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**LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR:  
MANAGING THE NOT-IN-MY-BACKYARD SYNDROME  
IN NEW ZEALAND**

**Love Thy Neighbour:  
Managing the Not-In-My-Backyard Syndrome in New Zealand**

A thesis  
presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
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*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*  
~ Saint Matthew ch.19, v.19 ~

*Christianity teaches us to love our neighbour as ourself;  
modern society acknowledges no neighbour.*  
~ Benjamin Disraeli ~

## ABSTRACT

The thesis is an investigation of the not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) syndrome. It comparatively analyses New Zealand's past and present planning regimes, examining how the *Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)* has influenced the management of the NIMBY syndrome in New Zealand.

The *RMA* provides for a planning environment that is less centralised and less prescriptive than its predecessor, the *Town and Country Planning Act 1977 (T&CPA)*. Resource management planning is more streamlined, with an effects-based regime replacing the activities-based approach of the *T&CPA*. The thesis focuses on the local government context, within which most NIMBY conflicts are addressed. Addressing NIMBY disputes in this environment encompasses many issues: public interest, NIMBY sentiment, institutional directives and political decision-making to name a few. Managing NIMBYs involves more than implementing mechanisms to address conflict; spatial, political and institutional issues must be balanced.

The thesis uses several methods to gather information relevant to the research problem. An extensive literature review provides a conceptual overview of the NIMBY phenomenon and establishes a base for interpreting empirical results. Four case studies are investigated, exploring two NIMBY issues: landfill sites and community care facilities. An example of each NIMBY issue is studied under the past and present planning regimes. Semi-structured interviews with key players in each NIMBY case were the principal means for gathering information relevant to the case studies. Additionally, interviews were conducted with planning consultants and local government planners independent of the cases, to provide more general insights. The technique of pattern-matching was used to analyse empirical evidence in light of theoretical perspectives.

The thesis reached a number of conclusions. The *RMA* provides greater scope for implementing initiatives to deal with land use conflict. However, the full flexibility the *RMA* offers is not being realised in local government planning. The *RMA* increases opportunities for public participation in decision-making. Pre-hearing meetings and dispute resolution techniques have considerable potential in managing NIMBY conflict. Yet, the cases show that local government planners have been slow to implement these measures.

The use of non-statutory techniques for dealing with NIMBY disputes is low. Evidence indicates a heavy reliance on statutory mechanisms. NIMBY conflict is approached in accordance with 'safe' statutory and institutional parameters. As a result, the same pattern of community representation is evident under both regimes; those groups who lobby the loudest are most prevalent in the decision-making process.

The shift from a prescriptive planning regime based on certainty, to one of less certainty and increased flexibility has affected the management of NIMBYS. Prolific use of zoning, as a means of determining the spatial form of a region, was evident under the *T&CPA*. Although a blunt instrument, zoning provided certainty regarding land use activities. The effects-based framework in the *RMA* encourages more performance-based controls which establish appropriate environmental standards. Managing NIMBY conflict requires an approach which draws on a broad range of techniques on the part of planners and local government decision-makers. The thesis indicates that techniques *beyond* the application of statute are demanded in most NIMBY disputes

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