

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**Submission-makers' Perceptions of
the Annual Plan Process in New Zealand
Local Government**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for a
Master of Resource and Environmental Planning
at Massey University
Palmerston North
New Zealand

Vicky Elizabeth Forgie
2001

Abstract

A purpose of local government in New Zealand as set out in s37K of the amended Local Government Act 1974 was to provide for public participation in local authority affairs. It was intended that this public participation provide citizens with a means of influencing local activities, as well as a way of making representatives more accountable to the citizens who elect them. The statutory annual planning and reporting cycle, and the special consultative procedure that it embodies, were the key mechanisms for achieving these objectives.

The focus of this research was to determine if the annual planning and reporting cycle which was introduced as an amendment to the Local Government Act 1974 in 1989 provides citizens with an adequate means of participating in local government and provides local authority accountability to citizens. A postal survey of citizens who made submissions in 1999/2000 was undertaken. It covered submission-makers from two city, two district and two regional councils all located in the lower part of the North Island. The overall response rate to the survey was 57.5%. Statistical analysis was used to isolate key interrelationships.

The survey responses indicated that most submission-makers value the opportunity the annual plan process provides to have an input into local government affairs. Despite the majority being of the opinion that submissions do not really make a difference or uncertain about whether they did or not, most submission-makers expressed the view they would make another submission in the future. Submissions were generally regarded as of 'some' importance to local authority decision-makers but not 'a lot'. Citizen satisfaction with involvement related more to benefits such as a chance to make their personal views known, than from any concrete outcomes in terms of influence on council decisions or accountability by council. How submission-makers perceived the public meetings to hear oral submissions and whether or not they were advised of the outcome were closely related to the level of satisfaction from involvement. People making submissions on behalf of organised groups were generally more positive about the process than individual submission-makers.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank my supervisors Dr Christine Cheyne and Dr Murray Patterson for their encouragement and guidance during the research and writing of this thesis. Christine's immense knowledge of public participation processes and enthusiasm for local government was a great inspiration. On a more practical basis, her sound advice, attention to detail and availability, have been an immense support. Murray's advice on the methodological approach and statistical testing was also a great help.

I would also like to thank Local Government New Zealand for the funding provided through the Dame Catherine Tizard Scholarship Award. This enabled me to carry out the postal survey.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Dr Philip McDermott for his assistance in designing the survey format. Also, I want to thank Mr Ted Drawneck for his willingness to provide advice and help on the use of the SPSS statistical package, and Mr Duncan Hedderley for his statistical guidance.

Thank you also to my family Richard, Rhiannon, Sam and Lucy for the nights spent filling envelopes - a big job when over 600 survey forms are sent out and follow-up letters required. A special thank you goes to Richard without whose support I would have been unable to do my research.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii	
Acknowledgements	iii	
Table of Contents	iv	
List of Tables	vi	
List of Figures	vii	
Abbreviations	viii	
1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Making Submissions on the Draft Annual Plan	1
1.2	Research Objectives	4
1.3	Structure/Format of Thesis	5
2	STATUTORY PROCESSES AND RECENT RESEARCH	8
2.1	Legislation Providing for Public Participation in Local Government	9
2.2	Research on Public Participation in New Zealand Local Government Decision-making	13
2.3	Measuring the Effectiveness of Submission-making	25
2.4	Conclusion	27
3	DEMOCRATIC THEORY	29
3.1	Participatory Democracy	30
3.2	Representative Democracy	33
3.3	Local Government Representative Democracy	36
3.4	Public Involvement in Decision-making	39
3.5	New Public Management in New Zealand Local Government	46
3.6	Conclusion	48
4	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	50
4.1	The Sample	50
4.2	Local Authority Profiles	51
4.3	Ethical Issues	56
4.4	The Survey	56
4.5	Statistical Analysis of the Survey Data	61
4.6	Strengths and Limitations of the Survey Method of Analysis	66
4.7	Conclusion	68
5	SURVEY FINDINGS	69
5.1	Who Makes Submissions and Why?	70
5.2	Do Submission-makers Regularly Participate and How Extensive is Their Interest and Understanding?	87

5.3	How Much Time and Effort is Put into Making Submissions?	89
5.4	What in the View of Submission-makers are the Best Aspects of the Annual Plan Process?	93
5.5	What in the View of Submission-makers are the Worst Aspects of the Annual Plan Process?	96
5.6	In the View of Submission-makers How Can the Annual Plan Process be Improved ?	101
5.7	Do Citizens Who Make Submissions as Part of the Annual Plan Process Find the Experience Satisfies Their Aspirations?	105
5.8	Other Factors that Influence Satisfaction	118
5.9	Conclusion	123
6	THE CONTRIBUTION OF SUBMISSIONS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEMOCRACY	125
6.1	Public Participation in the Annual Plan Process	125
6.2	Participatory Theory and the Annual Plan Process	131
6.3	Recommendations for Local Authorities	133
6.4	Proposed Changes to the Annual Plan Format	135
6.5	Future Research	137
6.6	Implications of Findings for the Review of the Local Government Act 1974	138
6.7	Concluding Comments	140
Appendices		
Appendix I	Survey Questionnaire and Letters	141
Appendix II	Chi-Square Tests Results	147
Appendix III	F-Test Results	149
Appendix IV	Mean Graphs for Significant F-Tests	151
Appendix V	Cross-tabulation Tables	166
	Bibliography	169

List of Tables

Table 2.1:	Local Authorities' Perceptions of Public Influence on Content of Final Plan.....	15
Table 2.2:	Number of Written and Oral Submissions to Annual Plans for all New Zealand 1991/1992 to 1999/2000.....	26
Table 3.1:	Elected Representatives Previously Sitting Members 1992 to 1998	37
Table 4.1:	Sample Local Authorities: Key Statistics	51
Table 4.2:	The Number of Written Submissions Received by Wellington City Council 1994/1995 to 1999/2000.....	52
Table 4.3:	The Number of Submissions Received by Palmerston North City Council 1993/1994 to 1999/2000.....	54
Table 4.4:	The Postal Survey Coverage and Response Rates 1999/2000.....	59
Table 5.1:	Gender of Submission-makers Responding to Survey 1999/2000	71
Table 5.2:	Value of Rateable Property Owned by Individual Submission-makers	71
Table 5.3:	Before Tax Income of Individuals Submission-makers 1999/2000 Compared with 1996 Census Statistics	72
Table 5.4:	Occupations of Submission-makers Responding to Survey 1999/2000	73
Table 5.5:	Percentage of Survey Respondents Retired/Not Retired 1999/2000	74
Table 5.6:	Individual/Organisation Breakdown of Submission-makers 1999/2000.....	75
Table 5.7:	Issues Organisations Made Submissions About 1999/2000	78
Table 5.8:	Number of Previous Submissions Made by Survey Respondents 1999/2000.....	88
Table 5.9:	Respondents Perceptions of Atmosphere at Hearings 1999/2000	92
Table 5.10:	Best Aspects of the Annual Plan Process According to Survey Respondents 1999/2000	94
Table 5.11:	Worst Aspect of Annual Plan Process According to Survey Respondents 1999/2000	96
Table 5.12:	Suggested Improvements to the Annual Planning Process Made by Survey Respondents 1999/2000	101
Table 5.13:	Significant Relationships ($p < 0.01$) Between the Index of Satisfaction Questions.....	106
Table 5.14:	Percentage of Respondents Advised of the Outcome 1999/2000.....	110
Table 5.15:	Significant Relationships ($p < 0.01$) Between Index of Satisfaction Questions and Hearings.....	118
Table 5.16:	Significant Relationships ($p < 0.01$) Between Index of Satisfaction Questions and Belonging to an Organisation	120
Table 5.17:	Significant Relationships ($p < 0.01$) Between Index of Satisfaction Questions and the Submission Outcome.....	121
Table 5.18:	Significant Relationships ($p < 0.01$) Between Index of Satisfaction Questions and the Planning Process Five Yearly.....	122

List of Figures

Figure 1.1:	The Research Aim, Objectives and Methods.....	6
Figure 2.1:	The Annual Planning and Reporting Cycle	12
Figure 3.1	Arnstein's Ladder of Participation.....	31
Figure 4.1:	The Issues Written Submissions Were About (WCC) 1999/2000.....	53
Figure 4.2:	Submissions by Significant Activity (PNCC) 1999/2000	54
Figure 4.3:	The Survey Structure	57
Figure 4.4:	Analytical Model Used for Chi-Square Tests.....	64
Figure 5.1:	Research Aim: To determine if citizens who make submissions as part of the annual plan process find the experience satisfies their aspirations?	70
Figure 5.2:	Age of Submission-makers Responding to Survey 1999/2000	74
Figure 5.3:	Types of Organisations Who Made Submissions 1999/2000	76
Figure 5.4:	Survey Responses to the Question "Submissions Enable Citizens To Get Things Off Their Chests" 1999/2000	80
Figure 5.5:	Survey Responses to the Question "Submissions Encourage Council to Listen to What is Worrying Citizens" 1999/2000	81
Figure 5.6:	Survey Responses to the Question "Submissions Provide an Opportunity to Fine Tune Annual Plans" 1999/2000.....	82
Figure 5.7:	Survey Responses to the Question "Submissions Provide a Chance for Citizens to Influence Annual Plans" 1999/2000	83
Figure 5.8:	Survey Responses to the Question "Councils Only Call for Submissions Because Required to by Law" 1999/2000	84
Figure 5.9:	Survey Responses to the Question "Submission Made a Difference to Annual Plan" 1999/2000	107
Figure 5.10:	Survey Responses to the Question "Are You Satisfied with the Outcome" 1999/2000	109
Figure 5.11:	Survey Responses to the Question "Would You be Willing to Make Another Submission" 1999/2000	111
Figure 5.12:	Survey Responses to the Question "Is the Process of Making a Submission Worthwhile" 1999/2000	112
Figure 5.13:	Survey Responses to the Question "How Much Importance Does Council Attach to Submissions".....	114
Figure 5.14:	Survey Responses to the Question "Did Your Input Give You Confidence in Council Decision-making" 1999/2000	115
Figure 5.15:	Box-plot of the Overall Level of Submission-maker Satisfaction	117
Figure 5.16:	Box-plot of Submission-maker Satisfaction By Council	117
Figure 6.1:	Proposed Change to Annual Plan Format	136

Abbreviations

AP	Annual Plan
APP	Annual Plan Process
CDC	Carterton District Council
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DAP	Draft Annual Plan
DIA	Department of Internal Affairs
DOC	Department of Conservation
GAAP	Generally Accepted Accounting Principles
horizons.mw	Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council (horizons.mw is the trading name)
KCDC	Kapiti Coast District Council
LATE	Local Authority Trading Enterprise
LGOIMA	Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act
LGC	Local Government Commission
LTFS	Long Term Financial Strategy
NPDC	New Plymouth District Council
OCCLG	Officials' Co-ordinating Committee on Local Government
PNCC	Palmerston North City Council
RMA	Resource Management Act
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
WCC	Wellington City Council
WRC	Wellington Regional Council
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development