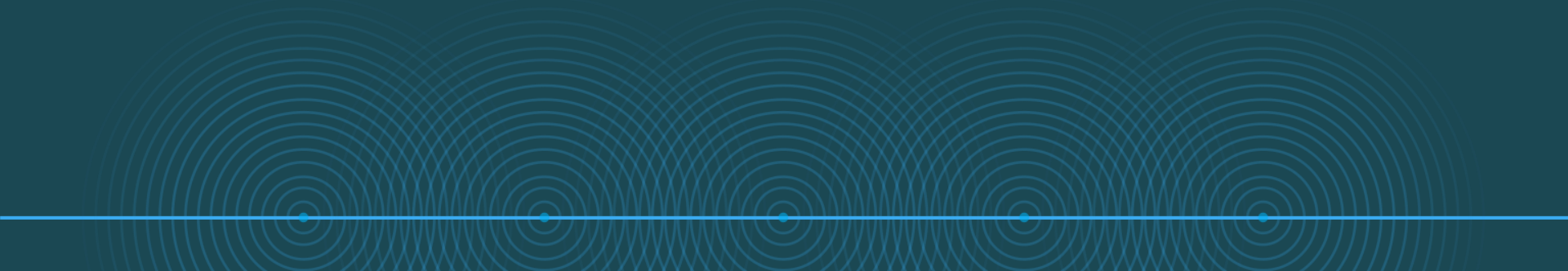


# Research Collaboration

## Tips and Tactics For Early Career Researchers

Robyn Keast, Michael B. Charles, & David Noble

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## About the speakers

- Robyn Keast is Professor in Southern Cross University's School of Business and Tourism and the former Chair of the Collaborative Research Network: Policy and Planning for Regional Sustainability. She has an extensive research portfolio, covering, for example, governance, government/community relations, social and public policy, police-corruption, interest-based negotiation and asset management. Robyn is recognised internationally for her research on networked arrangements and collaborative practice and has extensive experience in working with government, industry and community groups, having led numerous research projects in social services integration. She also chaired the Collaborative Research Network: Policy and Planning for Regional Sustainability, and has had leadership roles with several hard-infrastructure projects, including the Strategic HR Program within the Cooperative Research Centre for Integrated Engineering Asset Management, the Cooperative Research Centre for Construction Innovation, and Research Director for the Airport Metropolis Project.
- Michael B. Charles is an Associate Professor in Southern Cross University's School of Business and Tourism. He has considerable experience in the management of collaborative research. For example, he has previously been the Program Leader of the Economic, Social and Environmental Sustainability Program in the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Rail Innovation, where he worked with business academics, safety experts and engineers. Inspired by his background in managing collaborative research projects and his interest in improving research outcomes and industry engagement, he is currently involved in research pertaining to the effectiveness of CRCs in promoting innovation and the development of a collaborative competency framework for participants in University-Industry Collaboration (UIC) projects. His current role as School Director Higher Degree Research and Course Coordinator for the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) has provided him with significant insight into the contemporary management of HDR affairs.
- David Noble is a doctoral researcher and academic, focussing upon project management, and in particular the "soft skills" required for collaborative effectiveness. His publications have examined the interaction between government policy and collaborative competencies, especially in university-industry research projects. He is currently Course Coordinator for the Master of Project Management, and is undertaking his PhD in the area of university-industry research collaborations.

## About the speakers



Robyn Keast



David Noble



Michael Charles

## Today ....

- Tips for Research Collaboration for early career researchers, especially those involved with or looking to be part of a research collaboration
  - BUT:
- These tips are still relevant for early career researchers, and especially postdoctoral fellows.
- Finally, good collaborators do more than just connecting – Being a Value Adding Connector (VAC).

## Collaboration: the what & why?

- Collaboration defined.
- Characteristics / operating logic.
- Relationships are key!!! (respect, reciprocity & reputation)
- The lure of collaboration.

## Know your goals/ options?

- Do you **really** need to collaborate?
- Don't be lured into collaboration just because it's what everyone else seems to be doing.
- Is this a good option for **YOU**.
- Know the **rules** of the game/terms of engagement.
  - How does collaboration work in your School/discipline?
- Know yourself – what you have to offer – maybe special expertise / time / different perspective.

## How to find academic collaborators

- Leveraging **existing** relationships.
- Collaboration often works best when you work with people you know & trust – where **time** has been invested in building relationships (social capital)
  - Know how to work together.
  - Already trust.
- Supervisors are often your strongest relationship & first collaborators
  - Peers & other colleagues.
- Not necessarily **who you like** (although prior working relationships helpful)
  - and not necessarily who **are like you** – leverage differences.
- Realise the value & power of reciprocity, reputation, reflection.



## Build new relationships/connections

- Have some idea of what your goals/direction is
  - BUT don't close yourself off from serendipitous opportunities!
- Identify who (people or organisations) **you** need / would like to connect with
  - **Where** you see synergies & opportunities to create something new & interesting from bringing together.
  - **Who** has similar or different skill set/disciplines.
  - Collaboration often works best when there are **divergent** skills / experiences.
  - Be **open** to doing different things outside your discreet area of study
    - E.g. you might have expertise in .... Can you cross boundaries to work with someone else?
- Assess **your** relationship strength & work out strategy to make the connection.



## Building new relationships/connections cont.

- Identify opportunities and leverage relationships – e.g. supervisors will be key initially – including their links to others.
- This is about personal agency – don't sit back and wait for others (e.g. supervisors) to do all the heavy work.
- Also to sustain and go ahead – relationships, reciprocity and reputation – can't be taker / but equally can't be 'used' – have to be a maker – or a VAC – value adding connector – especially as you progress in career.
- This is about NETWORKING
  - Conferences, emails, workshops, follow on twitter, Linked-in.
  - Cold emailing to authors of interest – **be bold**.
  - SMARMING to reach out to these new potential collaborators.
- **Put effort where likely to secure optimal results** – Genuine relationships, ask questions – learn about others & how they are connected collect & share information, hold 'connecting' events.

## Aligning your intent and skills

- Many collaborations are **doomed** from the start because of mismatched expectations and goals, or working with parties who don't have the right skills and resources to make the project work.
- Collaborators don't have to be like you, but you need to be sure that the other parties **respect your way of thinking**.
- There's no point in collaborating with partners who don't bring additional expertise and resources to the table, and who maximise your contribution.

# So you really want to collaborate?

## Personal tasks & actions



# Collaboration Success factors

It's all about relationships	<i>Looked after &amp; leveraged</i>
Individual focused effort + togethering	<i>Shared / Common purpose &amp; commitment</i>
Different way of working: thinking & behaving	<i>High trust, interdependent, pooled resources, shared power, risk &amp; rewards</i> <i>Shared leadership &amp; management core</i>
Requires different skill sets (not always rewarded)	
Micro processes – it's the little things that count most	
Practice / reflection	
70% of collaborations 'fail'!	

## Be strategic & deliberate

- Establish the rules of the game – invest time upfront to get agreement on:
  - A. **What** are we going to do (outcomes)?
  - B. **Who** is going to do what & when?
  - C. **How** are we going to do it? – terms of engagement (how work together)
- Authorship contribution, order etc.
  - Over-connected – under invested.
  - **Deliberately leverage the connections – more than networking ...**
  - **Curate & convene.**
  - **Protect the fortress.**
  - You need to be **strategic**
- *What has worked with RK & MC is to do a smaller piece of work such as an opinion or controversy piece with new potential collaborators, see how that experience is, and proceed from there. Testing the waters/collaboration.*
- Don't give too much away up front.

## Other important strategies

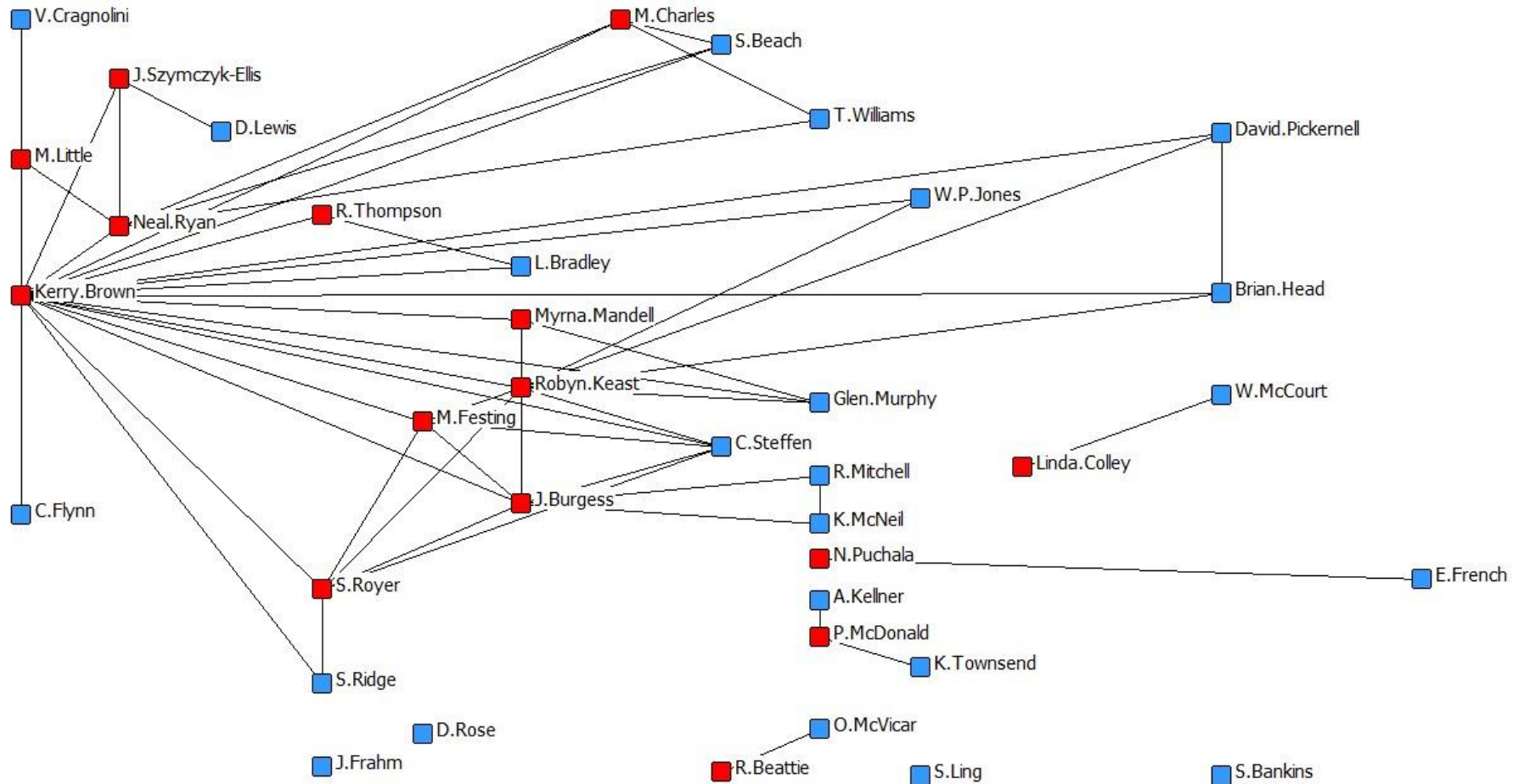
- **Close down the ineffectual or toxic.** Some collaborative projects end up carrying a partner or two, which puts considerable strain on everyone else – and can affect relationships that would otherwise be productive. Call out these behaviours, but give work-shy parties a chance to redeem themselves, or look for alternative ways of getting their input. If that doesn't work, revise previous agreements, particularly when it comes to co-authorship, and don't reward shirking behaviours.
- **Protect the fortress.** Work hard to keep a successful collaboration going. Add parties as the need arises, but take care when doing so. New parties need to understand the culture of the collaboration and fit in with its values, norms and behaviours. Understand how your partners work, their strengths and weaknesses, appreciate their value-add and constantly find ways of keeping the magic alive.

## Challenges

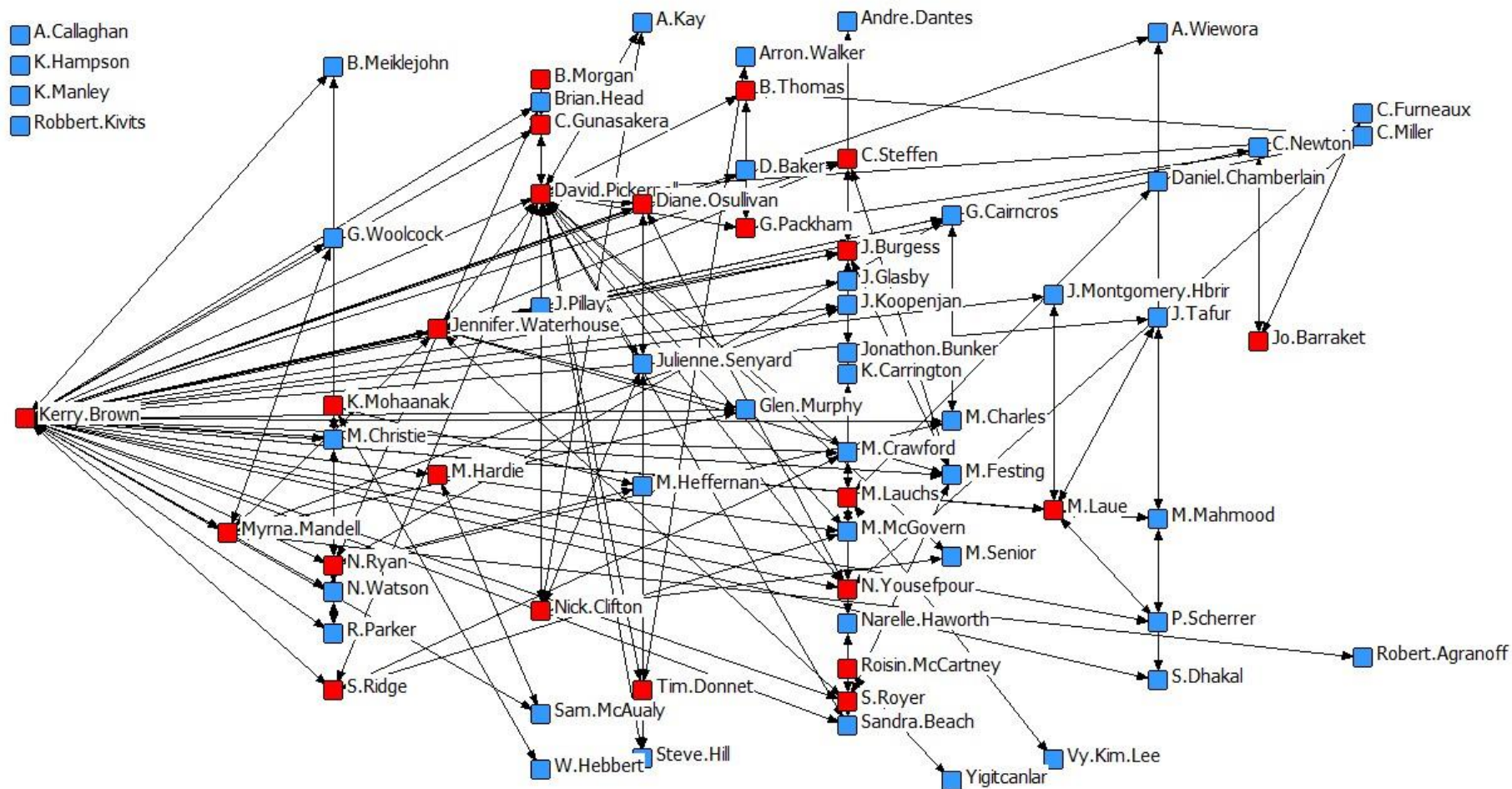
- Dealing with conflict from diverse actors / competing values / expectations.
- Navigating the collaboration – competition dilemma
- Work load & acknowledgement / patents issues.
- Delivering outcomes & claiming your value.



## A tale of two researchers







## Lessons from these experiences

Connect	early to hub – i.e. someone's well connected to others who are well connected
Have	<p>a good mental map of your connections (understand network structure)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Know what they do, their expertise, interests (personal &amp; academic)</li><li>• Reach out to these people, know where they hang out,</li></ul>
Be	open to opportunities – tweak your expertise
Be	<p>aware of different career pathways &amp; benefits/limitations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• E.g. projects, teaching etc.</li></ul>
Take	charge of your career & deliberately use your network (personal agency)

## 7 Take Away Tips

Know  
thyself

Know  
where you  
want to go /  
be open to  
opportunity

Know who  
is out there

Determine  
relation-  
ships

Exploit  
supervisory  
contacts

Know your  
obligations,  
rights & the  
rules of the  
game

Be  
proactive

BUT...

Protect  
yourself  
from  
exploitation

BUT...

Be ethical  
in all  
dealings –  
with  
respect,  
reciprocity  
&  
reputation

# Thank you.

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