

**A Greener Alternative? Deliberative Democracy Meets
Local Government in Australia**

by

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Declaration

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Ivan Zwart

4 June 2003

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Abstract

In recent decades a search has been conducted among democratic theorists to find a decision making form that is both democratic, and able to produce outcomes that may be seen to favour the life supporting capacity of our natural systems. One form of decision making that has gained considerable interest from green theorists is participatory or deliberative democracy. It is suggested that compared to liberal representative structures, a deliberative conception of politics will allow for a more informed policy process that enables the discovery and support of generalisable rather than particular interests. As a consequence, citizen deliberation will produce outcomes that support the pre-eminence of the natural environment, while providing greater legitimacy and compliance with the agreements reached.

These assumptions about the environmental credentials of deliberative forums are not entirely theoretical. In recent decades there has been a gradual movement within local government in Australia towards the use of participatory or deliberative models to support its existing representative structure. In particular, this has been driven by the emerging role of local government in addressing environmental issues. It is shown that despite questions regarding their reliability, many of the assumptions made within the deliberative democratic literature also exist within local processes to deliver favourable environmental outcomes. The thesis therefore tests the purported benefits of deliberative structures. It finds that citizen deliberation can produce more informed policy processes. However, the notion that deliberative structures will produce both environmentally favourable and universally legitimate outcomes is dependent upon a range of contextual factors.

To support this thesis, existing research on public deliberation and two case studies in Australian local government are presented and examined. The first case study inspects the use of a precinct system at the Glenorchy City Council to address issues including waste management, while the second concerns the use of a citizens jury to address stormwater issues at the Waverley Municipal Council. Although a range of factors prove to have significant impacts upon the environmental outcomes that were achieved, the thesis concludes that the deliberative model can facilitate the greening

of decision making, and enable a collective realisation of the benefits of active citizenship.

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Previously Published Material

Earlier sections of some chapters were presented at a conference or published.

Sections of Chapter Two, Six and Appendix One were used to present:

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Sections of Chapter Two, Six and Eight were used to produce the forthcoming article:

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Abbreviations

ALGA	Australian Local Government Association
ALP	Australian Labor Party
BCP	Bronte Catchment Project
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development
GPT	Gross Pollutant Trap
IGAE	Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment
ISMP	Integrated Stormwater Management Plan
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
IULA	International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives
KBB	Keep Bronte Beautiful
LA21	Local Agenda 21
NRO	Natural Resource Officer
NSESD	National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development
NSW	New South Wales
RFP	Residents Feedback Panel
UK	United Kingdom
UNSW	University of New South Wales
USEP	Urban Stormwater Education Program
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WCS	World Conservation Strategy
WMTF	Waste Management Task Force

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