Preface

This book emerges from a discussion with Dr Tim Cadman of Griffith University over a glass of wine on the eve of the negotiations prior to the Paris COP at the UNFCCC meetings in Bonn in June 2015. Our collaboration for this book arises from our mutual concern about the gap between the emission reduction targets of the proposed Paris agreement and the reduction commitments of the Parties. We questioned the policy development process and debated the value of adding a theoretical framework to guide the negotiating process.

My interest in the international climate change negotiations and domestic climate change policy was sparked by a research project for the International Organisation of Employers in Geneva in 2008 as to whether climate change was an issue that required the attention of employers’ organizations. The project found that climate change policy did impact the labour market, that labour market planning was not generally a part of policy and nor was it being prioritized by employers’ organizations and trade unions. The journey since has sought to better understand how to effectively influence the policy development process and facilitate the transition to a low carbon workplace.

The climate change policy development process is highly politically charged and impacted by international competitive relationships and unique domestic economic, social and cultural priorities. In 2008, climate change was still very much regarded as an environmental issue and, although the realities for economies and societies are now accepted, the actions required for effective mitigation and adaptation are still insufficient to meet the challenge. Accepting the complexities the competing priorities impose on the policy development process and exploring what can be done to better guide that process, Dr Cadman and I reverted to our initial debate – could a theoretical framework add value to the negotiating process? We adopted ecological modernization as a suitable theoretical framework and then undertook the task to extend it for use as a guide in the policy development process. We had been challenged by the contentions of EM theorists that EM was increasingly in use in environmental policy analysis, yet the instances referenced were the occasions when policy aligned with the language or principles of EM, it was not presented as an
influence over the decision or choices of the policymakers. In our view, EM had the potential to be an explicit guide in that process. Our work has presented EM in a form that can be used as a guide by policymakers in the achievement of their climate change objectives and helps explain and understand how the competing priorities mitigate policy impact.

We hope this book has provided some answers to questions about the impact of climate change on the labour market and the effectiveness of employers’ organizations and trade unions in the governance of policymaking. We offer it as a contribution to updating ecological modernization for the contemporary policy environment. Hopefully the book can be a resource to which policymakers and practitioners may refer to better understand the issues and influences that are impacting the achievement of their climate change policy objectives, and that the gap between the commitment and ambition can be bridged.