contacting a wide variety of voters, discussed in Chapter Seven. Further, it is the limited use of targeting that can account for the difficulties in fitting the party's campaigning into one era. This study concludes that the Greens field campaigns combine elements from various eras. The approach is of the second, the methods used resemble those of the third era, and the focus is indicative of the fourth. Rather than a condemnation of the usefulness of the eras in understanding the use of data

and technology in field campaigning, this may be a result of the unique blend of limitations and culture of the Greens.

## **Centralising or decentralising?**

This chapter has shown that new practices regarding data and technology have arisen primarily from need, addressing existing issues rather than innovating. The sources of these new practices where known have primarily been civil organisations and other political parties. In particular, texting was drawn from the Australian Labor party, and significantly influenced by Sanders' 2016 presidential campaign. This study finds that in addition to the sources of development discussed in the previous chapter, the Greens' use of data and technology in field campaigning is influenced by the party's perception of their practices as less technologically savvy.

As discussed in greater depth in Chapter Six, success, or the perception of it, has driven the adoption of new practices throughout the party. When concerning data and technology, this success is often equated with greater efficiency. Data and technology have typically been employed to streamline and simplify field campaigning practices, and many methods were first trialled in the Victorian party. As noted, the Victorian Greens prioritises the Voter ID strategy, typified by low barriers for volunteering and the efficient identification of voting intentions.

As found in other scholarly work, data and technology operate as centralising forces within the Greens (Gibson & Ward 2012, p. 68). The adoption of these tools by

parties can be costly, leading to it often being borne by central party structures, either at the state or national level. This in turn gives the central party further control over the campaign and its direction. Databases and tools are typically centrally administered and run in the Greens – with some exceptions such as NSW’s decentralised approach. Increasingly, many of these are held not by state parties but by the national party. The influence of party organisation on field campaigning, and of field campaigning on party organisation, is the focus of the next chapter.

## **Greens-Specific Limitations**

While many of the details regarding how and why field campaigns employ data and technology may apply to other Australian parties, some of this chapter’s findings are specific to the Greens. Issues such as the growing number of voters who cannot be contacted by phone calls or door knocks are likely to apply to all Australian parties. It is also unlikely that the Greens are the only party to look to others’ technological developments for inspiration and to prioritise efficiency.

However, the limitations explored here relate to a combination of features particular to the Greens. The limited resources of the party, a party culture that views extensive targeting as unethical, and a confederated party model that contests only a small number of seats create a unique combination. Together, these factors have led to the Greens’ use of data and technology for field campaigning being restricted. To further understand which aspects had which influence would require comparative study.

## Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the Greens' use of data and technology for field campaigning. The databases used by the party have shown the effects of its confederated structure through overlapping systems. However, there are indications that data and technology are having an increasingly centralising impact, shifting further control to state and national parties. Much of the development of technological tools has been intended to increase the efficiency of field campaigning, and this chapter has shown how this links to the Voter ID strategy discussed in Chapter Four. Finally, the findings here indicate that one of the biggest influences on the party's development of data and technology for field campaigning has been the plethora of limitations. These limitations, some of which were described as self-imposed, are deeply entangled with and reinforce one another, as shown through the discussion of targeting.

While much of this chapter has focused on the ways in which the Greens' use of data falls short, there are indicators of further development, such as experiments with texting and machine learning. These improvements are often driven by a perception that the party is less advanced than its competitors. However, to an extent, these deficiencies are a product of the party's culture, one in which field campaigning is understood as direct and personal contact on a mass scale. The next chapter will look to this culture and the organisation of the Greens party to understand the impact it has had on the development and role of field campaigning, and the impact that field campaigning has had on the party.

# Chapter 6

## Party Organisation and Field Campaigning

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### Introduction

The Australian Greens is a confederation of state parties that developed over decades before forming the Australian Greens in 1992 (Jackson 2016, p. 69). Each of these has its own history, culture, constitution, and way of conducting field campaigns.<sup>3</sup> The confederated structure of the Greens allows for comparison within a single case study. This comparison is intended as both an examination of the ways in which party organisation can influence the development of field campaigns, and to shed light on how widely applicable these findings may be. Party organisation is shaped by, and in turn shapes, the development of field campaigning and this chapter indicates some of the mechanisms by which this occurs. This can be accomplished by understanding both the formal structures, and the way in which field campaigning decisions are made. These are found to differ as the formal power of the grassroots membership of the party is balanced by the capacity and resourcing of staff.

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<sup>3</sup> For further information on the structure and history of the Australian Greens party organisation see Miragliotta's (2012) article 'Federalism, Party Organization and the Australian Greens' or Jackson's (2016) book *The Australian Greens: From Activism to Australia's Third Party*.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the roles of the national party, the leader's office, the state parties and the local branches as they relate to field campaigning. It then outlines the party structures that develop and support field campaigning strategy. The findings here show a tension between the formal power of party members and the capacity of staff. Differences between the state parties of Victoria, New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland are discussed, giving insight into the impacts of both structure and context on the development of field campaigning. Finally, the major findings of this chapter are considered in relation to party organisation and professionalisation literature.

## **Field Campaigning at the National, State and Local Levels**

There is a wide body of scholarship regarding party organisation and categorisation of the Australian Greens. As noted, the party's origins as a confederation affect both its internal structures and culture. Other significant influences include: the activist or movement history of the Greens; the party's membership in the Global Greens network; and, as time has passed, the success – or lack thereof – of their electoral campaigns. The focus of this chapter is the relationship between party organisation and field campaigns which is a reciprocal one, each influencing the other.

It begins with a brief overview of the Greens' party organisation. At its simplest, the Greens can be understood to have the following levels; the national party, the state party, and the local branch. The national party has historically had little direct role

in field campaigning, as field campaigning is enacted at the electorate level, involving the state party and the local branches. This is changing with new roles such as a national Digital Organiser, who works with volunteers across the country online (Interviewee 1). However, the national party's primary involvement remains in setting strategic goals such as which electorates to target, which are informed by national post-election reviews (Interviewee 17). At this level, campaign strategy is in broad brushstrokes, and unlikely to specifically mention field campaigning (Interviewee 18). More recently, the national party has played a growing role in providing collaborative spaces in which field campaigners around the country can share methods and innovations. This is likely supported by the growing number of national party staff (Jackson 2013, p. 98; Miragliotta 2010, p. 419). Key figures or groups that relate to field campaigning at this level are an Election Campaign Committee (ECC), National Campaign Director and the leader's office.

One interviewee noted that since Adam Bandt became the leader of the federal parliamentary Greens, the leader's office has played a growing role in field campaigning:

*Leader's office is leading a lot of the national field planning... they are playing a key role in coordinating with the Australian Greens across all states to take the learnings from the best practice, the most successful tactics, tools and systems used in each campaign... Adam's office is going to hold all of that institutional knowledge and disseminate it through the Australian Greens' (Interviewee 18).*

This is likely due to the expertise held by permanent field campaigning staff in Bandt's office and was noted as a significant change from the leader's office's role under previous federal parliamentary leaders.

The next level is the state parties. There are a number of differences between the structures, culture, capabilities and contexts of Greens state parties, some of which will be discussed in greater depth in this chapter. With notable exceptions, state parties are typically responsible for adding detail to the broad federal campaign strategy laid out by the national party. State elections are planned almost entirely at this level. In most cases the state party holds significant financial resources compared to the local branch or federal levels. The state ECC typically makes decisions about its resources and their allocation. This includes hiring campaign team staff and leasing campaign offices for electorates. State parties may also take a role in other forms of resources, such as supplying scripts for door knockers, support with software and other forms of expert advice to campaign teams. These forms of support typically come from the state office and its staff rather than the state party membership. While decisions are made at this level, field campaigns are executed by and within local electorates. As put by one interviewee explaining the distinction, 'state office isn't running a field campaign, they're supporting field campaigns' (Interviewee 5).

Lastly is the local branch, the level at which the field campaign is conducted, that is interpreting strategy and converting it into tactics directed at local targets (Interviewee 18). Local branches with more capacity and experience may have their own ECCs, comprised of local party members who provide oversight to the campaign team's decisions and spending (Interviewee 10). Included in this



campaign team are roles such as community organiser, data manager, polling day coordinator, and campaign manager. Depending on the scale and resources of the campaign in question these roles can be filled by either staff or volunteers. Local party members will also form a sizeable portion of this potential volunteer base of the field campaign.

Despite recent changes that appear to be increasing the influence of the national party and the leader's office in field campaigning, the state and local branch levels still dominate. To reiterate, the national level constructs top-line strategy and provides a growing number of functions in encouraging collaboration and communication between states and campaigners, but states and local branches resource, plan and conduct field campaigns. However, the recent formation of a national Digital Organiser and the growing interest and involvement of the leader's office suggest further national party forays into field campaigning are likely.

## **Campaign Strategy & Decision-Making**

The confederated nature of the Greens means that many functions are replicated at national and subnational levels throughout the party. Further complicating matters are significant variations in the party organisation of the state parties. As the purpose here is to understand the relationship between this party organisation and the development and role of field campaigning, where possible explanations have been simplified. However, the structure is convoluted, and even some of the party's campaigners find it difficult to understand and navigate.

The party structure around field campaigning decision making and strategy is typically similar for the national party, the state party and the local branch, and is illustrated in Figure 6-1 based on interview data. It begins with the ECC creating a strategy document, typically of no more than one or two pages. If the ECC is for the state or branch, this document is informed by the strategy set by the level above, i.e., the national ECC's strategy sets the broad goals that are then given details and allocated resources in the state ECC's strategy.

This committee forms the strategy in consultation with the campaign director, provided one has been hired by the party at the time. Interviewees differed in their descriptions of the nature of the relationship between the campaign director – a member of staff who does not have a vote in this committee – and the ECC, comprised of elected party members volunteering their time. While some said they work collaboratively, other interviewees across multiple states and territories described cases where staff played a larger role. Staff may construct the strategy and have it merely approved by the ECC or attempt to make decisions quickly to avoid ECC 'pushback' (Interviewee 11; Interviewee 10; Interviewee 6). In better resourced electorates with more campaign staff, ECCs may act primarily as an oversight body, setting budgets and approving spending. One interviewee viewed this member oversight as an 'annoying reality of working in a party where consensus is important', and as an impediment to effective campaigning as members are rarely campaigning professionals (Interviewee 11). The growing number of specialised campaign staff has shifted the locus of power in some ways. Staff have significantly deeper understandings of the strategy and execution of field campaigns. As put by one interviewee:

*I think the factor would be in increased professional capacity, which is ironic, because field campaigning is all about the grassroots. But people just don't have the time to be able to really change things in their spare time. And you really need resources dedicated, creating some kind of transformation within the organisation to effect new or better field campaigning (Interviewee 6).*

Despite increased professionalisation, campaign strategy must be approved by the relevant council of members, such as the national conference or state council meetings. Once approved, it returns to the ECC where the committee and the campaign director begin developing the details. At the national level, the campaign director will pass this information and guidance to the states. At a state level, the campaign director recruits and oversees the campaign teams who then enact it in electorates. At the local branch level, the campaign manager ensures the campaign team has the staff it requires and acts as the liaison between field campaigners, state office, and the local ECC.

Figure 6-1: Decision making process for field campaigning strategy



Source: Author using data from interviews.

There are commonalities at each level, in particular the presence of a paid member of staff, a specialised voluntary committee formed of party members and a wider party council comprised of volunteer party members.

Once the campaign strategy has been developed at the national and state levels, most decision making is left to campaign teams, managed and supported by the state campaign director. The exception is when a shift from strategy or significant spending is proposed. In these cases, the local branch ECC is consulted, and requests are made to the state office for further funding or support. This gives campaign teams a great deal of decision-making power and discretion in their campaigning choices. One interviewee with experience of this process described it

as 'a co-design process, but a co-design where the design of the technical details is done by the central team for approval and oversight by the local group' (Interviewee 11). However, even when these campaigns teams are comprised of staff with significant expertise, capacity and power, members remain at the core of decisions. As volunteers participating in field campaigning these members must be convinced of the merit of decisions made by staff, to ensure their continuing support and participation (Interviewee 11). Interviewees cast this relationship as that of professional staff training, supporting and persuading amateur member campaigners.

## **State Party Differences and their impacts**

As a confederated party, constituent state parties have a significant degree of autonomy. Particularly in their field campaigning efforts, state parties have operated independently from the national structure. This independence, coupled with each state party's unique history of formation, resources, membership and electoral support has led to differing patterns of development of field campaigning. These differences are further compounded by the localised nature of field campaigns, leading to their adaptation to each electorate. To explore the impacts these differences have had on field campaigning's development, successes and failures, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland parties are considered here as case studies (See Appendix C for relevant electoral results).

## Victoria

Field campaigning was first developed by the Greens in Victoria, and the state holds the only lower house federal seat the party has won to date at a general election. The Australian Greens Victoria's (AGV) development of field campaigning was informed by context and party structures. Early campaigns were considered innovative and successful, but in more recent years this characterisation has declined. Continuous mass scale field campaigns in a growing number of electorates have arguably spread the party too thin and has left little time or space for reflection or innovation.

Field campaigning for the Greens began in the seat of Melbourne in the 2010 federal election and then implemented at a mass scale in the following federal election in 2013 (Interviewee 7). The AGV were keen to hold their first lower house federal seat and actively sought out new methods to do so. Sam La Rocca – then chief of staff for Federal MP for Melbourne, Adam Bandt – was sent on a study tour to work on Obama's 2012 campaign, bringing back ideas of electoral community organising (La Rocca 2012). From the 2013 election onwards, the AGV frequently hired campaigners with experience in US Democratic Party election campaigns and these methods were diffused throughout the state via a series of campaign schools (Interviewee 7). Here, the role of the state party in informing field campaigning practices is evident.

However, field campaigning successes were shaped in part by context. The AGV has a significant number of members for the Greens, leading to comparatively substantial resources (Australian Greens Victoria 2020). Added to this is the

number of elected Greens politicians, who in all states typically give ten per cent of their parliamentary income to the party, referred to as a tithe (Australian Greens Victoria 2021a). The state office holds most of these resources, distributing funds to campaigns according to strategy. These factors have contributed to the comparative professionalisation of the AGV. In addition to the staff of elected politicians, the Victorian state office has more permanent staff than most other state parties (Interviewee 8). The development of field campaigning has been further aided by the geographic concentration of the electorates contested, primarily in inner Melbourne. This allowed for easy movement of campaigners between campaigns, spreading methods and expertise.

While party members ultimately approve field campaigning strategy and spending, the centralisation of resources and the growing number of professional staff has undermined the decision-making role that members have played in field campaigns. However, members' expectations have impacts. Interviewees referred to the number of electorates in which field campaigns were run in the 2019 federal election, and the number of campaign staff hired for these campaigns, as a mistake (Interviewee 4). This decision was in part guided by the expectations of local branch members that if their area was being taken seriously, that would result in a mass scale field campaign. The effect is seen in examples such as the decision to run field campaigning activities such as door knocks in Kooyong in 2019, despite campaigners not believing this would resonate well with older, wealthier constituents (Interviewee 19). As one interviewee put it, there is a 'perception that it [field campaigning] is a necessary component of Greens campaigns and that fails to acknowledge how hard it is and how much work it is... ten per cent of a field

campaign is not better than nothing, it's still nothing' (Interviewee 4). Having convinced members of the virtues of field campaigning and professional campaigners, members notice when these are absent. In this way, the culture of the AGV has been shaped by field campaigning and has come to prize expertise and professionalisation.

Despite early successes, the AGV is no longer considered at the forefront of field campaigning in the Greens. Interviewees typically attributed this to stagnation, either in the field campaigning methods or in the effects they have on the voter. Stagnation and its impacts is discussed in the following chapter. In either case, this stagnation can be attributed to the early successes and the ensuing rapid increase in scale. Since 2013 the AGV has overseen mass scale field campaigns every year except 2015 and has conducted campaigns on this scale in as many as eight lower house seats simultaneously (Interviewee 19).<sup>4</sup> The number and scale of campaigns has increased with every success, as the party strives to gain new electorates while defending their incumbents. This rapid and relentless pace has left the state party and its campaigners with little time for reflection, experimentation or research. This likely contributed to why the AGV developed its Voter ID strategy (see Chapter Four), easily replicated across electorates and focused on efficiency and scale.

In the 2021 round of interviews, it was apparent that the AGV has begun rethinking the relationship between staff and volunteer members. The party seems to be

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<sup>4</sup> Smaller campaigns are also conducted in electorates considered second or third tier priorities.



attempting to maintain the professionalisation of campaign strategy and planning, while encouraging further participation and autonomy in the execution of these plans:

*You need people to step up as leaders, but to follow the campaign strategy. So, it's not quite the same as equipping people with skills and saying go about and be leaders. It's equipping people with skills to follow the campaign strategy (Interviewee 2).*

To this end, the state office is encouraging electorate campaign teams and local branches to conduct more of their own fundraising, social events, and recruiting. This is being achieved through 'developing a build-your-own-adventure style campaign structure... making sure that there are resources and strategy and tools available for everybody to be able to work in service of the state-wide senate campaign' (Interviewee 18). These changes may ease some of the strain on the state party and its resources, while encouraging further member participation in the conduct of field campaigns.

It is also notable that the AGV have recently passed significant changes to their constitution. The new constitution is significantly shorter than previous versions, in part intended to move many party functions to by-laws for more changeability and flexibility (Australian Greens Victoria 2021b; Interviewee 19). Changes include the removal of all references to campaigning (Australian Greens Victoria 2021b). This includes decisions regarding which campaigning roles and party structures are filled by staff or party members. The new constitution may indicate a move towards

increasing involvement and control by the party office, as staff now have the potential to move into roles previously reserved for party members.

Context and a comparatively centralised and professional party structure gave rise to the AGV's early success, but these findings suggest that the rapid proliferation of field campaigning has impaired the state party's ability to innovate and improve. Field campaigning has shaped the party culture in the AGV, emphasising professionalisation and a strong central office. While this has had some benefits, leading to an easily replicable model of field campaigning and resources that can be distributed according to strategy, there have also been negative impacts. The changes to the AGV's constitution and attempts to shift more responsibility for conducting field campaigns to the party on the ground indicate that the state party is aware of these impacts and is in the early stages of restructuring the relationship between staff and members, although it is too early to say what the result may be.

## **New South Wales**

Interviewees spoke of the organisation of the Greens NSW (GNSW) as something of an aberration within the party. This is largely due to the level of decentralisation in the state, where many functions that typically are held by state offices elsewhere, remain with the local branch<sup>5</sup> in the GNSW. The dispersed nature of the state party is further reinforced by the geographic spread of Greens voters, and therefore of

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<sup>5</sup> The NSW Greens refers to these as local groups, but for the sake of similarity and ease of comparison, they are referred to as local branches here.

contestable electorates. This has had significant impacts and has arguably stymied the development of field campaigning in the state.

Unlike the AGV, whose state office take an active interest and role in field campaigns, the GNSW was described as 'a membership-based organisation, and winning elections is left to the groups [local branches] (Interviewee 20). This can be attributed to the lack of resources and therefore of staff at the state level. While the GNSW does hire a campaign director, it was noted by interviewees that this often occurs significantly later and for shorter periods than in other states (Interviewee 10). Despite the significant party membership of the GNSW and the use of tithing from MP salaries, other funds are devolved to the local branches. Most significantly, electoral returns are fed back to the relevant electorate campaign (Interviewee 20). While in total this is not an insignificant amount of funds, this money is spread across local branches and campaigns. This has two effects. Firstly, campaigns with resources are those who have done well in the past. This makes it difficult for the party to pivot in its priorities between elections, resulting in campaigns in areas that have recently become contestable receiving scant support.

Secondly, the lack of centralised resources means the state party has little role in field campaigns, including resources and infrastructure. The GNSW's election campaign committee at the state level has no constitutional recognition and the role it plays in setting strategy is minimal at best (The Greens NSW 2018). This has resulted in campaigns with disparate messaging, branding and field campaigning methods. This decentralisation has also led to the duplication of infrastructure such as NationBuilder database subscriptions, leading to wasted resources and ignorance of supporter contacts between neighbouring campaigns (Interviewee

14). Each campaign team becomes responsible for many more activities, such as database management, increasing their workload significantly. In some cases, the GNSW local branches have formed voluntary regional groupings to pool resources to overcome this. However, this is not a perfect solution. Electorates that the party considers contestable are more geographically dispersed in NSW than in other states, with pockets in Sydney and the Northern Rivers. While decentralisation could create a context in which field campaigners have more freedom to experiment and innovate, if this has occurred it has not spread significantly beyond a given local branch. However, interviewees indicated that this had not been the case. As seen in the AGV, interviewees pointed out that when campaigners are already operating at capacity, they have little space or time to innovate or learn new methods (Interviewee 14).

It is therefore unsurprising that developments in field campaigning have spread slowly and unevenly through the GNSW. Field campaigning came to the GNSW in the 2016 federal election campaign following its initial development in Victoria. Rather than supported by the state office, the introduction of field campaigning was largely spurred by campaigners and party members. Having heard of these developments, campaigners travelled to Victoria to gain experience and training and to bring methods and resources such as scripts back (Interviewee 14). Recently, some campaigners have built connections with the national party, seeking resources that in other states would likely be provided by the state party (Interviewee 14). This pattern of development has continued in the years since, with some campaigners forming their own strong personal networks, but the result is

not uniform. The field campaigns of the GNSW, while in some cases well executed, are not considered by those within the Greens to be at the cutting edge.

Due to the decentralised nature of the GNSW and the campaigns of its local branches, it is difficult to make sweeping assessments of the success of field campaigning in this state (See Appendix C for electoral results). Despite this difficulty, comparing the pattern of development and results to other state parties indicates that the type and level of decentralisation found in the GNSW has hampered its field campaigning efforts and stymied the development of professional campaigners. This suggests that in addition to grassroots involvement, central coordination is needed to develop field campaigns effectively. Despite a large membership, campaigners who are driven enough to seek their own further development and a number of contestable electorates, the organisation of the GNSW has led to less sophisticated field campaigning overall than found in Victoria or Queensland.

## **Queensland**

The majority of interviewees viewed the Queensland Greens (QG) as the state branch that was at the forefront of field campaigning within the party. The QG has experienced recent successes, gaining their first two state MPs in 2017 and 2020. This occurred in a period where the decline of Victoria and NSW's failure to launch had begun creating doubts as to the efficacy and longevity of field campaigning. In structure, the QG can be seen as a middle-way: resources are split between the state office and local branches; there is a strong central strategy supplied by the

state office but campaigns are under little pressure and given space to innovate (Interviewee 20). Despite local branches having more autonomy than in Victoria — both strategic and financial — from the state party, strong central supports are in place. Unlike GNSW, there is a permanent campaign director working from the state office (Interviewee 10). While these structures have evidently had an impact on the state's development of field campaigning, so too has the context. The QG has fewer members than the GNSW or the AGV. However, the party has benefited from slower development and the ability to focus on a small number of geographically concentrated electorates, lacking incumbents or a state upper house. In short, the stakes are somewhat lower here.

The QG's field campaigning is generally considered to have come into its own from the 2019 federal election onwards. Building upon Victorian understandings of field campaigning, campaigners worked to improve upon this model. Campaigners from Queensland sought advice from psychologists at the University of Queensland, looked closely to US influences such as Bernie Sanders' presidential campaigns and the research of the Analyst Institute.<sup>6</sup> The result has been the Voter Persuasion strategy, focused on building connections with not only voters but volunteers. In addition to its purported increased efficacy, this strategy contributes to stable, if slower, growth for the state party as the supporter experience is prioritised. This combination of highly trained and committed campaign volunteers with a strong

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<sup>6</sup> The Analyst Institute is a progressive US organisation that conducts research on voter contact-based campaigning and shares these insights with like-minded organisations.

central structure provided by staff and state strategy confirms that the structure of the QG can be characterised as a middle way between Victoria and NSW.

After only one federal and one state election it is perhaps too early to judge how field campaigning will impact the QG over the long term (See Appendix C for electoral results). However, the way in which interviewees from other states speak of Queensland's successes shows how success influences development. One interviewee noted that the QG's electoral successes have resonated in part because of the state's reputation as conservative (Interviewee 10). This likely drove initial interest, but as put by one interviewee, 'campaigns that are good at selling their own success [to others in the party] are quite successful at influencing the evolution of field in other places across the Greens, across the country' (Interviewee 18). This sentiment was echoed by eleven of the interviewees and was in part explained by campaigners' need to convince party members of the merits of their decisions (Interviewee 19). Despite this somewhat cynical understanding of how development occurs within the party, most attributed the QG's success in some way to their innovation. While these findings have shown that this innovation can be understood through context, this belief has encouraged Greens campaigners across the country to consider how else field campaigning may be improved.

## Discussion

This chapter has found that influences on field campaigning in the Greens include party organisation, electoral context and timing, resources, and the perception of success. These findings correspond well with the academic literature as it regards the party organisation of Greens parties generally, and the Australian Greens specifically, and address RQ4.

### Professionalisation

This chapter's findings conform with Mills' definition of professionalisation, characterised by an increasing number of paid staff with expertise and experience (Mills 2014b). Over the last decade, the number of field campaign staff in the Greens has increased significantly. This suggests growth in the level of resources devoted to field campaigns, although interviewees were reticent to supply detail about party finances. The shifts in the number and experience of campaign staff reflects Mills' (2014b) emphasis on the importance of experience and expertise. This is further confirmed by the value given to expert professionals by party members, particularly in the example of the AGV.

However, in a departure from Mills, the model of a party that engages in professional electoral campaigning does not neatly fit the Greens. Mills defines this model by its centralisation, strategy and ample resources (2015, p. 125). Mills describes strategy as professional when it includes targeting, marketing principles and consultants. Within the Greens, these features are rare and sporadic at best. The ample resources that Mills associates with professionalisation includes the



ability to pay not only for these consultants, but for full time campaigning staff, who are 'not 'amateurs' or 'volunteers' or 'part-time dilettantes' (2015, p. 119). While there are an increasing number of staff involved in Greens field campaigns, many roles are filled by volunteers. For those campaigners who are staff, most are hired on contracts for a single election campaign, with only a very small minority working in full-time ongoing positions. However, describing the Greens party's electoral campaigning as 'unprofessional' also seems inappropriate. Mills' argument that campaigns contribute to greater centralisation holds here, as do the features he ascribes, such as the introduction of a National Campaign Director (2015, p. 121). Likewise, the description of professionals as those with specialist skills and experience applies well to Greens campaigners. As such, the Greens' field campaigns are best described as increasingly, but not yet entirely professional.

## **Centralisation**

A pattern of centralisation has been found in this chapter, driven by the increasing number and capacity of national, state and campaign staff. This centralisation is balanced by the continuing need to court the support of party members, and their role in oversight committees and other formal party structures. The discussion of the differences between the Victoria and NSW parties has shown the difficulties present in either too much or too little centralisation. The middle path struck by Queensland provides the strengths of professionalisation while maintaining the grassroots identity of the Greens and high levels of member participation.

This chapter's findings build upon the work of Miragliotta and Jackson (2015) who showed that increased capacity at the national level of the Australian Greens has driven centralisation. Their work is expanded upon here, revealing that rising staff numbers and capacity has encouraged centralisation across the national, state and local branch levels. Despite this increased centralisation, the findings here show that the Greens should not be described as a centralised party. Instead, this chapter supports Kefford's (2018, p. 667) finding that the sub-national layer still dominates field campaigning, as states detail strategy, provide resources, and oversee the electorate campaign staff. The findings discussed here also provide further evidence for his assertion that within the Greens' campaigns 'the national party is playing an increasingly significant role' (Kefford 2018, p. 667). This assertion is echoed by Jackson (2013, p. 98), who notes the 'broader process of change within the Australian Greens, one of professionalisation and centralisation'. Jackson (2013, p. 98) ascribes this change to a drive to become 'electorally mature', affirmed by the findings of this chapter.

This chapter's discussion has also shown how context and party organisation shaped the respective development of the Voter ID strategy and Voter Persuasion strategy. The geographic concentration, or dispersal, of supporters and voters is found to have influenced the development of field campaigning by state Greens parties. In the AGV and the QG this has encouraged further centralisation and electoral success. This finding correlates well with Miragliotta's (2012) discussion of the impacts of geography on the party organisation of Greens' state parties, particularly the Queensland and NSW parties. Other contextual influences found

here to encourage centralisation include the speed and scale of development, and the absence of an upper house in the Queensland state parliament.

## **Party Organisation and Type**

Although centralisation has increased, it is not to the extent that the Greens could be described as a centralised party. This chapter has highlighted the differing and overlapping functions of the national, state and local levels in the planning and execution of field campaigns, and the variation in the degree of centralisation between state parties. State parties may still be the dominant actors in Greens field campaigning, but as shown, many functions are balanced or held by differing party levels and structures. Carty's (2004, p. 7) account of strataarchy as a form of mutual interdependence between party structures applies well to these findings. As the discussion of how campaign strategy moves through various Greens party bodies and levels shows, each part contributes a different role. Cross's (2018, p. 208) contributions to the idea of strataarchy are also considered here. The interdependent relationship this study finds between staff and members can be considered an example of the ability of these actors to hold each other to account. This suggests that continuing nationalisation and centralisation has made the Greens' organisation of field campaigns increasingly strataarchical since the publication of Kefford's (2018) work, as predicted by the author.

Regarding party types, this study's findings support Jackson's (2016, p. 35) understanding of the Australian Greens as possessing aspects from both movement party and electoral-professional party types. This chapter has shown

how the Greens' central professional structure is balanced against the interests and preferences of party members. Despite increasing centralisation and professionalisation, grassroots identity and the wishes of party members forms the basis of the party and it seems unlikely that this will be abandoned. Instead, the form of this balance is likely to continue shifting, such as in the AGV's new constitution and plans for increasing the participation of members in the upcoming federal election. The Greens' party type as defined by Jackson (2016) bears many similarities with the professional-activist centaurs described in the work of Rihoux and Frankland (2016) describing the transition of Greens parties from their activist origins. This account draws from the work of Panebianco (1988), asserting that Greens parties begin to shift away from their activist roots as they 'adapt to their environment' (Rihoux & Frankland 2016, p. 280). This results in a stratarchical party with an electoral-professional 'head', and an amateur activist 'body': a professional-activist centaur. This particular description of the way in which Greens parties adopt elements of both amateur-activist and electoral-professional aspects resonates with the findings of this study. Professionalisation is at its most prominent in the central structures of the Australian Greens' field campaigning apparatus, while as this and previous chapters have shown, field campaigning relies upon the participation of many party members and supporters.

## Conclusion

The relationship between party organisation and field campaigning operates as a feedback loop. This chapter has shown how the relationship between the Greens party organisation and their campaigns drives further development and change. The differences between the histories of field campaigning development of the state parties has demonstrated how this relationship shapes not just whether and to what extent field campaigning develops, but the form it takes.

Despite increasing professionalisation and centralisation, grassroots identity remains at the party's core. While field campaigning plays a functional role in the party's electoral campaigning, its role in affirming the Greens' identity is as important. As put by one interviewee, it is 'in the [party's] DNA, field campaigning is just a natural extension'(Interviewee 3). The next chapter will consider the role of field campaigning in affirming this identity, alongside other impacts and functions of field campaigns.

# Chapter 7

## The Impacts of Field Campaigning

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### Introduction

So far, we have established a working definition of field campaigning and examined how it has developed over time. This chapter focuses on what field campaigns achieve. This will be done by discussing the impacts interviewees believe field campaigning has had on the Greens' electoral fortunes, its party structure, and its role in performing a range of civic functions. It is unsurprising that the Greens view these outcomes as benefits given the resources the party commits to field campaigns. These functions mean that field campaigning can be considered an end in itself. This is because it involves forms of political activity by volunteers that are in keeping with the ways in which the Greens think about democracy. As one interviewee responded when asked about the impacts of field campaigns, 'I think that question involves a broader question for the Greens on what the purpose of electoral politics is' (Interviewee 3). Without a belief that field campaigns have positive impacts, there would be no incentive for campaigners or parties to commit to this form of political campaigning. However, interviewees also noted there were limitations to what field campaigning is able to achieve.

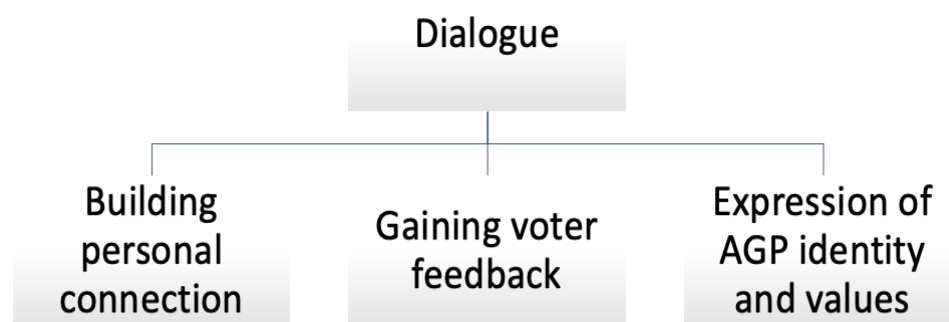
This chapter first considers the stated benefits of field campaigning: voter persuasion, party building and civic functions. A typology of civic functions is developed by identifying the elements referred to by interviewees. This chapter then

looks to the limitations of field campaigning and how the party believes they could be remedied. It concludes by considering the ultimate effectiveness of field campaigning, according to interviewees.

## Voter persuasion

The first and most prominent goal of field campaigning is its ambition to persuade the voter to vote for the party and its candidate. Gaining votes was consistently named as the primary goal of direct contact with voters. However, there was significant variation in *how* interviewees believed field campaigning could achieve this goal. Interviewees named field campaigning as persuasive through: a) humanising the party and building personal connections; b) gathering voter feedback and; c) expressing the identity and values of the Greens. These elements are inter-related and are all rooted in the dialogical nature of field campaigning. This is represented diagrammatically in Figure 7-1.

*Figure 7-1: Elements of voter persuasion through field campaigning*



*Source: Author using data from interviews.*

As discussed in earlier chapters, volunteers are trained with a battery of key messages and questions before commencing field campaigning activities, such as door-knocking or phone-banking. Volunteers are trained to relate to voters' individual concerns rather than simply promote their party. While scripts are used, they reflect the non-linear path of a natural conversation and use open-ended questions (Interviewee 7). Despite ongoing work to improve scripts, interviewees rarely referred to the script itself as being the critical element of voter persuasion. Instead, the dialogue acknowledging and responding to the concerns of voters was considered the central element of effective voter persuasion.

This dialogue was described as having an impact in three primary ways. Firstly, by 'building a human connection' between the voter and the party (Interviewee 19). Field campaigning was seen as the only point at which a voter has 'a two-way conversation' with a campaign (Interviewee 12). This dialogue was considered a form of persuasion as it expresses interest and care in the individual voter and their concerns. Gaining voter feedback through hearing these concerns is a significant part of this two-way communication. It enables the campaign to shift focus and speak to individual voters — and by extension, the electorate — about the issues they care about (Interviewee 17). In some cases, door knocks are conducted primarily for this purpose — to gather and test issue salience within an electorate (Interviewee 14). Beyond merely the issues themselves, it is used to mirror how voters speak about their concerns, to 'repeat back the framing that people use because the framing can be almost as important [as voters' concerns]' (Interviewee 13).



The party's goal is to position itself within the community by reflecting and responding to voters' concerns. Interviewees considered field campaigning as an expression of the Greens' identity as a grassroots party, illustrated in the foundational value of 'grassroots participatory democracy' (Interviewee 12; Interview 9; ('The Four Pillars' 2021). This creates and affirms the identity of the Greens as a "party that cares", with one interviewee describing field campaigning as a natural extension of the party's identity (Interviewee 3). This identity is intended to persuade voters while simultaneously cohering the support of volunteers, giving volunteers something to do demonstrating 'that we're a people powered movement' (Interviewee 5). However, as noted, commitment to this identity can lead to significant financial resources being committed to field campaigns that are ultimately unlikely to be successful.

### **How effective are field campaigns?**

There was an evident tension between the interviewees' explicit belief in the fundamental value of field campaigning and their analyses of its success in winning votes and elections. Interviewees tended to agree that the impacts of field campaigning were more limited than was widely believed within the party, particularly by members. One interviewee also noted the difficulty in judging the effectiveness of field campaigning. When seriously contesting electorates, the party always runs a large-scale field campaign (Interviewee 15). If the election is won, this success is then attributed to the field campaign. This victory affirms the Greens' belief in this method and its effectiveness, arguably without sufficient evidence

(Interviewee 15). As this interviewee clearly stated, 'I've never ever found any evidence that there is a correlation between field campaigning and votes' (Interviewee 15).

However, as the benefits listed in this chapter indicate, campaigners' evaluations of field campaigning were positive overall and demonstrated significant belief in its *value*. The interviewees' roles as field campaigners may have affected this optimism, as they are professionally invested in field campaigning. Additionally, many of the benefits identified were not about gaining votes, but about contributing to the quality of electoral politics and building the party.

Nevertheless, when asked 'How effective do you believe field campaigning to be?' interviewees gave positive, if qualified, answers (see Appendix A for Interview Questions). They spoke about the benefits as cumulative, contextual, and dependent on a campaign that was strong in other areas. If these conditions aligned, then field campaigning was effective. If its impact on voters was quantified, interviewees credited field campaigning with increasing votes by anywhere from a one to four per cent swing (Interviewee 7; Interviewee 4; Interviewee 12). Ultimately the party is — or at least considers itself — highly reliant on field campaigning, and this plays a significant role in its continued importance. As one interviewee said, 'if you don't have money, you don't have a chance without field campaigning' (Interviewee 13).

## Building the Party

Efforts to energise supporters and volunteers have long term impacts on party organisation. Several interviewees cited field campaigning as both strengthening the party and ensuring its longevity. This occurs through its capacity to a) increase fundraising, b) mobilise supporters and c) legitimise the party. Field campaigning enhances fundraising by communicating tangible campaign needs and outcomes to potential donors. Interviewee 19 explained:

*You can send out emails... and say we... need to buy a printer, right?*  
*And of course, you buy a printer, but the printer might cost... five*  
*grand or something like that. But say if you raised 15 grand, cool, just*  
*put the rest to digital [advertising] or whatever. As well as ... when you*  
*send out weekly updates to your fundraising lists, "we've done this",*  
*and it keeps people coming back (Interviewee 19).*

Direct fundraising is not the only way the Greens bring in money from field campaigning. Field campaigns were also said to attract large donors due to their visibility (Interviewee 5).

Field campaigns play a role in mobilising and recruiting supporters. As one interviewee said, 'without the field campaign, without tasks for those people to do, they wouldn't feel as involved in the campaign' (Interviewee 12). This involvement attracts new supporters and increases their likelihood of becoming paying party members. They take on volunteer roles within the party, administering the party bureaucracy: 'We now have a pool of people who are used to stepping up and

helping out, which then gives us a broader pool of people to choose from' (Interviewee 7). Some of these supporters will then go on to take paid positions with the party, or to become candidates (Interviewee 11). Bringing in new members and supporters was viewed as improving the party, and one interviewee described the party as 'calcified' prior to the introduction of contemporary field campaigning (Interviewee 10). Field campaigning also works to shape the culture and norms of local branches. Those branches that frequently run field campaigns were considered to be more engaged and structured (Interviewee 18). Once recruited, continuing field campaigns cement members' support by providing ongoing need for their involvement.

Supporters, funds and party administration all aid in the final element of field campaigning's contributions to the party: legitimisation. These are the hallmarks of a serious party. By running a field campaign, the Greens demonstrate they are 'serious about running for an election' and have a strong chance of winning in a given electorate (Interviewee 13; Interviewee 5). Field campaigning grows the number of visible supporters, 'making it normal to be Green' (Interviewee 7). The field campaign demonstrates that:

*There are enough supporters that they're willing to put on a stupid t-shirt and go out and knock on a stranger's door. The physical presence of a large number of people has a really strong psychological effect on people. Especially if you can get... the field campaign to look like the people you want to vote for you* (Interviewee 12).

In some cases door knockers wear clothes intended to match the area, such as smart casual dress in suburbs considered more affluent, a choice intended to normalise Greens supporters and increase the likelihood of voters engaging with door knockers (Interviewee 20).

## Civic Functions

Interviewees firmly believed that field campaigning improves politics by performing what are grouped and termed here as 'civic functions'. The majority of interviewees stated — unprompted — a belief that field campaigning improved Australian democracy, by performing a variety of civic functions. These civic functions are detailed below and are categorised as benefits to a) the individual voter or volunteer; b) the politician or party; and c) electoral politics (see Figure 7-2).

Interviewees differed on what they saw as the party's motivation for pursuing these civic functions. Some took a pragmatic view, describing how appearing to care about voters or connecting with the community increased their electoral chances (Interviewee 12). Most believed that doing good was the motivation (Interviewee 9). In either case, interviewees agreed that field campaigns benefit electoral politics by engaging voters directly and individually. As one interviewee said, 'I think that without field campaigning, the Australian political system would be worse off' (Interviewee 4).

## Benefits to the Citizen

Field campaigning was described by interviewees as benefiting individual voters and volunteers. While these benefits differ slightly between the two groups, they are described as engagement and education.

*Voter education* refers to the process of deepening voters' understanding of how the electoral system works. This is important 'because despite growing up in the country and doing it every few years some people just still for some reason don't understand how the voting system in Australia actually works' (Interviewee 17). This included increasing voters' understanding of preferential voting, which was considered crucial in persuading people to vote for the Greens rather than using their first preferences for one of the two major parties. While voter education is intended to improve electoral prospects, it was also identified as a broader civic function of field campaigning.

*Volunteer education* was primarily described as building volunteers' skills. While these benefit the campaign, interviewees described these skills as transferrable, benefiting volunteers in their personal and professional lives. Leadership and confidence were referred to often and one interviewee described the impact of volunteering with this example:

*I had a volunteer who never thought he would be a leader. I stepped him up and convinced him to be a leader. He was an amazing neighbourhood organiser and ran a team. And he said to me after..." I never would have thought that I would be able to lead a team. And I never thought that that would be a part of my career and now I'm*

*considering stepping into a management role and leading a team at my work because of this" (Interviewee 8).*

Some state parties adjust training and skills development to accord with what volunteers want to learn. While voter conversation training is a standard part of field campaigns, in response to a review of members and volunteers the ACT party developed conversation training for volunteers who wanted to learn to express their political views clearly and persuasively when talking to family and friends (Interviewee 3). Speaking to voters was viewed as building the confidence of volunteers in expressing their political values, particularly in younger female volunteers.

*Voter engagement* occurs through the dialogue that occurs between the campaign and voters, discussed above. This occurs through the interaction between voters and party volunteers:

*The larger public are disenfranchised with the political process and the Greens field campaign is an attempt to reengage them, get them excited about what they can change through their vote (Interviewee 9).*

Voter engagement was seen to occur regardless of the tone or outcome of the conversation. By expressing their concerns and thoughts with someone representing a party, 'even if it was just a rage' (Interviewee 9), interviewees believed that voters would become more politically engaged: 'just having somebody at your door talking to you about politics... makes it real for people' (Interviewee 4). At its best, this engagement was viewed as encouraging voters to think about their issues

through a political lens, to consider the policy solutions that would benefit themselves and their community and how they can be involved in achieving this (Interviewee 6).

One data manager attributed this to the minimal use of voter targeting by the Greens. By speaking to a wide array of people within the electorate, voter engagement occurs beyond those who are likely to vote for the Greens (Interviewee 15). Interviewees considered voter engagement to be an intrinsic good, reflecting the party's principles of 'grassroots democracy and community involvement' (Interviewee 9).

*Volunteer Engagement* beyond the forms of engagement outlined as aspects of building the party was primarily related to the perceived longer-term impacts of participating in campaigns. As one interviewee said:

*People who come in and get energised and get politically activated through the Greens, they then go, and they volunteer or work for a climate org, or they turn out at rallies... I think that the impact of those people being politically activated through a Greens field campaign, and then what they then go on to do in the broader progressive political movement isn't something we can really measure, but I think it is powerful (Interviewee 5).*

This engagement was seen as going beyond an electoral campaign, or a political party. In this way, volunteers are perceived as activated by engaging with Greens field campaigns, going on to participate more in political and civic life whether or not they remain affiliated with the party.



## Benefits to the Politician

Field campaigning was also described as having made politicians better representatives. This view was particular to the only interviewee who had been an elected representative. This finding is therefore significant despite not being replicated in other interviews. This interviewee described how 'you learn through campaigning... how to be a better campaigner, and then a better politician, a better representative' (Interviewee 13). This improvement was described as primarily occurring through increased ties with the community and feedback from conversations with voters, as they learned the concerns of their electorate.

*'When I got elected, I already knew... what was going on and it was really obvious the councillors who had... done field campaigning, versus those who had relied on giant billboards' (Interviewee 13).*

This politician described field campaigning as preparing them for their position, due to similarities it holds with being an elected representative, which requires direct engagement with constituents. They described the engagement process and its feedback as sometimes quite harsh, including being told outright by voters when they had lost a vote for failing to answer specific policy questions. However, this politician viewed this process of engagement as having made them a better representative, benefiting greatly from the feedback they received and increased knowledge of the concerns of their constituents. Another interviewee noted the importance of these learnings from the field campaign then being acted on and further developed: 'how do you make people feel heard, that as an MP you're interested in what they have to say?' (Interviewee 8). Once elected, interviewees

viewed this process as continuing through constituency work, aiding individuals or community groups.

Interviewees with experience working in the offices of elected representatives noted that this kind of candidate involvement in field campaigning does not apply universally. While lower house candidates for state and federal elections and council candidates participate in field campaigning, upper house candidates for state and federal elections are less likely to do so (Interviewee 5). This is likely due to the localised nature of field campaigning being thought more appropriate for campaigns tied to a single electorate.

## **Benefits to Electoral Politics**

Finally, there are the civic functions that interviewees believe field campaigning provides to electoral politics. These include fostering youth involvement in politics, breaking through narrow media narratives and accepted wisdom about voters and politics, and improving the tenor of public debate.

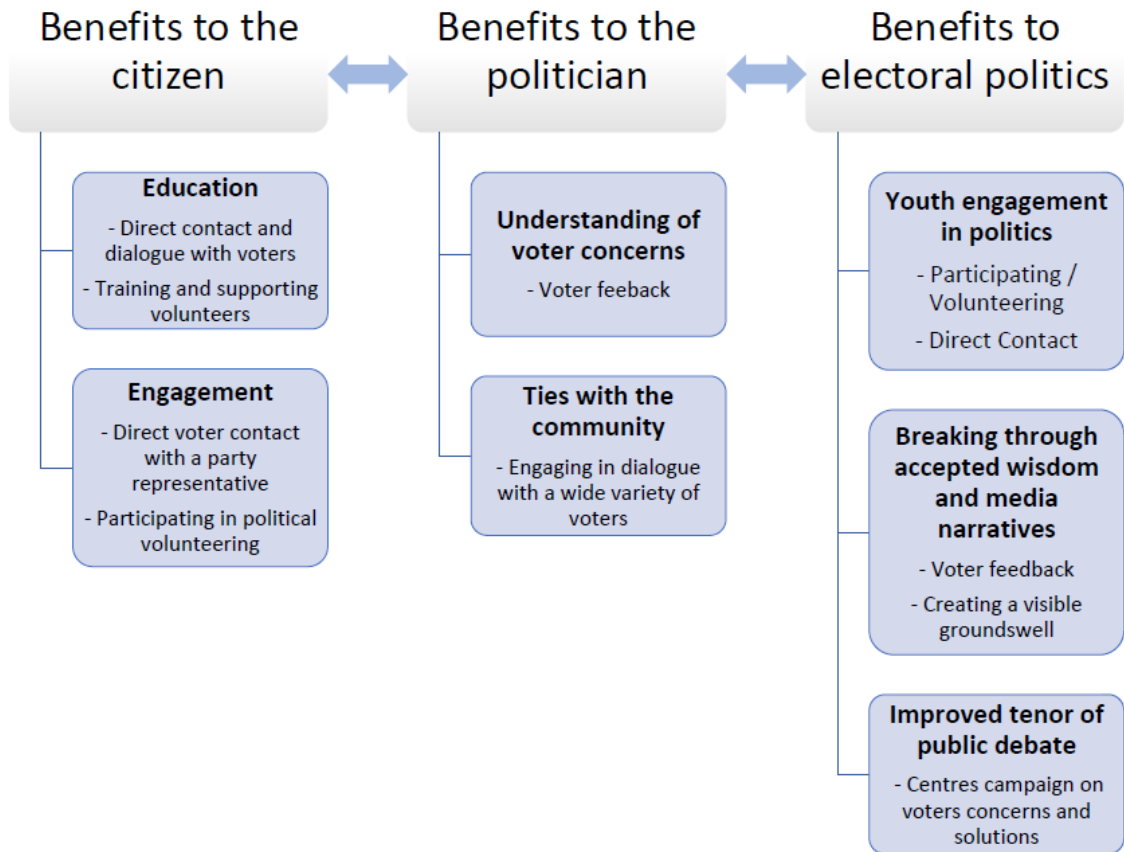
Youth involvement was considered key for several reasons: it 'energises' the campaign, combats 'disaffected youth' disengaging from politics, and brings in new supporters who keep the party representative of wider society (Interviewee 4; Interviewee 19; Interviewee 7). These effects were achieved through field campaigning methods involving direct political engagement. As one interviewee stated, 'It's not a spectator sport. It's a participation one' (Interviewee 7).

Direct contact was also seen to break through accepted wisdom and narratives about voters. Rather than assuming voters are concerned with a particular issue, field campaigns provide real-time, localised feedback (Interviewee 13; Interviewee 17). In turn, voter feedback was seen to encourage parties to better reflect the concerns of voters. Additionally, field campaigning was viewed as challenging the presumed outcome of an election, where 'every media outlet and poll might be telling you X is going to win' (Interviewee 4). This is achieved through the field campaigns role as a visible 'groundswell' that encourages voters to engage more readily with an election.

Voter feedback was also viewed as improving the tone of electoral campaigning. By focusing the campaign's content on the voters and their concerns, interviewees saw field campaigning as 'campaigning about what could be possible' (Interviewee 13). This was seen as improving politics as a whole and as an intrinsic element of the party's values of 'optimism and hope' (Interviewee 13).

These civic functions are shown in the typology below (Figure 7-2). It categorises the civic functions of field campaigning as 'benefits' in bold, and below each lists the activities through which it is realised.

Figure 7-2: Civic functions of field campaigning



Source: Author using data from interviews.

## The Limitations of Field Campaigning's Functions

As noted in Chapter Seven, several interviewees observed that field campaigning's effects had stagnated in recent years, particularly regarding voter persuasion. Despite running field campaigns in an increasing number of electorates, the Greens have not gained a second federal lower house seat (Interviewee 19). Clearly, there are limitations to the benefits of field campaigning. Most interviewees were in broad agreement about the causes of this plateau. They outlined a phenomenon that is termed the 'saturation effect' in the proceeding discussion.

## The Saturation Effect

The saturation effect is said to be caused when electorates reach a point of voter contact saturation, after which field campaigning has little to no benefit. The increased prevalence of field campaigning across parties has contributed to the saturation effect, particularly in Victoria. For example, between 2016 and 2019 the Darebin local government area in Melbourne saw six significant field campaigns from the Greens<sup>1</sup> (Interviewee 19). One interviewee described the impact of this upon the Greens' field campaigns:

*Our entire framework... is based on the idea that just talking to someone can be an effective tool in changing their mind... But when you go back to the same person year after year and keep just asking them what they care about, your conversation becomes essentially useless... I think it is [effective] when it's the first time someone speaks to you like that. But if we don't change, fundamentally, it's going to become less and less effective, even as we get bigger and bigger (Interviewee 15)*

The saturation effect is compounded by the same voters being contacted by the field campaigns of other parties and was viewed as leading to increasing 'distrust' (Interviewee 13). The success of campaigns in states where mass-scale field campaigning is relatively new, such as Queensland attests to this view (Interviewee

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<sup>1</sup> These were the 2016 Federal Election for Batman, the 2016 Council Election for Darebin, the 2017 State By-Election for Northcote, the 2018 Federal By-Election for Batman, the 2018 State Election for Northcote, and the 2019 Federal Election for Cooper (previously Batman).

15; Interviewee 19). One interviewee contested the presence of a saturation effect, noting that the number of meaningful interactions in each election cycle is typically below 10 per cent of the total electorate (Interviewee 8). However, despite doubting the saturation effect, this interviewee commented the impact that the perception may have on Greens field campaigners' efforts. In particular, the interviewee noted that it may lead to campaigners believing that they know a lot about an electorate already or that they have already contacted every voter.

The presence of a saturation effect was attributed to a lack of significant changes to the Greens' field campaigning model since 2013. Interviewees attributed two primary drivers of this stagnation: a) the limited ability of campaigns to adjust during an election; and b) the loss of professional knowledge between elections.

Despite viewing feedback as a strength of field campaigns, interviewees were critical of how campaigns utilise this feedback. These criticisms were varied and included perceived delays in adapting to feedback from voters, poor integration of voter feedback with other elements of the campaign such as media, and loss of internal feedback from volunteers and staff (Interviewee 12; Interviewee 4; Interviewee 15). If interviewees gave a reason, it was that 'we lose it because people are generally operating at near 100% capacity' (Interviewee 12). Due to the pressure and pace of campaigning, staff rarely have time during campaigns to take on feedback and are often limited to what is possible rather than what is ideal. The impacts of this were discussed in Chapter Six in relation to the capacity of staff in various states.

The insecurity of their positions and the loss of staff between election cycles compound this inefficiency. These losses were described as structural, caused by the limited resources of the party and therefore, the lack of job security for campaigners working on fixed term contracts. Consequentially, the Greens lose the 'learnt wisdom, combined wisdom of the people' between elections (Interviewee 17). These losses are exacerbated by the number of staff and volunteers who 'burn out' while working on field campaigns (Interviewee 13). Describing the impact of this, one interviewee said:

*I think it's a strange situation to be in when you have insecure work and you want to win, and that the security, the future security of your work and your career depends on whether or not you win*  
(Interviewee 4).

For this reason, many staff leave this work seeking more stable careers or positions.

## **Overcoming Limitations by Building a Movement**

Two campaigners in the first round of interviews in 2020 expressed thoughts on how best to overcome the saturation effect, describing a similar vision for the future. Despite criticising the lack of fundamental changes in the Greens' field campaigning model – in particular to the Voter ID strategy – they advocated for further commitment to the organising model of field campaigning rather than moving away from it (Interviewee 15; Interviewee 17). Organising is based on building strength and advocacy within a community. This version of the future of

field campaigning would see the party committing to campaigning on local issues and supporting the community between election cycles. This was viewed as helping the party by retaining and increasing the skill and engagement of staff and supporters while demonstrating the Greens' values at work within the community – hoped to help persuade voters at the next election (Interviewee 15; Interviewee 17).

Interviewees from the second round, in 2021, indicated that some of this work is already underway, associated with the rise of the Voter Persuasion strategy. Rather than speaking purely of electoral politics, a growing number referred to field campaigning as about building a political movement for structural change (Interviewee 6). Indicating their view of the Greens as part of something bigger, one interviewee described the party as 'the electoral arm of a progressive social movement' (Interviewee 5). Other interviewees referred to efforts to support or facilitate – rather than lead – community campaigns, with the party providing resources and spaces for meetings (Interviewee 3). The Victorian state party has created a position for an Engagement and Training Coordinator whose role centres around working closely with members and volunteers between election cycles (Interviewee 18). While the impacts of these efforts are yet to materialise, collectively they indicate a recent shift in thinking within the party and an effort to overcome the saturation effect and the stagnation that is believed to drive it.



## Discussion

The Greens' field campaigning has three types of functions; voter persuasion, building the party, and civic functions. Alongside the perceived limitations to field campaigns, these benefits address RQ5. Voter persuasion was believed to occur through field campaigning's dialogic and personalised nature, identified as forming connections that bring the party closer to potential Greens' voters. While this did include the mirroring of policy concerns as expressed by voters to campaigners, the connection was primarily described as an emotional one: based upon expressions of a voter's identity, the party's identity and the formation of common ground. Although the findings do not assess field campaigning's efficacy in winning votes, it is evident that field campaigning's attempts at persuasion are complex and layered.

Building the party manifested through increasing the number of party members, strengthening their commitment, fundraising and increasing the party's perceived legitimacy within the Australian electorate. Field campaigns express the Greens as a serious electoral contender that is representative of the community. Whether voters are persuaded by professional and relatable volunteers requires further scrutiny.

The civic functions and the associated typology offer questions for further research and consideration. It would be significant if field campaigns were found to improve political engagement among voters and volunteers, a politician's ability to represent their constituents, and the tenor and content of the political debate. The relationships between voters and politicians form the building blocks of electoral

politics and, as Mills (2012, p. 145) states, campaigns may impact this relationship. Interviewees believe that field campaigns have positive effects upon this relationship through improving trust and engagement on both sides, and further research is needed to establish whether this occurs. This very belief is interesting, suggesting that some campaigners are motivated by these positive civic effects and view their role as not just within a party but within a democratic electoral system.

These civic functions correspond with Norris' 'virtuous circle' (2000, p. 318) as they suggest political campaigns can increase civic engagement. However, Norris' virtuous circle refers to the positive effects of political communication on those who choose to engage, and these effects are reinforced by positive interaction. These civic functions were described as impacting *all* voters who had contact with the Greens' field campaigns, regardless of the voter's existing level of political engagement or the positivity of that interaction. Therefore, the civic functions represent not one, but many 'virtuous circles' applying to the structures and actors of field campaigns.

The civic functions as expressed by interviewees also differ somewhat from similar accounts. In his discussion of the professionalisation of Australian political parties and their campaigns, Mills describes Australian Labor Party officials who 'confidently assert that parties exist to govern and that therefore the party's best interests are served by electoral success' (2015, p. 119). Mills views this perspective as a hallmark of the professionalisation of these figures, and therefore of Australian political campaigns. While this sentiment was found among those interviewed for this research, the causal relationship was not as simply ascribed. Interviewees did

not necessarily believe that electoral success was the end, but in some cases viewed electoral success as the means to building a movement.

Unlike Norris' virtuous circle, which referred to political communication broadly, interviewees described these civic functions as *unique* to field campaigning. The Greens' field campaigning was viewed as being able to fulfil civic functions because it seeks to contact every voter it can within an electorate – rather than target specific audiences – and to communicate with them in a highly personalised manner. It is the distinctions between field campaigns and other forms of political communication that were seen as making the difference in achieving these civic functions.

Interviewees identified limitations to field campaigning's effects, leading to the proposed saturation effect. This occurs when field campaigns repeatedly contact voters, undermining the positive impacts of direct contact and dialogue. However, interviewees believe that employing community organising methods outside of election periods to build power and form relationships within the community may combat the saturation effect, and the party is making efforts to achieve this. This resembles the scholarly literature's definitions of traditional community organising closely and indicates that Greens campaigners believe strongly in this model (Bond & Exley 2016; Ganz 2018; Tattersall 2015, p. 382).

The effectiveness of field campaigning in persuading voters was generally viewed positively. Interviewees concluded that field campaigns account for a one to four per cent swing in primary votes. This appears to be a more optimistic assessment than Kefford (2021, p. 109) found across Australian party campaigners, who

assessed field campaigning as contributing to between 1.2 percent to 1.6 percent increase in two party preferred votes. The Greens' focus on primary votes is likely because they are a minor party. As voter persuasion is crucial in Australian elections due to mandatory voting resulting in a relatively stable number of voters, their belief in field campaigning's ability to shift voters is significant (Kefford 2018, p. 657).

Supporting the work of Farrell and Schmitt-Beck (2006, pp. 186–192), interviewees believe the impacts of field campaigning are highly contextual. Factors influencing the efficacy of field campaigning range from the physical, such as growing number of apartment buildings, to voter demographics, and the strength and momentum of the campaign. This may also account for the varied effects on voter persuasion documented by Kalla and Broockman (2018) and offers a different conclusion than that it is ultimately ineffectual. As noted, the number of factors at play within electoral field campaigns and the individual nature of direct contact contributes significantly to the difficulty in researching this topic (Young 2015, p. 104). Ultimately, interviewees believe field campaigns are effective in achieving a wide variety of functions as outlined above — in the right circumstances.

## Conclusion

Interviewees perceived field campaigning as having a wide range of impacts. Most are beneficial and include increasing the electoral success of the Greens (by persuading voters), making the party stronger (ensuring its longevity), and improving the quality of electoral politics. These benefits were described as occurring through dialogue with supporters, voters or the broader community, making electoral campaigns more participatory and representative for the public. While interviewees saw field campaigns as having stagnated, there was a belief that committing further to US community organising methods will help overcome these limitations. Although the benefits are largely unproven, the confidence the Greens have in field campaigning, and its role in the party's identity, indicate it will not be abandoned in the immediate future. The original typology of civic functions developed here illustrates the integral role interviewees believe field campaigning has and the impact it may have on the quality of democratic representation and engagement.

# Chapter 8

## Conclusion

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### Introduction

Field campaigning differs from other forms of political campaigning in its involvement of voters and supporters. Interviewees spoke of this difference when describing their experiences in field campaigns: 'There's just something about the power of people working together towards a common goal' (Interviewee 13). Another noted, 'you realise more people feel like you and it can actually make change happen' (Interviewee 4). This participation of the public in the processes of electoral politics is part of what makes understanding field campaigning and the experiences of those who conduct it so important. The concluding chapter reaffirms that participation is viewed by the Greens as one of the distinguishing characteristics of contemporary field campaigning, and it is the civic functions of field campaigning that make it different from other forms of campaigning.

This thesis has detailed a case study of the development of field campaigning through the example of the Greens to deepen understandings of its usage within Australian electoral campaigns. This chapter draws out the key findings of this research and clarifies how this study has addressed the research questions posed. The theoretical contributions of this work are discussed and contextualised, including the original definition of field campaigning and the proposal of civic functions to field campaigns. Finally, the applicability of these findings to other

political parties is considered and addressed. As an exploratory study, this thesis identifies several potential directions for further research.

## Key Findings

This study set out to analyse how field campaigning has developed in the Australian Greens since 2008 and to identify the main factors that have shaped this development. To achieve this aim, a series of research questions were posed.

In answer to the first research question:

**RQ1: How do field campaigning practitioners within the Australian Greens understand the concept of field campaigning?**

Greens field campaigning has been found to employ two primary strategies: the Voter ID strategy and the Voter Persuasion strategy. These strategies can be considered different models of field campaigning and stem from differences in priorities and thinking. In many cases these differences can be summarised as a preference for either efficiency or efficacy. As such, these strategies employ different approaches, which correlate well with the distinctions between community organising and mobilising. The Voter ID strategy focuses on efficiently contacting and identifying the intentions of as many voters as possible and shares more characteristics with mobilisation. In contrast, the Voter Persuasion approach emphasises efficacy by attempting to persuade virtually every voter contacted and draws strongly from community organising. Community organising principles are

a core element of Greens field campaigns, and recent efforts to improve field campaigning display a renewed commitment to these ideas. This may in part be due to their compatibility with the Greens' party identity and its core pillar of grassroots participatory democracy. In executing these strategies this study has found that Greens field campaigns are defined by their purpose – direct voter contact – and dominated by traditional activities such as door knocking and phone banking. While traditional activities remain the most common, how these activities are conducted has changed over time as new technological tools are adopted, such as auto-diallers, and new activities such as texting and online volunteering have emerged.

In response to the second research question:

**RQ2: How were contemporary field campaigning practices originally adopted by the Australian Greens?**

Within the Australian Greens, the adoption of new field campaigning practices was found to occur primarily via campaign staff's experiences, movement and research efforts. These changes were often made as attempts to overcome issues or streamline processes as opposed to improving efficacy. As noted, competition has been a driving force in the development of field campaigning, but so has the perception of success. Campaigners seek to adopt or surpass the most successful methods from both within the party and without. However, whether methods were considered successful was often determined by how they were promoted or perceived, rather than measurable results.



This study has identified a wide-ranging set of influences on the development of field campaigning. It found that many field campaigning practices and approaches used by the Greens were originally sourced from the campaigns of the US Democratic Party. While this was the most prominent and pervasive source for the Australian Greens, it was not the only source identified. Others include the New Zealand Greens, civic organisations, research and conferences. The Australian Greens were, in turn, found to be a source for other Global Greens parties' field campaigning practices.

In answer to the third research question:

**RQ3: To what extent have the Australian Greens incorporated new forms of technology into their field campaigning?**

This study has found that while the Greens have access to many forms of data software and technological tools, they have not been fully incorporated into campaigns. Typically, technological developments have not altered what activities field campaigns conduct but instead streamlined processes. The Greens' adoption of new technology has been found to be influenced by broader technological developments and fuelled by the perception – and perhaps sometimes, reality – of other parties and organisations being more technologically advanced than the Greens. This suggests, as is fitting for an electoral party, that competition is a driving force. This competition is not purely about electoral results, but often is instead driven by the need to recruit and retain volunteers by offering a streamlined and rewarding experience.

Perceptions of the Greens' identity have also influenced how the party employs the data and technology that they possess. These perceptions have been found to encourage the party to commit to less targeted and more inclusive forms of field campaigning. Despite the fragmented nature of the Greens' databases, data and technology has driven centralisation within the party, as systems are typically centrally purchased, constructed or operated by the state or federal parties.

This is just one of the ways in which field campaigning has shifted the party organisation of the Greens, as addressed in the next research question:

**RQ4: Has the organisation of the Australian Greens affected the way field campaigning has developed, and has field campaigning had any consequences for party organisation?**

This study's findings indicate that the development of field campaigning has been in large part shaped by the structures and context of the Australian Greens. Campaigners viewed the party's identity, structure and limitations as different to those of other parties, and these differences as having significant impacts. These features include the party's activist beginnings, commitment to grassroots participatory democracy, limited financial resources and commitment to communicating with all voters. These identifying traits of the party have often been referred to in comparison to other parties and may inform the Greens' focus on field campaigning as legitimising or normalising. These historical characteristics of the party shape the way many Greens activists think about the party and its role in the system, and shape how they think about field campaigning. These effects have also shaped how party members think of field campaigns, leading to their belief that

professional and staffed field campaigns are required to win electorates. This belief has contributed further to professionalisation and centralisation.

Other influences have included context and timing, as may be expected to impact the fortunes of electoral campaigns more broadly. The case studies of the Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland Greens parties indicate that within the Greens a balance between centralisation and campaign autonomy, ample resources, and slow but consistent growth is the ideal combination in developing effective field campaigns. Where the feature responsible for shaping field campaigning is identifiable – such as a confederated party structure or limited resources – these findings may be applicable to parties with similar features. Findings tied to the party's identity and understanding of itself as grassroots are likely applicable to other parties with their origins in activist movements.

Regarding the final research question:

**RQ5: What are the major benefits and limitations of field campaigning, according to practitioners within the Australian Greens?**

In answer, campaigners have been found to believe that field campaigns fulfil both pragmatic and civic functions. Pragmatic functions include winning votes, fundraising, mobilising supporters, and affirming and legitimising the party's identity. Together, these functions increase the party's electoral chances and longevity. In contrast, civic functions improve the electoral system and its participants. While interviewees perceived field campaigns have diminishing returns over time because of a saturation effect, some also believed that this

limitation could be overcome through a stronger commitment to community organising principles.

Unsurprisingly, campaigners believe that field campaigns are broadly effective at winning votes, although when questioned more specifically, campaigners tended to give qualified answers dependent on context. If a percentage was given, field campaigns were credited with achieving an increase in votes of between one and four per cent. Despite believing that the efficacy of field campaigning is limited and contextual, overall assessments have been found to be broadly positive. This is due to a belief that the Greens are reliant on field campaigns, and that this form of campaigning offers the most benefits and the best chance of electoral success. Whether this belief would hold if the party had greater financial resources is uncertain.

## Theoretical Contributions

Through answering these research questions this research has also made theoretical contributions to the existing scholarship on field campaigning. The first of these has been the development of an original definition of field campaigning, consisting of three elements. This definition unifies previous understandings of field campaigning which defined it either by its purpose – direct voter contact – or its activities – such as door knocking. To do so, this definition includes a third element: the strategy. The strategy establishes the nature and medium of direct voter contact, and therefore, the activities conducted to achieve this purpose. In

proposing this threefold definition, this thesis has intended to marry scholarly understandings of what a field campaign is with the understandings of its practitioners. Moreover, this definition encompasses the traditional activities of a field campaign while allowing flexibility to include new activities as they emerge. As the use of technology and data are significant aspects of contemporary mass field campaigns, this definition provides a way to discern the increasingly blurred edges of field campaigning.

The second theoretical contribution of this thesis is the original typology of the civic functions of field campaigns. These civic functions are purported to apply to the citizen, the politician and electoral politics as a whole, and are believed to improve the quality of Australian democracy. They do so by improving the quality and tenor of political debate, increasing citizen engagement, and encouraging politicians to better represent their constituents. These functions suggest that Norris' (2000) concept of the virtuous circle may be applicable to interactions other than that between the voter and political media. Rather than one virtuous circle, field campaigning has a number of different but positive civic functions, helping to engage voters, volunteers, and politicians, and revitalise electoral politics. These functions are believed to be a direct product of the participatory and dialogic nature of field campaigning.

It is beyond the scope of this study to prove field campaigning's impact, but the belief campaigners hold in these civic functions is nonetheless significant. This suggests that campaigners have an understanding of their role in the electoral system that goes beyond the electoral outcomes of their party, considering the role of the Greens in the party system and Australian democracy. In addition,

campaigners' belief in field campaigns contributes to both the perceived outcome of and the motivation for conducting field campaigns. This is just one of the ways in which field campaigns have not only been shaped by the party but have in turn shaped the Greens. Field campaigns have reinforced and given form to the party's commitment to its core pillar of grassroots participatory democracy ('The Four Pillars' 2021). This aligns with literature regarding the role of identity in influencing the party organisation of the Australian Labor and Liberal parties. The Labor and Liberal parties' identities are formed by historical influences and in comparison to what they view as the strengths and weaknesses of their rivals (Barry 2015, p. 160; Brett 2003, p. 27). This study's findings show that the formation and influence of the Greens' identity corresponds with this literature, and indicates that this pattern of influence impacts the ways in which field campaigns are developed.

The third theoretical finding of this thesis is the proposed saturation effect. This effect is believed to occur when voter contact reaches a saturation point, after which no additional benefits to field campaigning are noted. In short, field campaigns are believed to become less effective over time. This is particularly the case in instances where there is no significant adaptation or innovation: that is, when field campaigning methods stagnate. The findings of this study show that the perception of a saturation effect has prompted efforts to overcome the effect by connecting with constituents in new and more meaningful ways. In this way, the saturation effect sheds light on how the experience of voters, as perceived by the party, shapes field campaigning efforts.

This study's findings have implications for broader theories of political campaigning and its development. Regarding the framework of eras of political campaigning, this

study has indicated that the Greens' field campaigns draw from the second, third and – to a lesser extent – fourth eras. However, these eras are typically focused upon developments in media and communications technologies. As this study has found, these technologies do form an important aspect of field campaigns, but at its core it remains a traditional form of political campaigning and its development is more complex than may be accounted for by a single influence. While technological changes have been found to be one aspect of the development of field campaigning, many other factors such as party organisation and changes to strategy have also been noted. As such, the framework of political eras has some limitations in its applicability to field campaigns in isolation.

Among the features of the fourth era of political campaigning identified in the development of Greens' field campaigning was globalisation, in which campaigns draw practices and ideas from international sources (Roemmele & Gibson 2020; Semetko & Tworzecki 2017). This study has shown how campaigning methods and staff move across international borders and indicated that this is a recent and growing phenomenon. This suggests that although the eras focus on technology, the behaviour and thinking of campaigners forms a key area of development. Further consideration of how parties and their staff perceive of their role within the electoral system, and their relationship with the voter may shed further light on this thinking and its development.

## Future Research

This study has focused on field campaigning through an exploratory case study, and further comparative work is needed. Replicating this research with other Australian political parties will help reveal whether this research's findings are widely applicable throughout the party system, or largely distinct to the Australian Greens. This research has found that field campaigning methods have been sourced and adapted before being diffused globally, that technological developments have changed how field campaigning activities are conducted but not what these activities are, and that party organisation and stable growth have shaped the Greens' development of field campaigning. Further research will indicate whether these factors apply to other parties. The findings here have indicated that the party's identity has had a significant effect on the development of field campaigning. For this reason, future work may also look to international Greens and confederated parties to develop further knowledge of this effect. As noted here and elsewhere (Kefford 2021, p. 106), the field campaigning practices employed by parties have been influenced by civic organisations and unions. Further research may also consider comparing the electoral field campaigns of parties and other electoral actors.

Additionally, this study has used interviews with those who conduct field campaigns as its method. As has been stated, field campaigns involve many actors, from volunteers to voters. The findings presented here have indicated that the strategies employed by field campaigns alter how volunteers are considered and what role they are given. Further research into their experiences of field



campaigning will develop knowledge of how the practices found in this thesis shape their experience of electoral campaigning and politics.

A recurring theme throughout the findings has been the role and influence of the Greens' perception of their party identity – the party's core values, strengths and limitations. Field campaigning has operated as a way of expressing, reaffirming and shifting this identity and is evident in the actions of the party central office, campaign staff and party members. This theme affirms the need for further qualitative research to understand the perspectives of those within campaigns, as their views and perceptions shape field campaigns, and are shaped by them.

Finally, the theoretical contributions of this thesis require further testing. The definition of field campaigning may be tested through application. Given the difficulties in testing the efficacy of field campaigns, proving or disproving the proposed saturation effect would be difficult, but less ambitious work may consider how prevalent this belief is amongst campaigners from other parties and how else it influences their decisions. In particular, further research regarding the civic functions proposed here is necessary and may investigate whether field campaigners in other parties share this belief in field campaigning possessing civic functions. Given that the typology of civic functions applies to citizens, politicians and the electoral process as a whole, there are many avenues this research may take. Research testing the prevalence of belief in the civic functions among campaigners in Global Greens parties make an appropriate starting point, due to their shared ideology.

## In Sum

This thesis contributes a rich case study of the development and role of field campaigning in Australian elections. A robust definition and a typology of field campaigning have been developed. The findings regarding the functions of field campaigns have led to original theory-building around civic functions of campaigning, and its limitations in the form of the saturation effect.

There are likely to have been more recent changes that this research did not capture in their entirety. As this research was being conducted, the Covid-19 pandemic was forcing field campaigns to change significantly. The pandemic has led to the use of postal ballots in Australia and internationally, removing the need for field campaigns' polling day efforts. Many of the traditional activities of field campaigning — such as door-knocking — have been suspended. Field campaigns have adopted new technologies and modes of communication over the last two decades. During the Covid-19 pandemic field campaigns have continued to adapt and done so at an accelerated rate. What is enduring amidst all this change is a commitment to field campaigning and its dialogic nature.

This study has provided greater transparency regarding not just what parties are attempting to achieve when communicating with voters, but why — the thinking and methods that underly this approach. While this study has shown how the Greens attempt to win votes, it has also indicated that many campaigners are motivated by the idea that field campaigns improve politics.

That is not to say that campaigners are inherently altruistic, civically minded do-gooders. This study suggests that their understandings and motivations are diverse, and that the rigours of electoral campaigning give campaigners and parties little time to reflect on their practices. In particular, the findings regarding impacts and functions beyond electoral success are hoped to encourage further reflection on how campaigners' actions impact the electoral system at large.

As noted in the introduction of this thesis, electoral campaigns impact the 'relationship between citizen and state' (Mills 2012, p. 145). Field campaigning does so in a manner that is direct and personal. By shedding further light on the nature and purpose of field campaigns in Australia, this study has intended to broaden understanding of how the electoral process works, and to encourage consideration of what impact this may have on this relationship between voter and politics. Direct and personalised contact will continue to play a role in elections – although the medium will likely continue to change. Field campaigns create a unique space in which voters and volunteers may participate directly in the electoral process, believed by its practitioners to strengthen Australian democracy.

# Appendices

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## Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

### Semi-Structured Interview Questions 2020

1. What is your background and experience in field campaigning?
2. How do you define field campaigning? How did you get into field campaigning? Do you have a special area of interest within field campaigning or a particular part of it that you enjoy?
3. What do you believe are the impacts of field campaigns?
  1. Has this developed or changed between 2008-2020? If so, how?
4. How effective do you believe field campaigning tactics to be?
  1. Has this developed or changed between 2008-2020? If so, how?
5. What activities are included within the Australian Greens' field campaigning?
  1. Has this developed or changed between 2008-2020? If so, how?
6. Do you believe that field campaigning is practiced differently by the Greens than by other parties, and if so, how?
  1. Has this developed or changed between 2008-2020? If so, how?
7. What role do field campaigns play in the larger campaign effort?
8. Has this developed or changed between 2008-2020? If so, how?
9. What is the scale of resources dedicated to field campaigning within the Greens, including not just financial but also time, staffing and volunteer effort?
10. Has this developed or changed between 2008-2020? If so, how?

11. Is there a particular model or theory of field organising that the Greens use?
  1. What principles underpin this?
  2. Has this developed or changed between 2008-2020? If so, how?
12. What have the sources of new field campaigning practices been for the Greens?
  1. Has this developed or changed between 2008-2020? If so, how?
13. Are there any external factors that have influenced the development of field campaigning within the Greens? If so, how?
  1. Has this developed or changed between 2008-2020? If so, how?
14. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## **Semi-Structured Interview Questions 2021**

1. What is your background and experience in field campaigning, and can you explain the contribution of this role/s to the field campaign?
2. How do you define field campaigning?
3. What do you believe are the impacts of field campaigns?
  - a. Has this developed or changed between 2008-2020? If so, how?
4. How effective do you believe field campaigning tactics to be?
  - a. Has this developed or changed between 2008-2020? If so, how?
5. What activities are included within the Greens' field campaigning?
6. What role do field campaigns at the electorate level play in the larger campaign effort?
7. Do you believe that the campaigns you have worked on are typical of Greens' campaigns or have you done things differently, and why?

8. What is the scale of resources dedicated to field campaigning within the Greens, including not just financial but also time, staffing and volunteer effort?
9. What people or groups are involved in the planning, coordination and execution of field campaigns and have you seen this change?
10. Regarding volunteers in particular, what is the typical process for recruiting and retaining volunteers and how are prospective volunteers identified?
11. What have the sources of new field campaigning practices been for the Greens?
12. What factors have influenced the development of field campaigning within the Greens and how has this occurred?
13. In particular, what has been the role of data and technology and how has this evolved?
14. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## Appendix B: NVivo Codes used

Codes are organised into separate tables according to their parent-child relationships. Relationships between different code families were also used. For example, while “Text” is placed within the “Data and Tech” family, a relationship to the “Activities” of field campaigning was coded. All codes presented here were in active use at the end of analysis, and so represent at least one reference.

<b>Model</b>	Low Barrier	
	Geography	Urban
		Regional
	Visibility	
	Snowflake	
	Deep Organising	
	Values framework	
	Volunteer-centered	Volunteer Experience

<b>Defining Field</b>	Approach	Voter ID	
		Persuasion	
		Movement Building	Active Volunteer Recruitment
			Passive Volunteer Recruitment
	Activities	Online Volunteering	
		Polling Day	
		Data Entry	
		Training	
		Events	
		Flyering	
		Placards	
		Door Knocking	
		Stalls	
		Described as	Peripheral
			Core
		Phone Banking	Volunteer Phone Banking
			Voter Phone Banking

Influences	Contextual	Electoral System
		Momentum
		COVID
		Demographic Change
	Success	Pitching to others
	Failure	

Party Organisation	Staff		
	Oversight		
	Money and Resources		
	Capacity		
	Culture	Innovation	
		Stagnation	
		Localised	
		Competition	
		Cooperation	
		Centralisation	
		Decentralisation	
		Grassroots	
	Structures	Candidate	
		Campaign Team	
		Campaign Committees	
		MP Office	
		Branch	
		Leader's Office	
	Level	Local	
		National	
		State	WA
			TAS
			SA
			SA
			VIC
			QLD
			NT
			NSW
			ACT



Functions	Saturation Effect		
	Type	Efficacy	
		Efficiency	
		Burn Out	
		Pragmatic	
		Civic	
	Impact	Election Result	Ongoing
			Temporary
			Lower House
			Upper House
		Impacts Volunteer	Stepping Up
			Engagement
			Skills and Confidence
			Making A Difference
		Impacts Democracy	Media Narratives
			Representation
		Impacts Voter	Education
			Enfranchisement
			Engagement
			Persuasion
		Impacts Party	Expresses Identity
			Legitimacy
			Fundraising
			Party Bureaucracy

Data and Tech	Targeting	Machine Learning	
	Communications	Zoom	
		Auto Dialer	
		Text	Spoke
			Volunteer Text
			Voter Text
	Rocket		
	gVIRS		
	CRM	CiviCRM	
		NationBuilder	

History	Increasing Field	More Staff
		Quality
		Quantity
	Decreasing Field	Less Staff
		Quality
		Quantity

Sources	Organisations	Tomorrow Movement			
		Democracy In Colour			
		Australian Conservation Foundation			
		Progress Conference			
		Common Cause			
		AYCC			
		GetUp!			
	Method	Feedback	Staff Feedback		
			Volunteer Feedback		
			Voter Feedback		
	Countries	Central Europe			
		Canada			
		NZ			
		UK	UK Labour	Corbyn	
		US	Sunrise Movement		
			Churches		
			MoveOn		
			Jane McAlevey		
			Analyst Institute		
			Alinsky		
			Ganz		
			Hahrie Han		
			Becky Bond		
			Democrats	Harris	
				Obama	
				Sanders	

## Appendix C: Greens Electoral Results

The electoral results from electorates targeted by the Greens in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria are presented here. This appendix is intended to provide further context and detail to the discussion of the Greens' electoral successes in Chapter Six. These results are sourced from the federal and state electoral commissions (Australian Electoral Commission 2021; Electoral Commission of Queensland 2021; Green 2007; NSW Electoral Commission 2021; Victorian Electoral Commission 2021). All numbers refer to the percentage of first preference Greens votes. Shaded in cells indicate that the Greens candidate won the election, while italicised electorate names indicate a rural or regional electorate.

State-wide results for both lower and upper houses of parliament are included in each table to give context to electorate results. As noted, electorates were included in instances interviewees indicated that they were considered a target electorate by the Greens. Where they were considered important by interviewees or took place in electorates eventually won by the party, by-election results have been included. Federal and state results are provided for all states. Also included are the results in the Brisbane Council and Mayoral elections, as interviewees considered the success of the Queensland Greens in these elections a pivotal event in the state party's recent successes. Finally, as some electorates have changed names, undergone redistributions, been created and removed over the period covered here, footnotes are included to indicate which electorates substantially overlap with earlier iterations.

## New South Wales

Percentage of first preference votes for the Greens in New South Wales federal elections:

	2007	2010	2013	2016	2019
House of Representatives	7.88	10.24	7.95	8.95	8.71
Senate	8.43	10.69	7.79	7.41	8.73
Grayndler	18.70	25.90	23.03	22.24	22.55
<i>Richmond</i>	14.93	16.15	17.69	20.44	20.32
Sydney	20.71	23.75	17.33	18.81	18.07

Percentage of first preference votes for the Greens in New South Wales state elections:

	2007	2011	2015	2019
Legislative Assembly	8.95	10.28	10.29	9.57
Legislative Council		11.11	9.92	9.73
<i>Ballina</i>	19.44	21.7	27.02	31.71
Balmain	29.53	30.7	37.39	42.73
Heffron	19.65	19.0	21.11	19.13
<i>Lismore</i>	17.73	20.5	26.43	24.29
Marrickville	32.55	35.9		
Newtown <sup>1</sup>			45.57	46.05
Summer Hill <sup>2</sup>			27.31	20.61
Sydney	15.56	12.8	9.72	9.55
Tweed	7.75	14.0	13.27	13.85

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<sup>1</sup> Largely overlaps with the abolished electorate of Marrickville, changed in 2015

<sup>2</sup> Largely overlaps with the abolished electorate of Marrickville, changed in 2015

## Queensland

Percentage of first preference votes for the Greens in Queensland federal elections:

	2007	2010	2013	2016	2019
House of Representatives	5.63	10.92	6.22	8.83	10.32
Senate	7.32	12.76	6.04	6.92	9.94
Brisbane	11.80	21.28	14.43	19.40	22.37
Griffith	7.85	15.39	10.18	17.08	23.65

Percentage of first preference votes for the Greens in Queensland state elections:

	2009	2012	2012 by-election	2015	2017	2020
Legislative Council	8.37	7.53		8.43	10.00	9.47
Ashgrove	12.40	9.17		10.13		
Brisbane Central	17.00	15.33		18.59		
Cooper <sup>3</sup>					20.61	29.63
Greenslopes	12.57	12.92		12.93	21.28	23.43
Indooroopilly	25.93	18.49		18.63		
Maiwar <sup>4</sup>					27.78	41.32
McConnel <sup>5</sup>					27.11	28.15
Miller <sup>6</sup>					21.91	20.64
Mt Coot-tha	23.08	20.72		22.17		
South Brisbane	17.41	18.07	19.39	21.85	34.35	37.89
Yeerongpilly	15.96	15.96		16.66		

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<sup>3</sup> Largely overlaps with the abolished electorate of Ashgrove, changed in 2017

<sup>4</sup> Largely overlaps with the abolished electorates of Mount Coot-tha and Indooroopilly, changed in 2017

<sup>5</sup> Largely overlaps with the abolished electorate of Brisbane Central, changed in 2017

<sup>6</sup> Largely overlaps with the abolished electorate of Yeerongpilly, changed in 2017

Percentage of first preference votes for the Greens in Brisbane council and mayoral elections:

	2008	2010 by-election	2012	2016	2020
Mayoral	8.38		10.7	10.4	15.4
The Gabba	25.64		17.7	31.72	45.6
Paddington <sup>7</sup>				27.32	38.41
Pullenvale	10.68		13.26	21.32	24.38
Toowong	21.52		20.49		
Walter Taylor	15.15	22.39	19.99	22.82	34.86

## Victoria

Percentage of first preference votes for the Greens in Victorian federal elections:

	2007	2010	2013	2016	2018 by-election	2019
House of Representatives	8.17	12.66	10.18	13.13		11.89
Senate	10.08	14.74	10.84	10.87		10.62
Cooper <sup>8</sup>	17.17	23.48	26.40	36.23	39.49	21.14
Higgins	10.75	17.90	16.80	25.33		22.47
Kooyong	11.82	18.48	16.58	18.92		21.24
Macnamara <sup>9</sup>						24.24
Melbourne Ports	15.03	20.66	20.17	23.79		
Maribyrnong	6.82	11.85	9.90	9.75		14.81
Melbourne	22.80	36.17	42.62	43.75		49.30
Wills	13.82	20.60	22.23	30.83		26.62

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<sup>7</sup> Largely overlaps with the abolished electorate of Toowong, changed in 2016

<sup>8</sup> The electorate of Cooper was previously named Batman.

<sup>9</sup> Largely overlaps with the abolished electorate of Melbourne Ports, changed in 2019

Percentage of first preference votes for the Greens in Victorian state elections:

	2006	2010	2012 by- election	2014	2017 by- election	2018
Legislative Assembly	10.04	11.21		11.48		9.25
Legislative Council	10.58	12.01		10.75		10.71
Albert Park	19.07	18.14		16.77		16.56
Brunswick	29.71	30.24		39.65		40.06
Footscray	12.11	20.78		17.19		16.74
Melbourne	27.41	31.92	36.52	41.44		38.85
Northcote	27.41	30.85		36.28	45.22	39.52
Prahran	20.13	19.79		24.75		28.07
Richmond	24.68	28.44		31.46		34.23

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