

Clipped Wings:
Management discourses during organisational
change at Australia's
Civil Aviation Authority

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Form B

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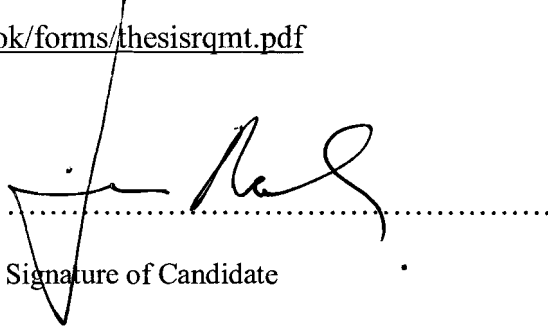
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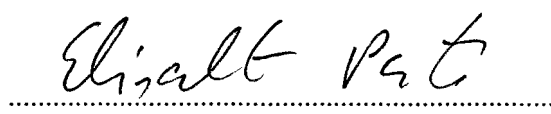
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Abstract

Structural change in organisations is stressful for staff and the managers who must implement it. Most change programs use employee communication techniques to support change directions set by senior executive decision makers – dominant coalitions.

This research used a single case study to explain the context and management discourses of a major re-structure of an Australian Federal Government agency, the former Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), during the early 1990s. A content analysis examined the use of keywords in management discourses that argued the need for change. The keywords represented the two major change discourses: micro-economic reform and aviation safety regulation. A critical discourse analysis investigated the dominant coalition's discourse strategies to justify change. Content and process communication theories, and the role of framing in organisational change, were used to explain how employees may have reacted to change directions.

The research found that change directions were framed as an economic imperative that clashed with a traditional organisational culture that emphasised the primacy of aviation safety. It found that mixed messages by the two principal members of the dominant coalition who drove change exacerbated the clash.

The results suggest a need for further analysis of management discourses used to inform employees about structural change, especially in organisations that have legislative responsibilities. Further analysis of change messages framed by dominant coalitions could lead to a deeper understanding of how they affect employees and the change process.

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Abbreviations

AA	Airservices Australia
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
AOPA	Aircraft Owners' and Pilots' Association
ANR	Air Navigation Regulation
ARP	Aviation Regulatory Proposal
CAA	Civil Aviation Authority
CAN	<i>Civil Aviation News</i>
CASA	Civil Aviation Safety Authority
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
FAC	Federal Airports Corporation
GBE	Government Business Enterprise
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organisation
RoR	Review of Resources
TQM	Total Quality Management