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**The legitimacy of collaborative planning:
setting water resource limits in Otago and
Canterbury, New Zealand**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Resource and Environment Planning**

**At Massey University,
Palmerston North, New Zealand.**

Julia Margaret Crossman

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ABSTRACT

Water resource management and planning in New Zealand has been a contested issue, typified by polarised positions, fragmented communities and costly court battles. Conventional top-down water planning processes have become characterised by conflicting science and opposing viewpoints. Over recent decades, a new form of planning and decision making has emerged where stakeholders and communities work collaboratively to resolve diverse perspectives and values and achieve community-accepted policy outcomes. These collaborative processes have gained momentum and become more widespread in recent years, however, so too has the level of scrutiny and the call to evaluate their effectiveness. Given the growing application of collaborative approaches in New Zealand it is timely to consider their legitimacy.

This research aims to assess the legitimacy of collaborative planning in the context of setting water resource limits. It develops an assessment framework founded on the principles of input, throughput and output legitimacy and employs a comparative case study approach to examine two regional council limit-setting processes – a conventional council-led approach in Otago, and a collaborative community-driven approach in Selwyn Waihora, Canterbury. Through a participant survey, complimented by a document analysis, the research examines the strengths and weaknesses of these differing approaches against the legitimacy principles and identifies the elements that promote or challenge legitimacy claims.

The research results indicate the collaborative Selwyn Waihora limit-setting process was perceived to be more legitimate than the top-down Otago planning approach. The Selwyn Waihora process performed relatively well against input and throughput legitimacy criteria, demonstrating that collaboration enables better local input, more buy-in and greater opportunities for information sharing and deliberation. It facilitates greater understanding of others views and a sense of commitment to involving and engaging the community. It also enhances problem-solving and innovation capability and the likelihood that common ground can be realised. The research does, however, indicate that while the Selwyn Waihora process was also more legitimate in terms of output criteria, the ratings for both the outcome effectiveness and the reflection of community input in the outcome were low given it was promoted as a community-driven process.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------|---|
| CWMS | Canterbury Water Management Strategy – Strategic Framework 2010 |
| ECan | Environment Canterbury / Canterbury Regional Council |
| ECan Act | Environment Canterbury (Temporary Commissioners and Improved Water Management) Act 2010 |
| LAWF | Land and Water Forum |
| LWRP | Land and Water Regional Plan |
| MfE | Ministry for the Environment |
| MPI | Ministry for Primary Industries |
| NIWA | National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (Limited) |
| NPSFWM | National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management |
| ORC | Otago Regional Council |
| PC6A | Plan Change 6A |
| RMA | Resource Management Act 1991 |
| RPS | Regional Policy Statement |
| s. | Section (of an Act). |
| ZIP | Zone Implementation Programme |

All sections of legislation, unless otherwise stated, are to the RMA