THE INFLUENCE OF TRUST ON THE PRESCRIPTION AND PRACTICE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS
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School of Architecture and Built Environment

The University of Newcastle, Australia, 2016.
Statement of Originality

I certify that the work embodied in this dissertation is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis contains published papers of which I am a joint author. I have included as part of the thesis a written statement, endorsed by my supervisor, attesting to my contribution to the joint publications.

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Thesis by Publication

I hereby certify that this thesis is in the form of a series of published papers of which I
am a joint author. I have included as part of the thesis a written statement from each co-author, endorsed by the Faculty Assistant Dean (Research Training), attesting to contribution to the joint publications.

Student Scott Matthew Strahorn, December, 2016
ABSTRACT

Given the human interaction that is intrinsic in any construction endeavour, the desirability of trusting behaviour is clear. Practitioner interactions and eventual project outcomes are likely to be negatively impacted if issues of trust are not well understood, or at least considered. Similarly, project delivery will ultimately be more difficult than it needs to be if project managers ignore or fail to appreciate the positive influence that can follow from the exercise of trust.

Understanding the influence of trust on both the prescription of the project management role and thereafter the practice of project management during construction projects is critical in the evaluation of its benefits. The creation of a conceptual framework of trust applicable within a construction project context is described, which thereafter informs the development and implementation of a phenomenological multi-perspective, exploratory research methodology. Given that trust is a phenomenon that cannot be directly observed it is necessary to determine how it is experienced by a) the experts who prescribe the practice of project management and b) the project managers who experience trust.

Adopting an etic lens, a qualitative content analysis is undertaken of The Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK). This establishes the extent to which it reflects concepts of trust and thus the extent that trust influences the prescription and practice of project management in construction projects.

The results question the reliance of project management practitioners on PMBOK and its prescription for the idealised project management process for delivering successful project outcomes, while also highlighting the disconnect between the process of project management (as mandated by PMBOK) and the practice of project management in maximising the likelihood of project success.

Adopting an emic lens, a phenomenological interview study is undertaken in order to examine the influence of trust on the practice of project management in construction projects, with attention given to the contextual specifics of respective transactional and relational approaches. Despite the contrasting principles underlying each approach, experiences of trust are found to be similar under both, where choice of procurement mechanism is found to be of relative insignificance compared to other influences.
The individual attitudes of project participants are shown to be critically influential, emphasising the importance of project team member selection. The appropriate allocation of risk is shown to be significant, with low trust levels, and sub optimal project outcomes resulting when risk is poorly apportioned.

Importantly, and counter intuitively, the certainty of risk apportionment and reward inherent under relational contracting conditions is found to remove the need for trust altogether once risk allocation has been negotiated. Where this is subsequently perceived to have resulted in an asymmetric risk distribution, feelings of misplaced trust predominate.
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

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AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION AND STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION OF CO-AUTHORS

The publications included within this thesis have been completed in conjunction with research supervisors, and co-authors. Details regarding the nature and extent of the intellectual input of the respective publications, including the candidate's contribution is included as required within chapter 4.
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