Evidence for the institutionalisation of water management change in Sydney

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Acknowledgements The author gratefully acknowledges John Roberts and Geoff Frost of the University of Sydney, Jeffrey Unerman of Royal Holloway University of London, Niamh Brennan of University College Dublin, and Brendan O'Dwyer of the Amsterdam Business School for their advice and guidance.

Author biography
Matthew is a lecturer in the Discipline of Accounting at the University of Sydney and completed his PhD in 2012. His research interests include sustainability management, the role of accounting technologies and accountants. His PhD explored how water management and accounting practices changed in the Sydney region in response to drought in early 2000s.

Abstract
Purpose
Water resources are subject to global constraints. This paper utilises the concepts of new institutional sociology to explore how water management change progressing across a field of organisations in Australia at a time of acute drought conditions into the late 2000s.
Design methodology/approach
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of individuals from 2008 to 2010.
Findings
A range of weak and un-coordinated drivers motivated pervasive water management change in some of the case organisations. Those would-be leaders sought to invoke a sense of a water management field, and champion the nascent logics, along with the theorisation developing in it, in order to gain some competitive advantage. Drawing on the concept of theorisation, we argue that efforts to promote water management change were intensifying into 2010. Our arguments suggest that while the field lacked clear and strong co-ordinating champions for change, an institutionalisation of water management change was progressing.
Research limitations
Further research could investigate how water management change continues to develop and impact the management of other sustainability issues (including carbon).
Practical implications
Global water resources are subject to increasing supply constraints. This paper responds by exploring how changed management practices can be driven across a field of organisations.
Originality/value
Relatively little is understood about 'institutionalisation' as an unfinished process. This paper responds by contributing to an understanding of how institutional logics can develop and how theorisation can progress in the context of water management change in Australia.
Keywords water management, water accounting, water efficiency, sustainability
Paper type Case study