

 ERST 635
Lincoln University 2013



Exploring the Concept of Christchurch as a
'Super City' from a Sustainability Perspective

TITLE: Exploring the Concept of Christchurch as a 'Super City' from a Sustainability Perspective

PREPARED FOR: **Ton Buhrs**
Roy Montgomery

PREPARED BY:
Amelia Ching
George Enersen
James Mills-Kelly
Jay Whitehead

AFFILIATION: ERST 635
Faculty of Environment, Society, and Design
Lincoln University
Ellesmere Junction Road/Springs Road
Canterbury
New Zealand

DATE: **23 May, 2013**

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Executive Summary

This report begins from the position that the Auckland ‘Super City’ reforms of 2009 will have serious implications and ramifications for local governance arrangements in other major cities, particularly Wellington and Christchurch. While Wellington councils have already responded to the possibility of change by commissioning a series of reports on local governance arrangements, as well as a major review led by Sir Geoffrey Palmer, to investigate options for governance reform, very little has been published about the future of local government in Christchurch. The sweeping changes to regional governance in the region in reaction to perceived shortcomings, combined with the appearance of a cabinet-appointed observer at Christchurch City Council proceedings in 2012 has hinted at a central government agenda of reform by stealth. Alongside this, the series of Christchurch earthquakes beginning September 2010 have raised a myriad of new and different governance issues, which may, or may not be able to be addressed under the status quo. This unique set of circumstances has provided the rationale for the research brief (appendix 1) which is to investigate the possibility of Christchurch becoming a ‘super city’. As a scoping exercise, the research considers local government in Canterbury and the greater Christchurch area in the wider governance context. The report does not limit discussion to only the structure of local government in Canterbury, rather, as the brief contemplates, it considers more broadly the relationship between central, regional, and local tiers of government, as well as the relationship between local government and their communities. It considers the current nature of local government arrangements in the Canterbury region, and considers how their boundaries and/or functions could be reconsidered to change the allocation of regional and local responsibilities, responsibilities for service delivery, and holding and managing infrastructure assets. It also investigates the processes (including planning and consultation requirements) within local governance and representation arrangements including those for Māori.

The potential reforms to local governance arrangements that this report considers are explored to discover their potential for improvements to the status quo, such as:

- Provision of a unified regional strategic approach and direction;
- improved service delivery;

- Integrated approach to decision-making and resource management;
- More effective engagement with the public, to enhance local democracy; and
- Providing more cost-effectiveness and efficiency for communities in the Canterbury region.

Aside from the importance of resolving issues within the region, there is also a need to ensure the region is planning for changes in the broader national and international environment in the future, such as the effects of climate change, maximising regional competitive advantages amid progressively ‘corporatised’ approaches to government, and continuing globalisation. Adding to this, the provision of high-quality governance and affordable essential services to an ageing population, within the limits of the current austere financial climate, amid continual but unforeseeable technological improvements across all fields, makes the need for future-focused and responsive approaches to planning clear.

The research utilises two primary methods, namely a broad literature review and structured interviews with high-level stakeholders and relevant academics.

Stemming from the literature review, a set of criteria is developed to analyse the opinions of key stakeholders from the interviews. The criteria draw primarily on theories of how local government *should* operate, as well as relevant legislation that specifies how local government *must* operate. They are constructed to be purposefully broad, so as not to constrain an investigation into the complex and multi-faceted issues that arise around local government reform, while at the same time providing guidance and direction for the report to meet the research aim. The criteria are based on the four dimensions of sustainability: environmental, economic, social, and cultural. A fifth criterion, democracy, is included to analyse reform options in light of opportunities for public participation. These five dimensions are used not only in developing criteria, but also in identifying key stakeholders. The four dimensions of sustainability also underlie, and provide a framework for this report.

Within the report a clear theme is developed which recognises the division separating two distinct ideologies of local governance. These two distinct approaches, described as the ‘broad perspective’ and the ‘narrow perspective’, acknowledge the differences highlighted by the reform agenda being implemented under the current administration towards a much

narrower interpretation of the role of local governance, opposing that view espoused under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), and the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) prior to its reform in 2012, placing emphasis on the afore-mentioned four well-beings. The broad perspective can be generally defined as the belief that local government should be involved in the welfare of citizens; while the narrow perspective views the role of local government as the provision of only core services with emphasis on efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Making this distinction is vital in understanding the ideological conflict inherent in reforming local government structures, and informing a complete and relevant picture of the current situation in Christchurch.

The report lays out a three part process by which it asserts any such decision on local government reform should be made: Firstly, a Royal Commission should be established that would investigate the issue and recommend a preferred option; secondly, an electronic referendum should be held that would present the public with a choice between maintaining the status quo or adopting the Royal Commission's preferred option; and lastly, the central government should make a final decision, based on the findings of the Royal Commission as well as the results from the electronic referendum, and its own internal Regulatory Impact Analysis processes.

Three possible scenarios for local government reform in the Greater Christchurch area are identified. These options include retaining the status quo, amalgamating the territorial authorities within the greater Christchurch region to ensure consistent local government functioning, and the option of retaining the current structural status quo, while all local councils operate under a single plan. This status quo 'plus' option would see Environment Canterbury, Christchurch City Council, Selwyn District Council, and Waimakariri District Council prepare a combined regional and district plan for the greater Christchurch area under s80 of the RMA. This would replace the Regional Policy Statement, the Regional Plan, the Regional Coastal Plan, and the three district plans, with one single document. It would save the need for costly restructuring, whilst retaining local identity and representation. The benefit of such a plan is that it could allow the region to address regional or sub-regional issues together, and undertake Schedule 1 public consultation on one document, rather than the current duplicative arrangements. Such a plan could incorporate initiatives such as the Regional Water Management Strategy and other regional

and sub-regional statutory and non-statutory frameworks in strategic, high-level long-term planning. This option is considered to address both broad and narrow perspectives, as it retains local choice and participation, whilst providing consistent service delivery, and effective and efficient local government functioning.

Finally, a list of 25 recommendations is presented for consideration in the reform of local governance arrangements in greater Christchurch:

List of Acronyms

ARC	Auckland Regional Council
ARH	Auckland Regional Holdings
ARST	Auckland Regional Services Trust
CCO	Council-Controlled Organisation
CERA	Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority
ECan	Environment Canterbury
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
IA	Infrastructure Auckland
LGA 2002	Local Government Act 2002
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RIA	Regulatory Impact Analysis
RIS	Regulatory Impact Statement
RMA	Resource Management Act 1991
SDC	Selwyn District Council
UDS	The Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy
WDC	Waimakariri District Council

Acknowledgements

The authors are very grateful for the guidance of Dr. Ton Bührs as the supervisor of this research. His expertise and knowledge has been invaluable in shaping the development of this research. We are particularly grateful for his willingness to provide detailed and constructive feedback, helping guide us towards a deeper investigation of the issues.

We would also like to thank Dr. Roy Montgomery for providing us with feedback and guidance on the draft report, as well as instilling in us an appreciation for the importance of group dynamics.

The authors are especially grateful to the respondents who took the time to become involved in the research. While they will remain anonymous, it was only through their contributions of time, knowledge, experience, and expertise that the research was made possible.

Finally, we would like to thank the administration staff at Lincoln University whose attention to detail throughout the research process kept us on time and on track.

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Part 1 Introduction to the Research

The New Zealand Government's decision to establish a unitary authority in the Auckland Region has provided much of the context and impetus for this review of current governance arrangements in the Canterbury region, to determine whether or not they are optimal for taking the communities of greater Christchurch into the future. A number of local governance academics, as well as several respected political pundits, have prophesised that the Auckland 'Super City' reforms of 2009 will have serious implications and ramifications for local governance arrangements in other major cities, particularly Wellington and Christchurch. Wellington councils have already responded to the possibility of change by undertaking a series of reports on local governance arrangements, as well as a major review led by Sir Geoffrey Palmer, to investigate options for governance reform. Alongside these developments, the Christchurch earthquakes beginning in September 2010 have raised a myriad of new and complex governance issues, which may or may not be able to be addressed under the status quo, while the replacement of Regional Councillors' with centrally-appointed Commissioners is suggestive of government dissatisfaction with current arrangements.

With these things in mind, the research group has considered local government in Canterbury and the greater Christchurch area in the wider governance context. It does not limit discussion to only the structure of local government in Canterbury but rather, as the brief (Appendix 1) indicates, considers more broadly the relationship between central, regional, and local tiers of government, as well as the relationship between local government and local communities.

The report addresses the current configuration of local government bodies in the Canterbury region, and considers how their boundaries and/or functions could be reconsidered to change the allocation of regional and local responsibilities, responsibilities for service delivery, and holding and managing infrastructure assets. It also investigates the processes (including planning and consultation requirements) within local governance and representation arrangements, including those for Māori.

The potential reforms to local governance arrangements that this report considers are explored to discover their potential for:

- Provision of a unified regional strategic approach and direction;
- Improved service delivery;
- Integrated approaches to decision-making and resource management;
- More effective engagement with the public, to enhance local democracy; and
- Providing more cost-effectiveness and efficiency for communities in the Canterbury region.

Aside from the importance of resolving issues within the region, there is also a need to ensure the region is planning for future changes in the broader national and international context, such as the effects of climate change, and maximising regional competitive advantages amid progressively 'corporatised' approaches to government and continuing globalisation. Adding to this, the provision of good governance and essential services to an ageing population within the limits of the current austere financial climate, and the continual, but unforeseeable, technological improvements across all fields, makes the need for future-focused and responsive approaches to planning clear.

The research report aims to establish a thorough understanding of the issues and challenges facing Christchurch and Canterbury, to uncover from the research whether an alternative set of governance arrangements would better enable these challenges to be met, to identify a number of potential reform options, and finally to describe ways such reforms may best be achieved. It is organised in six parts, and within these six parts runs a clear theme of the division separating two distinct ideologies of local governance. These two distinct approaches, described as the 'broad perspective' and the 'narrow perspective', recognise the differences highlighted by the reform agenda being implemented under the current administration towards a much narrower interpretation of the role of local governance, opposing that view espoused under the RMA, and the LGA prior to its reform in 2012, placing emphasis on the 'four well-beings'. Making this distinction is vital in understanding

the ideological conflict inherent in reforming local government structures, and informing a complete and relevant picture of the current situation in Christchurch

The introductory part of the report sets out the aims, background, and methodology of the research, and formulates three primary research questions to be addressed.

The second part comprises a literature review describing existing local government arrangements and their evolution from a local government theory perspective. Auckland, and the lessons learnt from Auckland's recent experience with amalgamation is used as a case study, followed by an outline of the diverse drivers of local governance reform in Canterbury. A discussion of the region's boundaries is presented, analysing what effects a number of proposed alterations to these boundaries might produce, along with an overview of current governance structures in the greater Christchurch area, and the challenges that these structures are facing.

The two most logical scenarios for reform of greater Christchurch governance are then outlined against preservation of the status quo, constituting the three proposed options formulated by the research group to be addressed by the report.

The third chapter of the report begins by presenting a framework of five criteria by which to evaluate any proposed change to greater Christchurch Governance, taking the four well-beings identified in the since-amended Local Government Act 2002 (LGA), and complementing these with the fifth criterion of democracy, to reflect the value of public participation recognised and required under both the LGA and the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). It explores the ability of Canterbury's current local governance to achieve the principles inherent in these criteria, and outlines how an integrated and sustainable approach to economic development, environmental management, social well-being, and culture and diversity will ensure the region's long-term prosperity, from within a framework that recognises public participation and collaborative local governance as essential in producing good governance outcomes.

The four strands of well-being identified in the original Local Government Act 2002 – social, environmental, cultural, and economic well-being – are inextricably linked and highly interdependent. Outcomes in each of these domains will impact on outcomes in the

others. For example, a growing economy creates employment, but it also depends upon a healthy, skilled workforce. In turn, a healthy, skilled workforce depends upon a range of factors that are boosted by a growing economy, such as stable and affordable housing, efficient and accessible transport options, a safe environment, access to health care and education, recreation opportunities, and a sense of connection. The challenge for local government is to take a systemic approach, and manage the inevitable inherent tensions, so that balanced and positive outcomes can be achieved.

A substantial discussion drawn from both the high-level stakeholder interviews and the extensive literature review follows, addressing each criterion identified in the beginning of the chapter individually to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of current local governance arrangements. From this discussion a series of findings are presented, which will inform the analysis of the options, and the recommendations that follow.

Following on from this part the three options presented earlier are analysed in light of the discussion and other research. A model of local government reform that involves strengthening the status quo, but not going as far as formally amalgamating councils is found to be the most justifiable reform option based on the criteria, from both a narrow and broad perspective.

The penultimate part sets out the decision-making processes and necessary statutory reforms the research group anticipates would be required to facilitate the discussed change, and outlines proposed transition arrangements, before a final concluding section presents the recommendations of the report and suggestions for future research, and the conclusion.

1.1 Methodology

1.1.1 Background

The key aim of the research arose from discussions between the research group and Dr. Ton Buhrs, Associate Professor in Environmental Policy at Lincoln University. From these discussions and based on a project brief, the task to investigate the rationale for the possibility of Christchurch becoming a 'super city' was set. The research group approached this task as a scoping project. That is to say the primary aim of the project was set as investigating the advantage and disadvantages of Christchurch becoming a 'super city', and not to specifically recommend any single preferable structure for local government in Christchurch.

To meet the research aim, three key research questions were developed.

The research aim was to:

Investigate the advantages and disadvantages of Christchurch becoming a 'super city'.

The research aim was addressed by answering the following three questions:

Research Questions

1. What opportunities are there for local government reform in Christchurch?
2. What are the opinions of key stakeholders on the possibility of Christchurch becoming a 'super city'?
3. What process could be used to facilitate local government reform in Christchurch?

These three research questions required a variety of methods and actions to address that are discussed here in more detail.

1.1.2 Research Question One

The first question addressed options for local government reform in Christchurch.

Answering this question required two approaches.

Literature Review

Firstly, an extensive literature review was conducted which ranged from investigating theories of local government and democracy in general, to determining the specific circumstances that relate to local government in Christchurch. This literature review was used to develop a broad understanding of local government in Christchurch and to create a set of questions that would be used to address the second research question. The literature review was conducted in four separate parts, each undertaken by a different member of the research group. Four reports were produced from this process:

- A review of local government theory, and its relevance to local government in New Zealand.
- A review of local government in Canterbury.
- A review of stakeholder roles in decision making processes.
- A review of the Auckland 'super city'.

Based on these four reports and with additional investigations into relevant literature and other information sources, a single literature review was developed which was instrumental in informing the research, deriving a set of criteria, and developing a local government reform process.

Criteria

Stemming from the literature review, a set of criteria was developed to be used in analysing the opinions of key stakeholders as part of addressing the second research question. The set of criteria drew primarily on theories of how local government *should* operate, as well as relevant legislation that specifies how local government *must* operate. The criteria were designed to be purposefully broad so as not to constrain an investigation into the complex and multi-faceted issues that arise around local government reform, while at the same time, provide guidance and direction for the research to meet the research aim. The criteria are based on the four dimensions of sustainability: environmental, economic, social, and cultural. A fifth criterion, democracy, was also included to analyse reform options in light of opportunities for public participation. These four dimensions were used not only for

developing criteria but also for identifying key stakeholders. The four dimensions of sustainability also underlie and provide a framework for this report.

1.1.3 Research Question two

Semi-Structured Interviews

The second research question investigated the opinions of key stakeholders in regard to the research aim. This was achieved primarily through the use of semi-structured interviews.

Design

The semi-structured interviews were based on a list of seventeen questions (See appendix 2). The questions emerged from the individual reports that were undertaken to address research question one. Using the individual reports, with reference to additional materials, and based on the feedback given on the reports by Dr. Buhrs; each member of the research group developed a set of key questions related to the research aim. Each question was justified as to how it would benefit the research, and how it would achieve the research aim. The questions were then combined into a single list, with necessary modifications and eliminations made. Once the research group was satisfied with the questions they were sent to Dr. Buhrs for review. Based on the feedback provided by Dr. Buhrs, the questions were further modified and the final list of seventeen questions was created. The questions were designed to flow from one to the next, allowing the respondent to build on their previous answer, and giving the respondent the opportunity to provide thoughts on both sides of the debate.

Implementation

Interview requests were sent to potential stakeholders with a brief description of the research project (see appendix 2). Email addresses were obtained either by an internet search, or were provided to the research group by respondents who were not able to take part in the research, but identified an alternative potential participant. Email invites were sent over a period of one week beginning March 1, 2013 and ending March 8, 2013. Follow-up reminders were sent where no response was received one week after the initial email. In the majority of interviews a researcher met with the respondent and was able to talk face to

face. In two cases the interview was conducted over the telephone, and in two cases the respondent was sent the list of questions to which they then responded in writing. The issue of limited time meant that the interviews were primarily restricted to the Canterbury region; however, one interview was conducted with an Auckland respondent via telephone. For some interviews a researcher travelled to other towns and cities around Canterbury to conduct the interview, and for others the interview was conducted in Christchurch. The research gathered the views of a wide range of respondents. This was considered necessary so that all aspects of the 'super city' proposal were investigated.

Ethics

Due to time constraints ethics approval was not sought. The research was conducted in accordance with the Lincoln University Human Ethics Guidelines. Several steps were taken to ensure that ethics approval would not be required for the research. Primarily, stakeholders were asked for their opinion in their professional capacity and not as a general member of the public. Furthermore, no names of respondents are given in this report. Most respondents were very particular that they remain anonymous, and therefore the report has been careful to ensure that they do so. Some respondents were not concerned with their identity being revealed, however, in the interest of giving all opinions expressed by the respondents equal weight and importance, it was decided that no respondent should be identifiable through the research.

Population and sampling

In order to identify potential respondents for the semi-structured interview process the research group first considered the four dimensions of sustainability. This was done to ensure a comprehensive range of opinions was gathered in order to address the research aim. Under each of the four categories the group identified and subsequently contacted key stakeholders. For example, amongst others; iwi and academics were contacted for the cultural dimension, business leaders were contacted for the economic dimension, local government representatives and community groups were contacted for the social dimension, and environmental advocacy groups and academics were contacted for the environmental dimension.

Potential respondents were contacted based on their prominence in the relevant dimension of sustainability. While it would have been desirable to survey the general public for their opinion, time and ethics constraints meant that this was not possible. It is hoped that the opinions of the general public will be reflected in the key stakeholders' opinions as well as through secondary sources of literature.

Response rates agreeing to the emailed interview request were approximately 50%, which was considered adequate for the purpose of the research. A further approximately 20% of respondents were unable to take part in the research but recommended another person. The non-response rate was around 10%. The remaining approximately 20% of respondents declined to take part in the interview process. In total 9 respondents took part in the research.

Interview Analysis

The results of the survey were analysed using a qualitative method of summative content analysis. A summative content analysis involves comparisons of content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context (see Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). The interview responses were compared against each other as well as being evaluated by use of the criteria.

The interview analysis was conducted in four parts based on the four dimensions of sustainability. Each group member was assigned one dimension to analyse. The interview responses were analysed from the perspective of each of the four dimensions of sustainability based on the criteria as well as other relevant sources of information. By investigating all responses from a single dimension it is possible to obtain a broad range of opinions pertaining to that dimension. Significant findings were drawn from each of the four analysis sections and were subsequently combined into a summary of the key findings of the research. These key findings were then used to formulate options for recommendations and options for reform of local government in Christchurch.

1.1.4 Research Question Three

Drawing on the information obtained by addressing the first two research questions, research question three investigated a possible process by which local government reform in Christchurch could occur if it was to be desired. The process was developed by investigating previous reform processes such as what had occurred in Auckland during the establishment of the 'super city'. Other methods for facilitating local government reform discussed primarily in literature on public participation in policy matters, and comments made by the respondents were compared against the Auckland process to determine the suitability of this process for local government reform in Christchurch. Based on the additional research, the basic framework of the Auckland reform process was adopted and then modified to make it more inclusive of the public's preferences and less susceptible to excessive control from central institutions. The result was a basic three step process with a detailed description of what is to occur within each step. This process was designed to be specifically relevant to the Christchurch situation.

Part 2 Background to the Research

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Local Government

In the words of John Stuart Mill "there is a limit to the extent of country which can advantageously be governed, or even whose government can be conveniently superintended, from a single centre" (Wallis and Oates, 1988 p.13). The role of government was initially seen as a means of achieving the greatest overall 'welfare' for society. There are three main reasons why local government is seen as being best placed to achieve its welfare role:

1. First, by being in close proximity to the source of local circumstances and having local knowledge, local government can address local issues more efficiently than central institutions which are distanced from the source of attention.

2. Second, local governments should be more accessible than national government and can therefore be more engaged with the local community and more responsive to their needs.
3. Third, having local government allows local communities to choose different services and different levels of taxation to suit their needs and preferences.

While the economic efficiency perspective of local government is arguably the most prominent and widely accepted rationale for the existence of local government, it is not without its detractors. Many of these criticisms are directed at the perceived inefficiency of local government, and argue that centrally-contracted market based provision of many services would be more efficient. Related to this is another criticism that argues for the importance of individual choice suggesting that the collective decision making approach of local government is not always desirable for all individuals.

To meet the needs of the citizen it is essential that both central and local government operate as a coherent whole. They must be seen as part of a single system of government. Local government is a place for representation, discussion, and decision making, a deliverer of the welfare state and public services, and a provider of efficient and responsive services and government (Lyons, 2007 p.56). This role is not easily conducted from a central position, however, it does benefit from central guidance. Despite international trends towards globalisation, local government remains relevant as a provider of public resources that maintain the wellbeing of citizens. While the market can be used to provide some public services efficiently, other public goods or collective issues, like sewage infrastructure, do not lend themselves to a market based approach due to their high public utility but low profitability.

The importance of place is especially significant when confronting environmental issues, where engaging citizens and changing behaviours can prove to be much more effective than trying to manage the problem itself. Many environmental problems are complex and differ vastly between regions. Focusing narrowly on a service delivery approach that operates at

maximum efficiency for lowest cost can overlook the needs of individuals or specific communities, and is therefore undesirable from a community wellbeing perspective.

The local government model was established in New Zealand soon after colonisation and exists to this day. Although the model can provide many benefits to communities, the experiences of local government in New Zealand have been mixed, and the system has continued to evolve and develop through a number of reforms, as is outlined in the following section.

Historical Developments in the Role of Local Government in New Zealand

The establishment of local government in New Zealand was founded on a British interpretation of the role of local government (Howell, 1996 p.5). When Britain proclaimed sovereignty over New Zealand in 1840 the practices of British Local Government were introduced and subsequently established.

The New Zealand Constitution Act 1852 established the provinces of New Zealand and represented the first attempt at a systematic approach to devolved sub-national government (Cheyne, 2002 p.22). Ad hoc institutions were established as needs arose, such as harbour boards, rabbit boards, and transport boards to fill gaps in local government institutions' ability to provide effective governance at a local level (Cheyne, 2002 p. 23). As local government developed in New Zealand, provinces became increasingly divided into smaller areas. In 1876 the provincial system was abandoned (Cheyne, 2002 p.13), and with this abolition of the intermediate level of government came the existing two tier government of New Zealand – Local and Central. As a result of the abolition of the provincial model of government, counties were established and the role of local government rationalised.

The Town Districts Act 1881 made the setting up of town districts and boroughs easier (Christchurch City Council, 2005), for example Selwyn County divided into seven smaller counties (Cheyne, 2002 p.23). With the amounting number of ad hoc special purpose institutions and the creation of more counties and boroughs through the Town Districts Act, the number of authorities rose considerably. This continuing fragmentation of local

government became increasingly problematic; the Local Government Act 1974 was the first piece of legislation to recognise this, and led to a string of local government reforms (Drage, 2008) which culminated in the Local Government Act 1989. According to Cheyne (2002 p.27) those reforms to the 1974 Act modernised local government law.

The Local Government Act 1989 reform saw the amalgamation of 850 local government authorities into 86 local authorities (Thomas and Memon, 2007 p.175). The 1989 reforms were fundamental in establishing the role and justification for local government in New Zealand, outlining the functions, structure and organisation of both territorial authorities and ad hoc institutions. With the 1989 reforms, authorities were now required to write formalised annual plans and reports, and to undertake consultation with the public (Thomas and Memon, 2007 p.175), while elected councillors were expected to focus on matters of policy and strategy, and to allow managers the freedom to manage (Cheyne, 2002 p.25).

In 1996 a National led government brought further amendments to local government provisions through the Local Government Act 1996, which were seen as the most significant financial and borrowing provisions ever made for local government (Thomas and Memon, 2007 p.175). These amendments required local authorities to identify explicitly how their funding proposals reflected the wishes of communities through the development of long-term financial strategies (Cheyne, 2002 p.27), and focused on enhanced efficiency, greater transparency and infrastructural sustainability (Thomas and Memon, 2007 p.175).

The history of local government in New Zealand shows the emergence of two distinct concepts that have come to dominate competing political ideologies. One is the idea that government should be simplified and made more efficient both economically, and in the way it operates, using less resources and concentrating on essential issues. The other is that local government should play a strong role in providing for the welfare of its community. Nowhere have these two dominant ideologies on the role of local government been more evident than in the local government reforms in New Zealand over the past 15 years.

Recent Developments in the Role of Local Government in New Zealand 1999 - 2013

From 1999, new statutory provisions empowered local governments to promote economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing which has had some significant implications for the activities that local authorities are now engaged in (Cheyne, 2008 p.30). The Local Government Act 2002 gave reference to sustainable development and the requirement to promote these four well-beings. Cheyne (2002 p.31) recognised this reform as strongly promoting collaboration and the need to think and act strategically in regard to sustainable development.

The LGA 2002 signalled a strengthening of the notion that local government should be involved in the welfare of citizens, and a significant shift away from the traditional role of local government as simply a provider of health, rubbish, and road services (Cheyne, 2008 p.36). The LGA was an expression of a model of collaboration between central and local government that encouraged public participation in the policy process within a 'whole of government' setting (Thomas and Memon, 2007 p.173). Local government became a means for political interaction that enabled diverse societies to exercise their rights as citizens, and work collaboratively towards common goals (Reid, 2002).

The overall aim in section 3 of the LGA stated that local authorities were to:

. . . play a broad role in promoting the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of their communities, taking a sustainable development approach.

The sustainable development emphasis of the LGA at this time recognised that wellbeing comprises at least the four key domains of sustainability: environmental, economic, cultural, and social. Therefore, for local government to be able to provide for the wellbeing of communities, it must be able to address the different ways development can impact on all aspects of wellbeing for both current and future generations. While local government had been empowered to take on this new role, it had not necessarily been provided with the capability or institutional capacity to do so (Cheyne, 2008 p.39). While the LGA empowered local government by providing a participatory model of democracy, the legislative framework was still centralist and prescriptive (Thomas and Memon, 2007 p.182). The local government reforms which took place from 1999 to 2002 saw spaces for high degrees of

participatory democracy between local government and communities open up, however, central government still retained a significant amount of control over the process.

Recent local government reforms in New Zealand however, have questioned the role of local government in regard to ensuring community wellbeing, signalling a shift back to the other dominant ideology on the role of local government, efficiency, and service delivery. There has long been such a tension in New Zealand between finding a balance between democracy and efficiency (Thomas and Memon, 2007 p.176). This tension manifests in debates around how to provide local authorities with the necessary flexibility to respond to community needs, but in a way that is compliant with the decision making processes laid out by central government in order to ensure economic efficiency.

Recent decisions of central government have also shown a greater willingness to intervene in the role of local government. For example, the substantial overriding power provided by the Rugby World Cup 2011 empowering Act; the replacement of democratically elected members of the Canterbury Regional Council with centrally-appointed commissioners; the establishment of the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority, and the establishment of the 'super city', Auckland. While some of these decisions were arguably necessary, they do indicate a propensity for the central government to take a 'command and control' approach to dealing with local government.

The most recent change to the role of local government, reinforcing the continued centralisation of government in New Zealand is the Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Act 2012. As a result of this amendment the role of local government has been substantially contracted. Most significantly, the need for local government to consider the wellbeing of communities has been removed, as well as the need to take a sustainable development approach. Instead the new role of local government is:

"to meet the current and future needs of communities for good quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost-effective for households and businesses."

The focus of local government is now very clearly on effectiveness and efficiency, economics, and providing only the core traditional local government services. The new

mission of local government in New Zealand is not to have a community focus, but to be a service provider (McGuinness, 2012 p.9). McKinlay Douglas Limited (2006) summarised the problem with this approach in the report *Local Government Structure and Efficiency*:

. . . local government is inherently an expression of local democracy. Necessarily this means that different councils may differ significantly from their fellows in the ways they undertake activity, or the choices they make, reflecting the fact that they represent different communities, each with their own unique makeup.' (McKinlay Douglas Limited, 2006: 11-12).

The current 'economic efficiency' approach to local government in New Zealand takes a homogenous view of the functions of local government, presenting an erosion of community governance and a swing back to pre-1999 models of local government. Many of the districts and regions throughout New Zealand are unique and require a 'tailored' style of governance to ensure continual community development, effective management of natural and physical resources, and infrastructure development; this is where one of the major shortcomings to a homogenous model becomes manifest. What is evident over the past fourteen years of local government reform is that there are two distinct and competing perspectives on the role of local government in New Zealand.

2.1.2 Two Primary Perspectives on the Role of Local Government

Two distinct trends, stemming from two models of local government can be identified within the preceding discussion. These two models of government will be described here as the 'broad perspective' and the 'narrow perspective' on the role of local government.

Identifying these two different perspectives has important implications for analysing how different stakeholders conceptualise the role of local government. The research investigates the opinions of a wide range of stakeholders whose views on local government can be categorised as belonging to one or even both of these two perspectives. The two perspectives described here will therefore form the theme that will run through the analysis of key stakeholder opinions on local government reform in Christchurch. The two perspectives will also be used to identify and inform important questions that will need to

be addressed to further progress an investigation into local government reform in Christchurch.

The '**Broad Perspective**' on the Role of Local Government.

The broad perspective on local government is optimised by the belief that government should be involved in the welfare of citizens. This broad perspective was influential in the creation of the Local Government Act (LGA) 2002. The four well-beings (economic, social, environmental, and cultural) were seen as the responsibility of local government to promote. The broad perspective promotes a 'whole of government' approach whereby central and local government work together in conjunction with the citizens to work collaboratively towards addressing issues. While the broad perspective on local government promotes democratic ideals and public participation, it is sometimes criticised for its inefficiency compared to a market based approach (Thomas, 2007 p.176).

The '**Narrow Perspective**' on the Role of Local Government

The narrow perspective on the role of local government seeks to address inefficiencies by restricting the role of local government to only core services. This perspective is sometimes summed up as focusing to the three Rs; roads, rates, and rubbish (LGNZ, 2012). The narrow perspective of local government in New Zealand is reflected in the Local Government Act 2002 Local Amendment Act 2012. This reform reflects a desire for local government to focus on being a service provider and to distance itself from issues of community welfare (McGuinness, 2012 p.9). The narrow perspective also arguably facilitates a greater degree of 'command and control' on the part central government when interacting with local government. This can lead to faster decision making processes, such as those enabled by the Rugby World Cup 2011 Empowering Act. On the other side, the greater emphasis on central decision making, and the lack of involvement in the welfare of citizens can weaken the fundamental pillars of democracy, such as opportunity for public participation and collaboration.

These two perspectives both have their strengths and weaknesses, and each depending on the views of the individual. The broad perspective, on the one hand, promotes the welfare of citizens; however, it can be viewed as inefficient from an economic standpoint. While the narrow perspective delivers economically efficient outcomes for citizens, it can lead to a weakening of public participation and a reduction in citizen welfare.

To illustrate how current perspectives on the role of local government in New Zealand are leading to radical reform in some cases, it is useful to turn to the creation of an Auckland 'super city'. While it should not be expected that the Auckland situation can provide a model for local government reform in Christchurch, it does highlight the influence that certain perspectives (in this case primarily a narrow perspective) have on the shape and role of local government. The Auckland 'super city' also provides for a good overview of some of the challenges that will face Christchurch if it were to pursue a similar course of reform.

2.1.3 The Auckland 'Super City'

It is clear that the profound changes to the nature of local governance structures in Auckland will have ramifications for all New Zealand communities, (Cheyne, 2011 p. 41) and perhaps influence future governance structures within other regions. This change of governance has not been a sudden shift. Since their inception in 1989, Regional Councils that have their boundaries shaped by river catchments rather than by local communities of interest have struggled to fulfil their limited regulatory functions around resource management, often causing conflict with the smaller district councils working in the interests of local communities (McNeill, 2011 p. 121). The democratic make-up of regional councils has caused problems, affecting the ability of elected councillors to adequately represent their large and diverse constituencies, while struggling to address the environmental issues for which they are responsible for managing (McNeill, 2011 p. 122). At the same time, there has been significant concern that regional councils had been captured

by sector interests, and are preoccupied with matters of national economic industry and growth, at the expense of the natural resources they are tasked with managing.

Auckland Specific Issues

As of November 1st, 2010, the Auckland Council became a unitary authority, through the amalgamation of 1 regional council and 7 territorial authorities (see figure 1.).

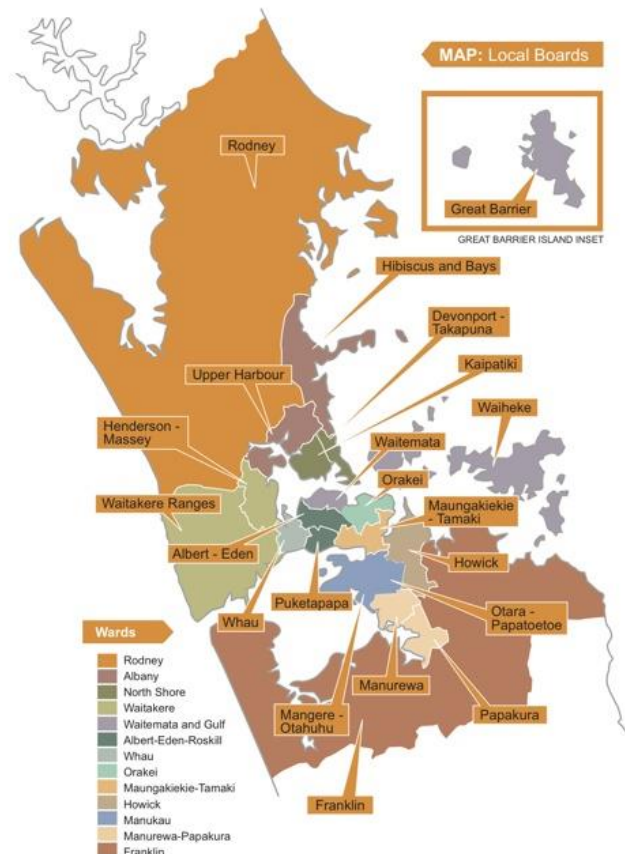


Figure 1. Unitary Auckland Council (source <http://www.communityconnectionsuckland.net/locationsregions-new-auckland-council>)

It has now become the largest council in Australasia, with an annual budget of \$3 billion, \$29 billion worth of assets, and around 8,000 staff (Auditor General's Office, 2012 p. 5). This constituted the biggest change to Auckland's governance since the abolition of the provincial system in the mid-1870s (Reid, 2009 p. 39). The Auckland Council now has two complementary and non-hierarchical parts which share the decision-making responsibilities of the Council: the governing body, consisting of a mayor elected at large, and 20 councilors

elected on a ward basis, which focus on those decisions that affect the council area as a whole, as well as twenty-one local boards, with members elected by residents within the geographic boundaries of each local board area, which focus on decisions regarding local issues, activities and facilities. The restructuring also involved the establishment of seven company-structured business operations, known as Council-Controlled Organisations (CCOs), to centralise administration of the majority of council services, such as public transport, tourism, parks, and water management at arms-length from the council. This was undertaken with the aim of allowing council to focus on high-level core strategy issues. The National-led Government's rationale for such extensive change was stated as:

"to reduce local government inefficiencies and weak, fragmented regional government in greater Auckland, to create a prosperous, world-class city to benefit Auckland and ultimately New Zealand" (New Zealand Government, 2009a p. 2).

The last two decades have seen a tumultuous and challenging series of transitions and reforms for Auckland governance structures. The ad hoc nature of these developments, constantly shifting the focus of responsibility between the local councils and the Regional Council, particularly in relation to land use, transport, and economic planning, greatly complicated the issues surrounding governance in the Auckland area. As a result, governance arrangements in Auckland prior to November 1st, 2010 were complex, with eight local councils, seven territorial authorities, five community boards, and a regional council. There were a total of 261 elected members, including 7 city mayors, regional council chair, 13 regional councilors, and 96 territorial authority councilors. During this time, the region has faced enormous pressure on infrastructure capacity, generated by the constant and rapid rate of growth. While the Auckland region is the second smallest in the country by area, it is also New Zealand's most populous region, and has been the fastest-growing region over the last decade. Auckland is by far New Zealand's largest city, with, according to Statistics New Zealand, a population of 1,486,000 at 30 June 2011. Three fifths of New Zealand's population growth is predicted to be in Auckland in the next twenty years, with the region projected to be close to reaching two million people by 2031. It is hardly surprising that governance arrangements have struggled to provide the answers that such growth has posed.

A major restructuring of governance arrangements during the national amalgamation of local government bodies in 1989 reduced the number of territorial authorities in the Auckland region from 29 to 7. Alongside these were 30 community boards to represent community interests. Boards responsible for administering harbours, airports, and electricity generation and transmission were reconstituted in the form of companies, control of which was divided between the Auckland Regional Council (ARC) and the territorial authorities. This arrangement was changed in 1992 with the change of government. The Auckland Regional Services Trust (ARST) was established to take over the non-regulatory functions of the ARC, such as water and bus services, and the majority holding of the Ports of Auckland. This effectively restricted the ARC to matters of environmental management and protection.

1998 saw the dissolution of ARST and the creation of Infrastructure Auckland (AI), with assets divided between AI and distributed across the six territorial authorities, and new limited-liability companies and joint ventures established between the territorial authorities to administer transport and water. AI, in its turn, was abolished in 2004 by the Local Government (Auckland) Amendment Act 2004, with the creation of Auckland Regional Transport Authority (ARTA), to manage transport issues between territorial authorities, and Auckland Regional Holdings (ARH) to manage the assets of the former AI. This shift was in an effort to integrate land use and infrastructure planning on a regional basis, with prominence given to planning for transport. It has been argued that this reversed an established tradition and discipline of planning transport to support land use to one of shaping land use in support of transport investment. The 2004 Act required Auckland planning documents to give effect to the ARC's 1999 regional growth strategy, limiting urban sprawl and future urban land use. The new Act also gave the regional council primacy over local councils and the Environment Court in any decisions about extending the Metropolitan Urban Limits (Mcdermott 2008). In 2007, a single infrastructure plan was envisaged for Auckland, and the Regional Sustainable Development Forum was created, comprising representation from local and central government and tangata whenua, to take leadership of the Auckland Sustainability Framework, the Regional Growth Strategy, and the development of the 'One Plan'.

In July of the same year, the Government announced its decision to establish a Royal Commission on Auckland Governance (Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, 2009), to respond to the growing concerns about the perceived problems in the structure of local governance in the Auckland region. The objectives of the Commission's inquiry, as set out in its terms of reference, were (Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, 2009):

to receive representations on, inquire into, investigate, and report on the local government arrangements (including institutions, mechanisms, and processes) that are required in the Auckland region over the foreseeable future in order to maximise, in a cost effective manner,—

- (a) the current and future well-being of the region and its communities; and*
- (b) the region's contribution to wider national objectives and outcomes.*

The report of the Royal Commission, published in March 2009, unsurprisingly identified a need for extensive change. Problems identified by the Commission included "messy and inefficient urban growth, infrastructure constraints, social disparity, and poor urban design" (Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, 2009). The Commission identified a number of specific problems with the existing governance of Auckland. These were a low standard of public transport services, congested roads, an under-utilised and dilapidated waterfront area, high costs and long delays over resource consents and planning applications, excessively high rates, and a group of councils which were not responding adequately to the desires of their communities, and were distracted by their own failure to agree on significant regional issues (Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, 2009 p. 90). Underpinning these shortcomings, the Commission identified two broad, systemic problems evident in the existing local government arrangements:

- *Weak and fragmented regional governance*
- *Poor community engagement.*

A research paper presented to the Royal Commission pointed to a deficiency of coordinated planning, particularly for infrastructure and network services which require management at the regional level such as transport, water, wastewater, energy and telecommunications. Integral to this is implementing a widely-agreed, practical long-term regional development plan which allows major decisions around infrastructure to be made with confidence that future decisions will be consistent. Even in cases where strategic matters were dealt with at a regional level, local councils were still most often charged with implementing the subsequent plans and policies. This resulted in constant disagreement between the agenda of local councils relating to community outcomes, and the regional strategic plans. This lack of collaboration and cooperation caused a serious barrier to effective delivery of either outcome. It was posited in the research paper (Mcdermott 2008 p. 3) that the Auckland Regional Council had assumed influence over land use to an extent not intended or foreseen by the Resource Management Act, or the local government reforms of 1989, and to a degree not seen in other regions. The reasoning behind their having exceeded this mandate has been put down to the unique challenges facing Auckland during this time; the city was experiencing massive growth, and a wide diversity in uses of land, and this provided significant challenges for Auckland's planners and politicians. The region also underwent transition from a primary processing and manufacturing economy, reliant on trade of goods, to one progressively dependent on its rapid population growth, consumption, and services sector, which further complicated planning in the city (Mcdermott 2008 p. 3).

The research paper went on to identify ten separate, but interrelated, issues which the Auckland Governance structure was failing to adequately address, which are reproduced below:

1. Concerns over the future capacity and security of electricity supply;
2. The need for substantial spending on network infrastructure, for renewal, capacity expansion, and extensions;
3. The continuing division of responsibilities in water supply and distribution;

4. Required improvements to the broadband network;
5. Differences in assessment of land required to cater for development and the consequences of different approaches to urban land use on business investment and housing affordability;
6. Associated with the land capacity issue, the potential role of intensification to absorb growth in a way that is acceptable to the public;
7. The long-term development of port and airport capacity and their relationship with trade and business development. This includes questions of facilities capacity, land use conflicts, environmental impacts, and ground transport accessibility;
8. Waterfront development, including the role of different stakeholders (the regional and city councils, the port company); the potential conflict between public and private use and access; and land use conflicts among commercial, residential and recreational activities in the vicinity.
9. Concerns about duplication of assets and, consequently, excess spending, evident in the utilisation and performance of indoor and outdoor sports stadia, for example.
10. The supply and funding of regional assets, which are subject to the Auckland Regional Amenities Funding Bill.

Many of these issues revolve around, or impact on, funding. A major problem identified was that of interaction within the governance structure; all parties showed a willingness to cooperate constructively around coordinated planning, but an inability to make progress on these matters when it came to taking responsibility for funding and implementation that may have risked political capital. The report also highlighted inefficiencies in administrative procedures such as waste through duplication and a lack of common and consistent information to inform decision-making (Mcdermott 2008 p. 4).

Complications resulting from such fragmentation were most acute in the planning of public transport. Although all parties recognised the need for improvements to public transport, the divided responsibilities caused by past changes to governance structures and asset holdings meant no single organisation was responsible for implementing the strategy. For example, the Bus-way program relied on the collaboration and cooperation of Transit, North Shore City, Auckland Regional Council, Auckland City Council, Land Transport NZ, Infrastructure Auckland and, after 2004, the Auckland Regional Transport Authority. Consequently, the Bus-way program was not completed for some 20 years after it was first proposed in regional transport plans. The improvement of rail services provided even further problems, with a lack of integrated decision-making again causing conflict between the stakeholders, who had differing responsibilities, and, hence, differing views on the level of capital investment needed, as well as ownership and funding mechanisms for operational costs. This was no doubt aggravated by private ownership of key rail assets at the time. On the subject of consultation and decision-making, the Commission found that processes were prolonged and duplicative with poor engagement, and, subsequently, poor outcomes (Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, 2009).

In summarising this raft of problems, the Report delivered a damning statement that:

“Auckland’s regional council and seven territorial authorities lacked the collective sense of purpose, constitutional ability, and momentum to address issues effectively for the overall good of Auckland.” (Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, 2009 p. 4).

They cited the constant disputes among councils over urban growth and the development and sharing of key infrastructure, as well as the limited sharing of services to conclude that Auckland residents were receiving delayed and sometimes suboptimal decisions for the region, and poor provision of services at a higher cost than necessary.

In recommending a more appropriate governance system suitable for the specific challenges facing Auckland over the next half a century, the Commission listed four guiding principle which are reproduced below:

Common identity and purpose

Auckland's governance arrangements should encompass the interests of the entire Auckland city-region and foster a common regional identity and purpose, which supports integrated planning and decision making.

Effectiveness

The governance structure should deliver maximum value within available resources, in terms of cost, quality of service delivery, local democracy and community engagement.

Transparency and accountability

Roles must be clear, including where decision making should be regional and where local.

Responsiveness

The structure should respect and accommodate diversity and be responsive to the needs and preferences of different groups and local communities (Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, 2009 p. 31).

The Commission acknowledged the tensions among these principles, and sought to achieve a reasonable and workable balance.

Over 3,500 written and 550 oral submissions were made to the Commission, most proposing change of some form or another to existing local government arrangements. The Commission considered a range of options, from retaining the status quo to establishing a single local authority with a two-tier structure (such as a large regional governing body or a unitary council with representation at a more local level) through to a larger number of empowered community boards or smaller ward-based councils. The Commission concluded that the establishment of a single, region-wide unitary authority would help achieve strong and effective Auckland governance and overcome current fragmentation and coordination problems. It would also allow for much more decisive and visible leadership. Other benefits include advantages of scale in relation to service delivery, infrastructure, investment, and coordination of logistics (Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, 2009).

The Commission proposed the dissolution of the Auckland Regional Council and all seven territorial authorities existing in Auckland, and the creation of a new single unitary authority called the Auckland Council. The Auckland Council would have all the powers and responsibilities of a regional council and territorial authority across the region, including staffing and all assets and liabilities. In addition to the elected governing body of the Auckland Council, local democracy would be maintained through six elected local councils operating within the unitary Auckland Council, with local councils responsible for the delivery of services and local engagement (Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, 2009). The Commission claimed that its recommendations would achieve significant streamlining in Auckland's local government arrangements through the simplification of roles, the clarification of mandates, and the elimination of unnecessary duplication (Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, 2009).

The National-led Government of the day agreed with the substance of the report, and, after only a week and a half, they presented the 'Making Auckland Greater: greater communities; greater connections; greater value' report, in which it presented the new blueprint of Auckland governance. Citing the importance of having the new governance structure in place in time for the 2010 elections and the Rugby World Cup the following year, the Government released its own agenda without consultation or a public submissions process. However, the Government report included significant departures from that of the Royal Commission. Most importantly, it made substantial changes to the second-tier of the governance structure recommended by the Royal Commission, with 21 elected local boards replacing the envisaged six local councils. Changes also included the removal of the commission's recommendation for three Maori seats and a reduction in the number of members elected at large, as well as the rejection of the proposals of a four-year term, a Social Issues Board, a minister for Auckland and a Cabinet committee on Auckland.

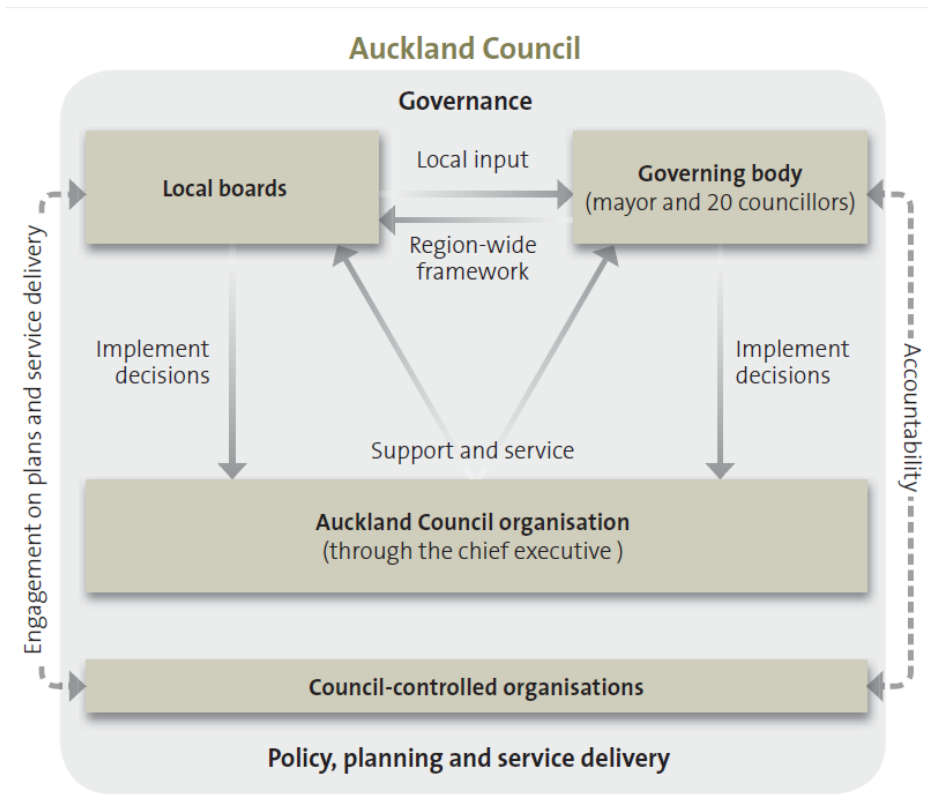


Figure 2. The Auckland governance model (source Auditor General's Office, 2012)
The CCO structure is outlined below in figure 3.

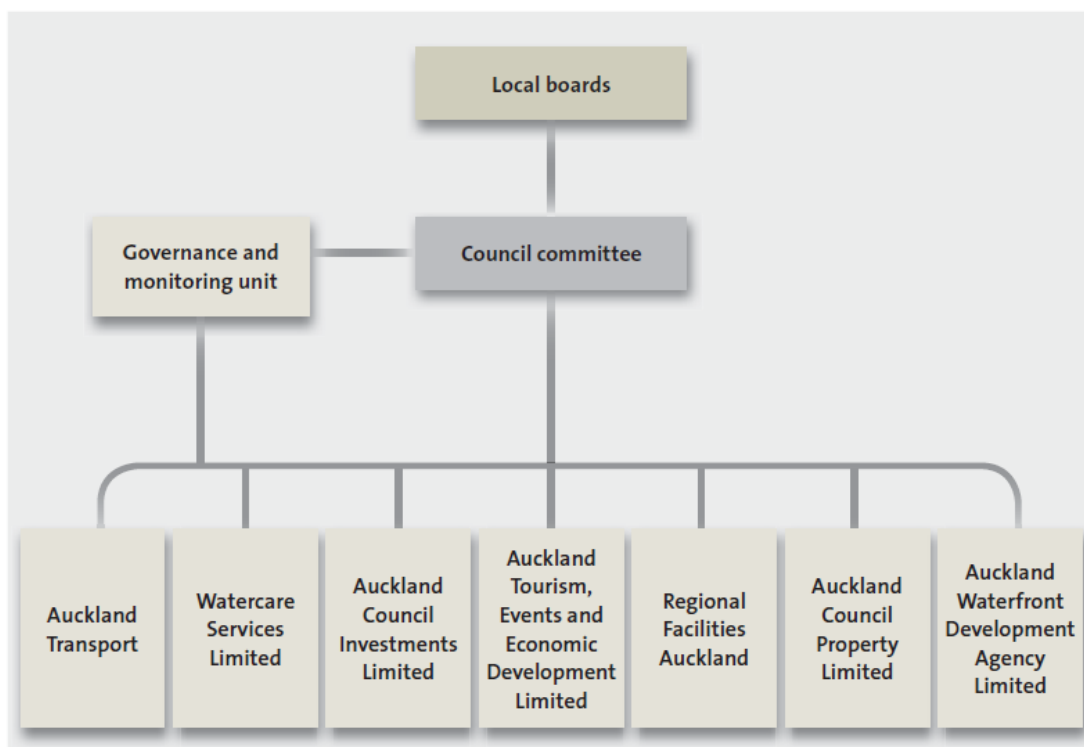


Figure 3: The CCO Structure (source Auckland Transition Agency, 2009 p. 117)

The transition to a Super-City did not come without a mix of unease, dissent and firm opposition from some quarters: Many questioned the possible agenda of privatisation behind the Auckland reforms, suggesting that the restructure would see the 'community' stripped from the new Auckland Council, which would instead be given a narrow commercial focus. Political pundit and economist, Rod Oram, criticised the 'Super City' model for vesting too much power into CCOs, cautioning that they would have enough influence to "*shape the spatial plan and its subsidiary plans*", most notably the CCO responsible for transport, which would consume 54% of the city rates bill (Oram, 2011). He also questioned the immense power vested in hand-picked appointees," he said: "*It is fundamentally shifting accountability and control of civic life in Auckland out of the public domain and into the boardrooms.*" (The National Herald, 2010). It was also claimed that local boards had little power, due to a lack of funding or staffing, and their being restricted from undertaking numerous government roles, especially where those roles might clash with regional functions such as transport or utilities.

In reporting on the Super City process in December 2012, the Auditor-General found that a "*Unified and integrated direction has been achieved through the vision and plan for the Auckland region.*" However, it was also noted in the report that there remained inherent tensions in the Council's governance arrangements that needed to be constructively managed and that relationships between the governing body and the local boards needed to be improved. The scale of the Council was also addressed, with recognition that internal communication was difficult, and that the council would struggle to be responsive and agile for its communities and residents. The report also indicated that Council had not adequately synthesised understanding and implementation of the varied range of disparate policies, regulations, and service expectations it has inherited from the former councils (Auditor General's Office, 2012).

In both Auckland and Canterbury there were failings between Regional and District councils leading to a lack of decision-making (McNeill, 2011 p. 123). While Canterbury and Auckland face their own diverse range of specific challenges, at the same time both have suffered from the broad systemic issues affecting the effectiveness of local governance. Both have struggled for a long period with bickering regional and territorial authorities retarding

strategic planning and infrastructure development, and both have had dramatic changes to their local governance systems imposed by central government.

As will be discussed, the majority of Canterbury's governance issues have surrounded the management of natural resources and issues under the Resource Management Act. The proceeding section will delve further into issues facing the region.

2.1.4 Drivers of Local Government Reform in Canterbury

The Canterbury region covers a land area of 4.22 million hectares, the largest of all the regions in New Zealand. Canterbury occupies one-quarter of the South Island (Johnston, 1983 p.6), consisting of diverse landscapes from the Plains traversed by braided alpine rivers to the Southern Alps (Environment Canterbury, 2010 p.28). The region has ten local government authorities including Environment Canterbury, Christchurch City, Ashburton District, Hurunui District, Timaru District, Waimakariri District, Selwyn District, Kaikoura District, Waimate District, and part of the Waitaki District. The boundaries of the region extend from the catchment of the Clarence River in the north, to the Waitaki River catchment in the south. The Main Divide forms the western boundary while the region extends 12 nautical miles into the Pacific Ocean to form its eastern boundary (Johnston, 1983 p.6).

To provide some background for the context within which the creation of a 'super city' would exist, it is beneficial to investigate some of the recent challenges that local government in Christchurch and the wider Canterbury area have been dealing with. The Canterbury Regional Council (ECan) is a key stakeholder in the affairs of the Christchurch

City Council, as the two councils' responsibilities overlap both spatially and in a statutory context. The relationship between these two councils, therefore, has a significant effect on how local government operates within the greater Christchurch area.

The Canterbury region contains a diverse economy relying on agriculture, industry, fishing, forestry, tourism and energy resources, and also has over 70% of the country's irrigable land, which underpins the national agricultural sector (Environment Canterbury, 2010 p. 28). The Canterbury region has an estimated 2.62 million hectares of land in agricultural and horticultural production (Department of Internal Affairs, 2012 p. 4). The agricultural use of the land has had a substantial influence on the region's landscape and has underpinned many of the region's environmental issues.

In contrast to Auckland, many of Canterbury's key issues have their genesis in resource management, rather than infrastructure planning. These resource management issues have had a significant influence on the role and relationships between different local government organisations throughout Canterbury. The issue of freshwater management (both ground and surface water) has been identified by a Governmental Review Group as the single most significant issue facing the Canterbury Region (Creech et al., 2010 p. 1). However, The Canterbury Regional Council (ECan) has had a long-running history of in-fighting and discontent over the management of its regional issues (Luke, 2007 p. 5), and a number of these have brought the efficacy of Canterbury governance into question. In particular, the inadequate management of water, in the face of the vast and rapid expansion of the dairy industry has seen lowland rivers and streams become polluted, and aquifers being overdrawn.

In 2010, Environment Canterbury's democratically elected governing body of 14 regional councillors was replaced with seven Government-appointed Commissioners. This was justified on grounds of reported longstanding problems of entrenched political divisions; competing and adversarial approaches within the organisation; institutional and technical deficits; and ingrained organisational culture issues (James and Crisp, 2012 p. 3). This provoked a strong reaction amongst local communities in Canterbury, who criticised the government's lack of sympathy for democratic processes. There was, however, significant support for some change in the functioning of the regional council: In a 2012 Regulatory

Impact Statement on Canterbury governance it was stated that Canterbury's territorial authorities were all unanimous in expressing to Ministers their lack of confidence in ECan, as were iwi, selected stakeholders, and many public submitters (James and Crisp, 2012 p. 8).

The Christchurch City Council has also experienced similar challenges. A number of decisions made by the Christchurch City Council are said to have undermined the transparency, accountability and decision-making of the City Council as well as the leadership of Mayor Bob Parker (Drage, 2011a p. 158).

The earthquake of February 2011 resulted in a drastic reorganisation of power in Christchurch's local government framework. Central government asserted a higher degree of control over local government in Canterbury through implementation of a legislative framework creating the 'Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority' (CERA). CERA is described as an "agency established by the Government to lead and coordinate the on-going recovery effort" (Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority, n.d.). CERA's role is to provide integrated decision-making across a range of public and private organisations although the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Act gives the Earthquake Minister Gerry Brownlee powers to override a number of statutory decisions made by local authorities.

In 2012, following periods of apparent conflict and dysfunction within the council, Central Government appointed an observer to sit on the council leading to speculation in the media and public that the City councillors would also be replaced by government-appointed commissioners. The open-ended imbalance in the relationship between local and central government (through the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority) is an issue that is influencing local governance and democracy in the region.

The recent history of local government in Christchurch indicates a lack of certainty around where power is believed to best reside. Even before the establishment of ECan, and the experiences suffered by the Canterbury earthquakes, there was a long-running history of infighting and discontent within local bodies over the management of particular issues, and claims of a power struggle between ECan and the Christchurch City Council have drawn widespread criticism of both organisations (Espiner, 2001 p. 48, Luke, 2007). It is beneficial to further examine the tensions that have existed between the Christchurch City Council

and the Canterbury Regional Council, as any local government reform in Christchurch must aim to neutralise the power struggle between these two levels of local government.

Local government changes in Christchurch city that result in the City Council extending its boundary of responsibility over a wider area have the potential to cause changes in the relationship between the district and regional councils. How these two spheres of local government interact and cooperate together is of significance for any local government reform in Christchurch. A more in depth analysis of the structure, functions and relationships of the three district councils that are being investigated by the research will now be presented.

2.2 Introduction to Greater Christchurch Councils

The following section presents an outline of the three district councils that are identified as being most likely to be included in any local government reform that were to take place in Christchurch. The Greater Christchurch area has been defined in the Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy (Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy, 2013) as the communities within the 'commuter belt' which is approximately half an hour drive from the Central City in Selwyn and Waimakariri Districts. This section describes the councils in the Greater Christchurch area, their structure, decision making processes, public participation responsibilities, and their relationships with each other.

2.2.1 Christchurch City Council

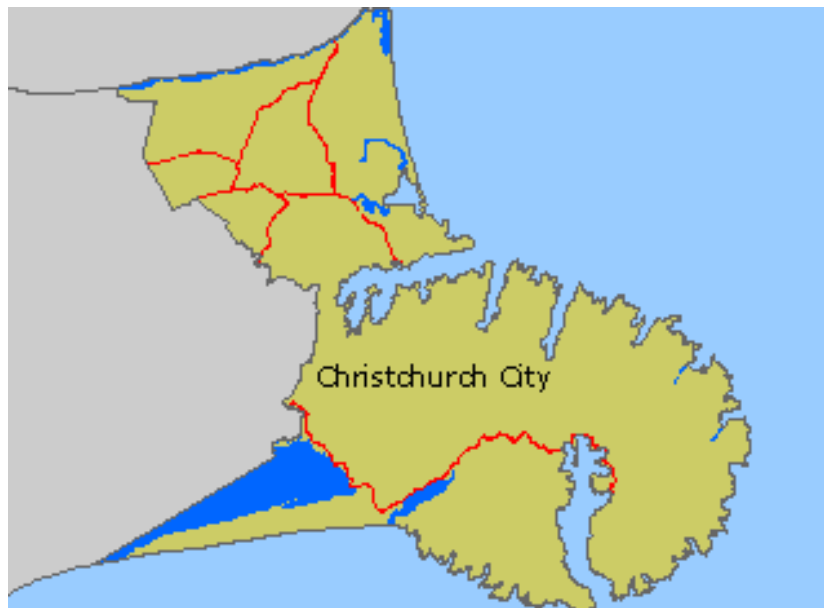


Figure 4. Christchurch City (source <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage/Boundary/BoundaryMap.aspx?id=2000060&type=ta&ParentID=1000013>)

The Christchurch City Council shown in figure 4 is the second largest Council in the country, with a population of 368,900 residents (Christchurch City Council, n.d.). The size of the council is a result of amalgamations of former local authorities previously operating in the area now covered by the Christchurch City Council including Riccarton, Sydenham, New Brighton, Spreydon, St. Albans, Sumner, Linwood and Woolston Borough Councils as well as a number of special purpose boards.

The Christchurch City Council comprises of 12 Councillors representing six metropolitan wards and one Councillor representing the Banks Peninsula ward. Councillors are elected by the voters within each individual ward whereas the Mayor is elected at large (Christchurch City Council, 2011). Because of the size of the Christchurch City Council the creation of community boards gives the public the opportunity to participate in local government decision making. In Christchurch City there are eight Community Boards. Six metropolitan Community Boards are made up of five board members each who are elected for each ward. There are two Banks Peninsula Community Boards which again are made up of five elected board members for each board (Christchurch City Council, 2011). Each of the

Community Boards has two elected Councillors on the board with the exception of Banks Peninsula, which has one councillor for its two community boards.

The Christchurch City Council's governance statement (Christchurch City Council, 2011) states the roles in the decision making process as the Mayor and Councillors having the authority, under the Local Government Act 2002, to make certain decisions including setting rates, passing bylaws, adopting plans and policies and appointing the Chief Executive. Some decisions are delegated to community boards and the Chief executive (Christchurch City Council, 2011).

The public is advised of all upcoming meetings of the Council, its Community Boards and all committees and sub-committees. Although the public are encouraged to raise a local issue with their local Community Board in the first instance, as the Community Boards can forward issues to the Council if necessary.

2.2.2 Selwyn District Council



Figure 5. Selwyn District Council (source <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage/Boundary/BoundaryMap.aspx?id=2000062&type=ta&ParentID=1000013>)

The Selwyn District Council (SDC) shown in figure 5 is New Zealand's fastest growing district, in the June 2006 Census, Statistics New Zealand put the District's population at 34,000, a 2.3% increase on the 27,000 living here in 2001. Since 2006, Selwyn has continued growing at an average rate of 3.3% per annum and was the fastest growing territorial authority in New Zealand in 2010 (Selwyn District Council, 2012). The district's current boundaries date from 1989 when three adjacent counties, Malvern, Ellesmere and the rural section of Paparua were amalgamated into a single district (Selwyn District Council, n.d.).

SDC is divided into four wards with 11 Councillors elected. Four Councillors are elected by the Selwyn Central Ward, two Councillors from each of the other wards (Ellesmere, Springs and Malvern) and the Mayor who is elected by the district (Selwyn District Council, 2011). Selwyn District Council (2011) in their local governance statement identify the adoption of a community governance model, that is identified in the figure below with the community a significant part of the Council governance structure.

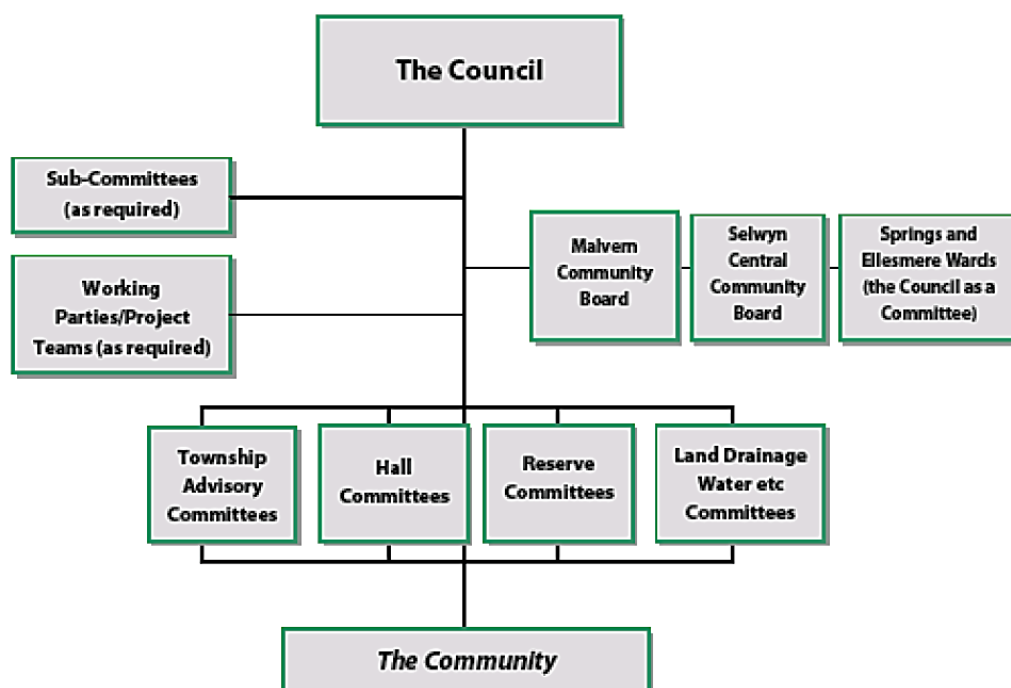


Figure 6. Selwyn District Council Governance Structure (source Selwyn District Council, 2011 appendix 4)

SDC operates in a similar manner to the Christchurch City Council in terms of their decision making processes and the structure of their community boards (see figure 6). The structure of the community boards, as outlined in the SDC governance statement, consist of:

- The Malvern Community Board, comprising five elected members and one Councillor appointed from the Malvern Ward.
- The Selwyn Central Community Board, comprising four elected members and one Councillor appointed from the Selwyn Central Ward (Selwyn District Council, 2011).

Public consultation is a requirement of both Schedule 1 of the RMA, and the LGA 2002, and the SDC governance statement describes the required consultation process and public access, which the SDC states goes beyond the consultative procedure required in the aforementioned Acts. SDC (2012) states that it has been expressed to the Council through Residents Surveys and consultation processes how important it is to belong to cohesive, active and safe communities. The Council interprets this as a strong mandate to be involved in community development activities, and this is reflected throughout their plans, policies, and governance statement.

2.2.3 Waimakariri District Council



Figure 7. Waimakariri District (source <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage/Boundary/BoundaryMap.aspx?id=2000059&type=ta&ParentID=1000013>)

The Waimakariri District is located to the north of the Waimakariri River in North Canterbury, and spans around 225,000 hectares (Waimakariri District Council, 2012b). The district, which extends from Pegasus Bay in the east, to the Puketeraki Range in the west, borders on the south side of the Hurunui District. The two major urban centres are Rangiora and Kaiapoi (Waimakariri District Council, 2012b). There are also a number of other smaller towns, including Woodend and Oxford, as well as a number of villages and beach communities. The District is currently experiencing rapid growth in population from around 47,812 in 2011, to an expected 59,833 in 2021, which represents an increase of 26.4% (Council, 2012 p. 5). Much of this growth was predicted and planned for, but has been accelerated greatly as a result of the Canterbury earthquakes (Council, 2012 p. 5).

The territorial local authority administering the area is the Waimakariri District Council, which is governed by a Mayor and ten elected Councillors. The Council organisation is headed by a Chief Executive whose responsibilities are to employ other staff on behalf of Council, implement Council decisions and provide advice to the Council (Waimakariri District Council, 2012a p. 4). Total operating expenditure on Council services is typically approximately \$50 million per year (District, 2011 p. 5). The assets held by the Council to

deliver these services had an estimated net value of \$993.8 million in June 2010 (Council, 2012 p. 4). To meet the extensive costs associated with recovering from the Canterbury earthquakes, Waimakariri District Council has announced in its latest ten year plan that it is planning its highest ever level of capital expenditure over the next few years, proposing to spend over \$164 million on repairs, renewals and enhancements to existing facilities in 2013 (Council, 2012 p. 4). To fund this programme of work the Council has indicated its intent to significantly increase rates, as well as Council's borrowing (Council, 2012 p. 4).

The Waimakariri District also uses a ward system to promote the interests of its communities, represented by Community Boards which are open to the public to discuss Council and community-related matters (District, 2011 p. 7). There are four wards within Waimakariri, with three being represented by community boards and one by a ward advisory board. Kaiapoi, Rangiora and Woodend-Ashley Boards have six members elected by the community plus three Councillors appointed from each of the appropriate wards. The Oxford-Eyre ward has a ward advisory board which is appointed by the Council, following a public nomination process. Each Community Board elects their own chairperson (District, 2011 p. 7).

The Waimakariri District Council states in its delegation manual that: *"it is essential, in the interests of good management and effective administration, to encourage the delegation of decision making to the lowest competent level"* (Waimakariri District Council, 2012a p. 2).

The reasoning behind this is that it *"will achieve best use of the abilities of elected representatives and officers, minimise the cost of material, technical and financial resources, promote the development of effective managers and minimise bureaucratic interference in the daily affairs of the District's residents"* (Waimakariri District Council, 2012a p. 2).

The Council holds a meeting every month to make decisions and set policies relating to the business of the Council. Much of the Council's policy direction is set outside of these public meetings by a number of Standing Committees, which are made up of small groups of Elected Members who recommend actions to the Council, and make lower-lever delegated decisions (District, 2011 p. 9) The Council also monitors the performance of Council Controlled Organisations which are responsible for providing services, such as Tranzwaste.

Public participation and consultation is undertaken as per Schedule 1 of the RMA. The Council, in its governance statement, acknowledges the hapu and whanau of Ngai Tuahuriri as tangata whenua for the Waimakariri District, which links to Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu. The Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Te Ngai Tuahuriri Runanga in December 2003, and has enacted a range of policies relating to Maori relationships with ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu and other taonga (District, 2011 p. 22).

Integration between the Three Councils

The last two decades has seen an increasing shift towards regional and, in particular, sub-regional integration of strategic planning and management. A realisation that local authorities and other resource management stakeholders throughout Canterbury are dealing with the same issues, and involved in processes that immediately affect one another, has led to the establishment of a number of inter-agency working parties, committees and groups who meet on a regular basis to discuss these challenges and come up with solutions (Environment Canterbury, 2013 p. 21). Examples include the Mayoral Forum, Nga Rūnanga, the Canterbury Regional Energy Forum, the Regional Affairs Committee, the Canterbury Regional Land Transport Strategy, the Regional Biodiversity Advisory Group, the Canterbury Civil Defence Emergency Management Group, and the Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy Partners group. Multi-interest advisory groups such as these provide a valuable strategic input to planning and decision-making, and often make significant positive changes by allowing input and discourse between regional, city, and district councils, central government agencies, NGOs, and other community stakeholders (Environment Canterbury, 2013 p. 21). This fosters a coordinated and cooperative approach, which recognises the importance of shared responsibility and working together to achieve the common goals of the strategy's vision (Environment Canterbury, 2013 p. 21). Environment Canterbury supports the establishment of groups such as these, which they state will help to ensure that region-wide and cross-boundary issues are addressed in a strategic and collaborative manner (Environment Canterbury, 2013 p. 21).

In relation to plans, there are many responsibilities relating to planning and consents for which both district and regional councils have functions under Sections 30 and 31 of the RMA, and this can cause friction, conflict, and duplication, as outlined in the example of Auckland. It seems that there may be clear benefits in the development of a combined district and regional plan under Section 80 of the RMA to better integrate regional and sub-regional issues within Greater Christchurch. Combined plans appear likely to more effectively and efficiently resolve these issues by integrating the appropriate resource management outcomes and processes through the Schedule 1 process, thereby avoiding duplication and ensuring clear regional or sub-regional direction and voice.

2.3 Challenges Facing Greater Christchurch Councils

2.3.1 Challenges facing the CCC

The destructive sequence of earthquakes that struck Canterbury throughout 2010 and 2011 has set the stage for the key issues that will face the Christchurch City Council now and in the future. Within Christchurch in particular, no decision can be made without taking into account the recovery from the earthquakes (CCC, 2013 p.15). This is not to say that there were no underlying issues in Christchurch prior to the earthquakes: one prime example is central city revitalisation, which is even more relevant in the post-quake environment. Some of the key challenges the city will face include post-rebuild economic growth, an aging population, and its effect on the workforce and its skills base, and the temporary or permanent relocation of business activities and residential properties (CCC, 2013 p.19).

One of the very real and immediate issues crucial to the city's recovery is dealing with the effects of the geographic shifts in population across the city both in terms of housing and businesses. A vast majority of the residential shifts are occurring from eastern ('red zone') areas to new residential developments within outlying green-field areas, while the business transitions are concentrated around central to suburban shifts. In relation to these population shifts, the need for short term transport systems to keep Christchurch moving will be critical to the recovery of the City, as traffic patterns and roading networks have been significantly altered. The earthquakes have posed some immense strategic challenges for the City's roading network, with 45 per cent of the roads in Christchurch suffering damage, and up to 50,000 repairs being required (GCUDS, 2012). In the long term, an opportunity exists to improve travel options and to transition from an auto-dependant transport system to other sustainable forms, such as cycling and public transit systems.

A number of housing issues exist, both pre-existent and earthquake-related. Adequate and affordable housing is a pre-existing challenge, one that is felt nation-wide, but also one that is now a major recovery issue for the city in the wake of the earthquakes. Housing for temporary workers will be another issue that will be demanding on the Council's services and which potentially brings wider social impacts that will need addressing. Estimates propose that up to 36,000 extra workers will migrate to Christchurch for the rebuild (CCC, 2013 p.17).

Across Christchurch a need has been identified by the Council for a co-ordinated and integrated approach to the identification, assessment and resolution of recovery related

issues. Funding the rebuilding of infrastructure and retaining key community services remain major challenges as the Christchurch economy, which has also been negatively impacted by the global economic crisis. Although many of the economic focal points of the greater Christchurch and Canterbury region are relatively unaffected, tourism and visitor accommodation sectors have been hard hit by the earthquakes.

A number of specific environmental issues will be faced by the council; the urgency of recovery measures related to the earthquakes have meant environmental concerns have been generally overlooked in recent times, and additional environmental concerns, such as the production of demolition waste, have emerged.

The following have been identified as key environmental challenges:

- Repairing waterways and restoring ecosystems have been identified as clear health and environmental priorities.
- Impacts of liquefaction have reduced the storage capacity of the city's waterways while the banks and profiles of river systems have altered dramatically, increasing the susceptibility of flooding.
- The opportunity of a city-wide rebuild also means necessary attention to longer term issues, such as climate change, should be accounted for.
- Christchurch is susceptible to natural hazards including floods, tsunamis, earthquakes, slope instability, rock falls, droughts, snow and wind.
- CERA estimates that in excess of 4 million tonnes of demolition waste will need to be addressed, whilst in the long term there will be an increase in construction wastes.

Water has been identified as a key resource of concern that requires specific management to maintain the existence of the wider economy of Christchurch. Managing Canterbury's water resources will be important to the future of Christchurch's economy and will largely depend on the ability of the Christchurch and outlying District Councils to successfully manage this resource through integration.

2.3.2 Challenges facing the Selwyn District

Now and in the near future the Selwyn District Council will face a number of challenges that will need to be overcome in order for the Council to deliver services and infrastructure that will meet the needs of its communities. One of the key challenges is that the district is the highest growth district in the South Island, mainly as a result of internal migration (SDC, 2012 p.24). On-going population growth is also expected along with increasing urbanisation of rural townships which will lead to the pressures of providing sufficient community facilities. According to the Mayor of Selwyn District the biggest issue the district is facing is growth, particularly in Prebbleton, Rolleston and Lincoln (Young, 2013 p.1).

The impact that the Canterbury earthquakes will have on the changes to growth are still largely undetermined (SDC, 2012 p.24), uncertainty therefore remains as to whether growth will accelerate further or will flatten out. This raises further concerns for existing infrastructure as some facilities, predominantly in the growth towns, will reach their capacity over the next ten years and will need to be expanded to meet the demand. If population does boom in the District as predicted, it will place the Council under pressure to ensure all the infrastructure (roading, sewage and services) needed to support an urbanised environment can keep up with demand (Young, 2013 p.1).

The demographics of the District are changing, including an aging population, increasing numbers of children and youth in the higher growth areas and an increase of diversity within its communities. A number of buildings within the District are approaching the end of their useful life-span and will require renewing or replacing, adding to the financial strain of the district. Some of these facilities are considered low-use, and therefore will be uneconomical to replace. Maintaining the day-to-day infrastructure and services of the district are, however, more important, yet this risks a high impact on rating (SDC, 2012 p.24). In addition, more resilient building codes are required for infrastructure as a result of the earthquakes, meaning rebuild costs are higher, while some existing buildings have been labelled 'earthquake prone', meaning they require additional strengthening, also leading to an increase in costs.

Approximately 60 per cent of the District's population live within 25km of the Christchurch City boundary (SDC, 2012 p.56). While this proximity creates excellent opportunities for working and living relationships, it can also create issues in meeting transport needs as

volumes of commuters increase. One of the transport issues of most concern to the District is its extensive network of narrow rural roads and the large number of intersections, in particular ones not able to handle the predicted levels of traffic identified in the greater Christchurch area (SDC, 2012 p.57).

Issues surrounding freshwater also sit among the top concerns within the operations and maintenance sphere of the Council (SDC, 2012 p.80). The strong relationship between water use and wastewater disposal, storm water, water race and land drainage systems have been provided for in integrated projects. A major focus for the region in the future is to ensure all communities within the District have access to good drinking water (Young, 2013 p.1).

The impact of Canterbury's earthquake sequence also heavily affected the availability of sports and recreational facilities throughout the greater Christchurch area. This may mean the demand for use of facilities and spaces within the Selwyn District that were only affected by minor damage will increase as the District may need to support the lack of facilities within the Christchurch City boundaries.

2.3.3 Challenges facing the Waimakariri District Council

The key issue that the Waimakariri District Council will face over the next ten years will be the ability to provide community facilities and infrastructure to meet the needs of a projected population of 60,000 people in the District by 2022 (WDC, 2012 p.4). A key part of this challenge will be the ability for the Council to fund the necessary infrastructure. The district is already struggling from a shortfall in community facilities as a result of the Canterbury earthquakes. Damage to key community facilities in Kaiapoi has seen the closure of the library, service centre, and swimming pool (WDC, 2012 p.4), while recent decisions were made to close the town halls in Rangiora and Oxford due to them being earthquake prone. Like the Christchurch City Council, Waimakariri is experiencing large shifts in population due to the red zoning of over 1000 homes within the district as well as migration from Christchurch's red-zoned areas (Cairns, 2013 p.1).

Rate rises required to ensure services and infrastructure can be retained are a continuing issue which is been driven by the effects of the Canterbury earthquakes and urban sprawl. According to the District's long-term plan, the Waimakariri District is expected to continue

to be one of New Zealand's highest growth areas (WDC, 2012 p.5). Rates will therefore continue to be pressured due to development and maintenance of community infrastructure and the need for considerable rebuilding. The September earthquake had a severe impact on the Kaiapoi town centre, damaging many public facilities, spaces, businesses and the transport network. The Council has adopted a Kaiapoi Town Centre Plan for the rebuild; however, the cost of this project will be significant.

A number of bridges within the District have been identified as needing repair work and strengthening. Although the New Zealand Transport Agency provides funding to assist in roading and infrastructure including bridges, the Council is still required to share around half the costs (depending on the significance of the project).

Accommodating the district's growing population is another of the key concerns to the district, and along with this comes the challenge of ensuring its infrastructure can cope with such growth (Cairns, 2013 p.1). Identified pressure areas that will need to be improved to meet increasing urban growth (and as a consequence of the earthquakes) include sewer upgrades, rural water schemes, stormwater drainage and disposing of solid wastes.

A key question that needs to be addressed when considering local government reform that potentially affects multiple councils is boundaries. The boundaries within which reform should take place is a key consideration when deciding which model, and what scale, of local government will work best for greater Christchurch.

2.4 Boundaries

As described earlier, the boundary for the Canterbury Region extends from the catchment of the Clarence River in the North, to the Waitaki River catchment in the South. While the

Main Divide forms the Western Boundary, the region's Eastern limit is 12 nautical miles into the Pacific Ocean (Johnston, 1983 p.6). Boundaries have important political, financial and social effects. The research is focused on investigating the optimal scale of local government in Christchurch city. Therefore, it is important to consider the boundaries of Christchurch city within the broader context of the boundaries of the Canterbury region.

Skaburski (1992 p.159) identifies different definitions and determinations of boundaries for the distribution of local government. Skaburski (1992 p.159) states that boundaries are innately concerned with "the interest and welfare of the community, development and industrial character, economic and industrial character, financial resources, physical features, population characteristics, administrative record of government concerned, size and shape of areas, and the wishes of the inhabitants". Feiock (2001 p.383) discusses this further, stating that boundaries define local arrangements of service provision and production, patterns of economic development, the exercise of political power and that boundaries carry important distributional implications because they can determine whose preferences are decisive in public choice, and the number and size of local government affect the allocation of costs and benefits to individuals and groups. Another definition Skaburski (1992 p.159) highlights that boundaries stress a sense of community. They provide for a balance among diverse groups; effective functioning, facilitation and cooperation; and they maintain intergovernmental cooperation in planning.

Given the functions of boundaries that have been described by the authors above, it is relevant and necessary to understand how the changes of these boundaries may or may not improve how local government can function within regions and districts. The following section will describe the potential for change that may exist in greater Christchurch for the purposes of improving the functioning of local government and the outcomes for councils.

Changes to Boundaries

Feiock (2001 p 390) discusses authors who attempt to identify motivation for altering local boundaries. They find public officials, business associates, and citizens had differing

opinions. For example, public officials were concerned with community leadership and political power; while business associates were concerned with community image and status, and financial gain; compared with the citizens who wanted accountability, representation, lower taxes, greater access and efficiency.

Such reasons for change were evident in the restructuring of Auckland governance, and for the purposes of dealing with the raft of issues that existed within the region. Due to the suggestions from some academics, and the realisation of the extent of issues that exist within greater Christchurch (Christchurch City, Selwyn District and Waimakariri District), it may be possible to restructure these territorial boundaries. The reasons for altering territorial boundaries will be briefly touched upon here; however, these are discussed in detail in Part 3 of this report.

Christchurch is a city with few geographic boundaries. There is the sea and the Port Hills, other than that there is almost unhindered opportunity for development of land to extend the urban area all the way to the horizon (McCrone, 2009). The small towns of Selwyn and Waimakariri are already among the fastest growing places in the country, as Christchurch spreads out across the Canterbury plains. However, Christchurch and Auckland are considerably different in both population and area, as identified earlier, which suggests that the Auckland 'super city' model may not simply apply to local government arrangements within the greater Christchurch area. A number of possible options that discuss both boundary changes and maintaining existing boundaries are presented in the next section for the purpose of identifying options for reforming local government in Christchurch.

Part 3 Outline of Options

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to investigate the possibility of boundary changes and the opportunities for local government reform in Christchurch driven in part by the recent creation of the Auckland 'super city'. This section will explain three possible reform options for the greater Christchurch area.

The local government reforms in Auckland resulted in a unitary council where the territorial authorities and the regional authority were united into one council. This option of local government reform for greater Christchurch has been considered by the research and determined to be impracticable for Canterbury, due mainly to the size of the region and its low-density, dispersed population. Unifying the Canterbury region would involve reducing 10 authorities into 1, covering a region which is the largest in New Zealand. This would detract from the purpose of improving local government within the greater Christchurch region, and would potentially have severe adverse effects on a number of other small local communities within the region. In addition, it is considered important, particularly in Canterbury, that the roles of regional and district councils remain separate to ensure decision making regarding the natural environment is consistent, transparent and, crucially, accountable.

The three reform options presented here will therefore not include a single unitary council for the entire Canterbury region as per the Auckland 'super city' model. The three options include retaining the status quo (separate councils), amalgamating the territorial authorities within the greater Christchurch region, and a strengthening of the status quo, envisaging integration between greater Christchurch District Councils and ECan, working together to create and adopt a single Unitary Plan under which Greater Christchurch could operate.

3.2.1 Option 1: Status Quo

Retain the current local government arrangements for Christchurch - Environment Canterbury, Christchurch City Council, Selwyn District Council and Waimakariri District Council. Retain district boundaries and maintain strategic partnerships through the continuation of integrated land-use planning under the Land Use Recovery Plan.

3.2.2 Option 2: Greater Christchurch Council

The potential for a Greater Christchurch Council would result from the amalgamation of the Christchurch City Council, Waimakariri District Council and the Selwyn District Council, where in union they would form a Greater Christchurch Council.

The Greater Christchurch Council would operate under a single plan which would outline the typical functions of a local authority. The Canterbury Regional Council (ECan) would still oversee its regional responsibilities for the entire Canterbury region, including the area incorporated by the greater Christchurch boundaries. Currently ECan operates the public transport service for the three districts, under the new option of a Greater Christchurch Council public transport would be one of the new additions of district responsibility. This would allow ECan to focus strictly on its regional responsibilities of managing the regions' natural and physical resources and environment.

Given the challenges that the three councils currently face have been identified as being mostly similar, partly as a result of the Canterbury earthquakes, it could be more effective and efficient that these challenges are dealt with collectively.

The Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy (UDS) has already acknowledged the need for regional planning and consistency across Christchurch City and Selwyn and Waimakariri Districts (Luke, 2009). These two districts have been identified as being among the fastest growing in the nation and a merger with Christchurch would create a city of around 450,000. This UDS itself is already a form of amalgamation as it binds Selwyn and Waimakariri to the city's planning desires (McCrone, 2009).

3.2.3 Option 3: Status Quo Plus

An option open to the local government bodies of greater Christchurch, as a means of compromise between the status quo and the amalgamation of local government, can be achieved through s80 (5) of the RMA, which states:

s80 (5) One or more regional councils or territorial authorities may prepare, implement, and administer a combined regional and district plan for the whole or any part of their respective regions or districts.

This would allow Environment Canterbury, Christchurch City Council, Selwyn District Council, and Waimakariri District Council to prepare a combined regional and district plan for the greater Christchurch area, in a unitary or spatial plan such as seen in the Auckland Plan, or the Horizons One Plan. This would replace the Regional Policy Statement, the Regional Plan, the Regional Coastal Plan, and the three district plans with one single document. It would save the need for costly restructuring, whilst retaining local identity and representation.

The benefit of such a plan is that it could allow the region to address regional or sub-regional issues together, and undertake Schedule 1 public consultation on one document, rather than the current duplicative current arrangements. Such a plan could incorporate initiatives such as the Regional Water Management Strategy and other regional and sub-regional arrangements. As evidenced by the Horizons One Plan, which has made significant progress in managing freshwater quality under a unitary plan, environmental quality is not necessarily compromised in such a scenario; however, it may be under a unitary authority. Resource management and environmental protection would still be undertaken by Environment Canterbury in its current capacity.

In order to access the merits of each of these options the research consulted with a number of key stakeholders in local government reform. The views of these stakeholders were considered alongside a set of criteria developed to identify the threats and opportunities raised by different types of local government reform. The following section outlines the criteria that were used to access the findings of the research.

Part 4 Criteria, Findings, and Discussion

4.1 Criteria for Evaluating Local Government Reform

New Zealand has considered the concept of sustainable management for over 20 years now, since parliament established the Ministry for the Environment, and created the office of 'Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment'. These first steps have had a significant influence on the two major pieces of legislation influencing the role and nature of local government in New Zealand, the RMA and the LGA (Bradley et al., 2007 p.63). These two acts promote the concept of sustainability as fundamental to the purposes of the Acts. In the case of the RMA, the focus is on the sustainable management of natural and physical resources, while the LGA was focused on the sustainable development of communities. As sustainability has been seen as a fundamental principle in the key legislation guiding local government in New Zealand, and is considered in all action undertaken by local government, sustainability will form the basis of the criteria for which to interpret local government reform in New Zealand.

While it must be noted that the concept of sustainability has been removed from the LGA 2002 as of 2012, sustainability remains a guiding influence on the regulatory and policy framework within which local government operates. Local government in New Zealand is still directed to a high degree by the concept of sustainability as a requirement of the RMA. Plan making, consent granting, and decision making undertaken by local government are all subject to a consideration of sustainability as a requirement of the RMA. It is considered by the research therefore, that if the actions of local government must be guided by the concept of sustainability, then the structure of local government should be such that it is able to efficiently facilitate the principles of sustainability.

By adopting the four aspects (or pillars) of sustainability as criteria; environmental, social, economic, and cultural, it is possible to analyse local government reform in light of each aspect, in order to determine its suitability. A fifth criterion that is considered to be of importance is democracy. While democracy is considered an important component of

sustainability, the importance of democracy to local government reform is considered vital enough to warrant a separate section in the discussion.

The five criteria described in this section are designed to be used as a guide to help facilitate a deeper investigation into the many divergent issues around local government reform in Christchurch. They allow for a deep and unconstrained analysis of issues and opportunities and are not designed to be used as a type of checklist. Local government reform is a complex and multifaceted subject; the following criteria recognise this complexity and therefore are designed to guide an investigation rather than being the final word on any one option. The criteria begin with the broadest and arguably most complex aspect of sustainability, the environmental dimension.

4.1.1 Environmental

For the purpose of this research, the environmental sustainability criteria will flow from a conceptualisation of environmental sustainability as a requirement of a resource-limited ecological economic framework of 'limits to growth'. Environmental sustainability in this form looks to improve human welfare by means of ensuring the protection of the sources of raw materials used from human needs, while also ensuring that the sinks for human wastes are not exceeded, in order to prevent harm to humans and the ecosystems on which they depend (Moldan et al., 2012 p.6). The reason for taking this more anthropocentric and resource based view of environmental sustainability rather than a more inherently intrinsic approach to the environment is that it is seen as a compromise between the greater environmental emphasis of the previous 2002 LGA and the newer less environmentally focused 2012 version of the LGA. Drawing on the five interlinked objectives for environmental sustainability put forward by the OECD (2001) as well as the basic principles of environmental sustainability described by Moldan et al. (2012) a list of criteria has been derived. These four criteria can be used to investigate the environmental implications for local government reform in Christchurch:

- The structure and functions of local government will facilitate a long term perspective on resource use without any designated time limits

- The structure of local government will facilitate the understanding of the non-linear evolution of complex systems (thresholds, sudden unpredictable changes, tipping points)
- The structure of local government will promote flexibility and the ability to react quickly to changing situations
- The structure of local government will be intimately connected to local conditions

A local government structure, as defined by size, boundaries, responsibilities, and functions could be considered to be environmentally sustainable if it is able to meet these basic requirements.

4.1.2 Social

Community engagement is a key aspect of sustainability. Local government makes decisions based not only on the information in front of them, but must also genuinely engage with communities before making a decision (Bradley et al., 2007 p.65). The main requirement of good quality social engagement by local government is that the decision makers *consider* the views of stakeholders without prejudice. Social sustainability requires that society is cohesive and is able to work towards common goals. This requires that individual needs such as health and wellbeing, nutrition, shelter, education, and cultural expression should be met (Torjman, 2000 p.2). The social sustainability criteria derived for this research are based on the fundamental aspects of social sustainability described by Torjman (2002). These fundamental aspects have then been re-worked to make them more specifically applicable to local government reform through reference to the work done by the government of Western Australia on sustainability (Western Australia, 2003). The social criteria do not address issues of public participation and democracy as, while these are social issues, they are addressed under a separate criterion.

- Poverty reduction – The structure of local government increases access, equity and human rights in the provision of material security and effective choices. Local government works to ensure equity and reduce poverty by helping communities gain access to the skills, training, information, and living conditions they need to find reasonable paid employment

- Social investment - Social investment is a prerequisite to economic development. As well as ensuring access to common good resources, the structure of local government should allow for the provision of services that help communities balance their responsibilities. This requires the provision of adequate health, education, and family support facilities.

Informed and actively involved citizens comprise the essence of democracy; this is also a necessary prerequisite to the equitable distribution of resources and the protection of human rights. It is essential that any structure of local government is able to recognise and adequately provide for the social aspect of sustainability.

4.1.3 Economic

Maintaining economic growth is a highly desirable objective for the broad public (Moldan et al., 2012 p.5). Growth is almost always the most important policy goal throughout the world. From a sustainability perspective, inter and intra-generational economic equity are a major concern. Addressing economic issues on their own merits without having regard to their connection to environmental aspects can lead to unsustainable development based solely on economic progress. The actual specifics of how economic sustainability should be pursued are beyond the scope of this report, therefore, the criteria for economic sustainability are based on the need to provide for inter and intra-generational economic sustainability, and not the need for local government to take any specific action. The economic criteria are not based on a strong interpretation of sustainability as these requirements would contrast too radically with the current political environment, and limit the ability of the research to draw relevant conclusions. These criteria draw instead on a softer interpretation of economic sustainability based on the sustainability assessment work undertaken by Gibson (2006).

- Intergenerational Equity

The structure of local government favours development options that are most likely to enhance or preserve the capabilities and opportunities of future generations to live sustainably. This requires that structure of local government will strive to reduce pressure on ecological systems and their functions to levels that are safely within those systems

capacity to provide resources and services for future generations. Furthermore, the structure of local government will make economic decisions based on the need to build the integrity of socio-ecological systems, and maintain diversity and other qualities over the long term.

- Intra-generational Equity

The structure of local government should favour economic decisions that ensure that sufficiency and effective choices are undertaken in ways that seek to reduce gaps in sufficiency and opportunity between the rich and poor. This requires emphasising less material and energy intensive consumptive patterns among advantaged groups to permit higher levels of sufficiency for all. The structure of local government should also facilitate the provision of key prerequisites for a decent life throughout all income levels within communities.

4.1.4 Cultural

Nowhere in New Zealand are Maori adequately represented in local government. The number of Maori elected to local government remains far lower than their proportion of the population: in the 2007 local government elections less than five per cent of successful candidates were Maori, although Maori make up nearly fifteen per cent of the population (Human Rights Commission, 2011 p.5). The LGA allows for the establishment of Maori constituencies or wards, however, ten years since the LGA came into force only one of the seventy-eight local authorities in New Zealand has taken this step. The interaction between Maori and local government is largely limited to the statutory requirements of the RMA that ensure local authorities consult with Maori over land and resource matters.

Any criteria that evaluate the effect of local government reform on the cultural aspect of sustainability should be focused on the inclusion of Maori in the affairs of local government. The structure of local government in Christchurch should therefore be analysed against the degree to which it could facilitate and encourage interactions and involvement between local authorities and Maori.

4.1.5 Democracy

It has been indicated that there has been a loss of democracy in Christchurch because of current local government arrangements. It is therefore important to assess local government reform against broad democratic standards/criteria. Generally, people identify democracy with the right they have to vote in elections to choose the people who will hold positions of power in the various levels of government in their country (Laxor, 2009); and this is the case as the citizens elect Councillors and Members of Parliament at various levels of government, and those elected serve as the representatives of the people (Laxor, 2009). Democracy itself can take on many theoretical definitions but here we associate it with public participation and representation.

The criteria here have been derived from the Dahl's (1989) discussion of democratic processes. The criteria are restricted to only a few key points as the research is focused on local government reform and a wider discussion on the role of democracy such as provided by Dahl (1989) goes beyond the scope of the research. The following criteria can be used to investigate and analyse the implications on democracy of local government reform in Christchurch. The most essential democracy criteria for local government reform can be distilled down to:

- **Effective participation and Community Involvement**

All members of the public need to have their voices heard in the decision making process. Citizens ought to have an adequate opportunity, and an equal opportunity, for expressing their opinions, placing questions on the agenda, and debating for particular outcomes. The structure of local government must facilitate the active engagement of citizens in building safe and caring communities. This involves more than simply gathering the communities' opinions, but instead actively incorporating the views of communities into the decision making process. The local government also helps to build up a community's sense of place through actions such as heritage protection.

4.2 Findings/Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings of the research. The findings are drawn from both interviews with key stakeholders and by means of consulting the relevant literature. The findings are presented in five parts based on the criteria against which the findings are compared. The parts are environmental, social, economic, cultural, and democratic. How the five criteria apply to the stakeholders' views is highly dependent on their perspective on the role of local government. An attempt will be made to explicitly state, where possible, whether the views expressed are derived from a narrow or broad perspective on the role of local government. The two perspectives can promote very different views on how the criteria are best achieved and these different views are investigated. This section begins with environmental issues in the context of local government reform.

4.2.1 Environmental

The following discussion assesses the environmental criteria against the responses from the research interviews, literature review and other literature sources.

The evaluation of the criteria will provide information for which a 'best model' of government can be selected for managing the environment. A key question is whether a more centralised approach, or a more devolved local government approach is best for achieving environmental outcomes. As discussed earlier, the research categorises two primary perspectives on the role of local government, the broad perspective and the narrow perspective. Environmental issues in the context of local government are addressed here in light of these two perspectives on the role of local government. The purpose of this is to see how the restructuring of governance in Canterbury will affect the way the natural environment is managed. A government structure that is able to meet the environmental criteria requirements could be considered to be environmentally sustainable.

The ability to facilitate a long term perspective

Facilitating a long term perspective in terms of environmental policy from a centralised government model can prove to be very difficult. Due to the political cycles of government in New Zealand being short (three years), government led policies toward environmental policy for long-term vision do not receive substantial commitment. While local government is also subject to this three year election cycle, a long term perspective is, however, given regard. Under the Local Government Act 2002, councils are required to produce long term plans which consist of a ten year planning vision which includes the vision for the management of the natural and physical environment of that district or region. Many environmental issues (i.e. wetland restoration) require a commitment of money and resources over a long period of time. The ten year planning process helps to facilitate these types of environmental issues. A broad perspective promoted by some respondents argues that by providing local government with more resources, long term environmental outcomes could be achieved.

Local government structure will enable Environmental thresholds and baselines to be recognised

Arguing from a broad perspective, several respondents suggested that local government has the best understanding of thresholds and tipping points as they are the best equipped in terms of local knowledge. A number of leading stakeholders/academics hence do not favour the idea of national environmental standards and therefore believe that local decision making is critical to setting bottom lines. Although some respondents identify the importance and usefulness of national standards as still being appropriate for providing technical benchmarks (for example water and air quality), it is felt that regional and local authorities should facilitate what is best for their area and decide how to deliver the outcomes of such standards. Contrary to this view, the respondents from a narrow perspective suggested that local government is sometimes ill equipped to understand some complex issues, and that perhaps a centralised and well-resourced organisation could provide and form a better understanding of environmental conditions. The vast majority of the respondents did, however, feel that implementation of environmental programmes

should be strongly influenced by local choice; however local choice does not necessarily exclude the involvement of a centralised body.

Climate change has been described by Sir Nicholas Stern as “the greatest market failure the world has seen”, requiring governments and societies across the world to act to reduce carbon emissions (cited in Lyons, 2007 p69). Daily we face environmental issues that are less global than climate change, for example ensuring sustainable land uses, managing water quality, and various types of pollution.

Local government can also make a significant contribution to even the most global of challenges, such as climate change. While local authorities cannot solve such problems alone, it is clear that the sense of responsibility felt by local people, local politicians and local authorities as institutions to the world and to the future of their places has led to action on this issue (Lyons, 2007 p80). With regards to localised issues, it’s often argued that those who are in close proximity to the issue have the best knowledge of the issues characteristics rather than those from outside the area e.g. central government. This argument is often used to justify greater devolution of authority to local governments as a first step, and then further down to smaller local community groups and organisations. From this perspective, unifying councils into larger and more centralised bodies could pose a threat to the ability to adequately address local issues.

From a more narrow perspective however, scientific information and policy advice can be applied from top level organisations quickly and efficiently, avoiding an ad-hoc approach to addressing the issue. This can lead to a faster response to an issue if it is recognised as an issue of national significance. The views of respondents who subscribe to a narrow perspective highlight the inefficiency of local government to take a wider view of environmental issues, arguing that often local governments’ response to environmental issues can be curtailed and hijacked by dominant local interests.

Local government will provide for flexibility and the ability to react quickly to change

The case for local administration of industries and services rests primarily on the environmental consciousness of inhabitants of a given area, and on common needs. These

needs differ from those of other localities and along with the facility with which neighbours can take counsel together in order to determine for them what shall be their physical environment and how it can be best maintained and improved. There were two primary views when it came to flexibility and the ability to react to change. Centralised government units are seen as more efficient, while smaller ones (local government authorities) are more responsive (McNeil, 2011b p133). While the narrow perspective argues for the efficiency of a centralised approach and the broad perspective argues for the responsiveness of a localised approach, essentially, environmental issues require a balance between these two approaches.

Respondents suggested that local approaches and solutions are particularly relevant to issues with a more local focus. Regional authorities are responsible for the development of plans and policies to regulate and guide the management of the natural and physical resources of that given area. They can make a very substantial contribution to sustainable development through their statutory responsibilities and through their wider place-shaping responsibilities for the well-being of their citizens and communities (Lyons, 2007 p79). A balance is required between more centralised and more localised approaches to environmental issues. Often environmental issues extend beyond the boundaries of local authorities, in these cases, while not automatically requiring the involvement of central government, there is a need for a more centralised and coordinated approach to the issue. Likewise, a very localised environmental issue is unlikely to attract significant attention from a large and centralised organisation, and therefore would benefit from a more localised administration.

In their current role, Regional Councils are charged with managing natural resources and the environment, and their reaction to changing environmental situations has been at the root of much of local government tension. It is difficult to avoid this tension when regional councils have to fill this environmental role, and conflict with district councils will at times be unavoidable. When forced to make difficult and potentially unpopular decisions regarding the environment, regional councils will often be seen as the villain. A response from a leading political scientist suggests that such tensions are not a reason to remove decision making from local authorities; however, what is needed is a focus on building more effective relationships within local government and applying leadership to overcome

tension. The next criterion to be considered, based on the opinions of the respondents, looks at social issues.

4.2.2 Social

Local government as stated by Lyons (2007) is a place for representation, discussion, and decision making, a deliverer of the welfare state and public services, and a provider of efficient and responsive services and government. This view was found to be expressed by all respondents. The degree to which they believed that local government should be involved in the welfare of citizens differed, however none took the very narrow perspective that local government should not be involved at all. Throughout the research and interviews process, the delivery of the welfare state has been a common point of contention. The social criteria establish a broad investigation into the role of local government in providing poverty reduction, social investment and safe and caring communities.

Local Government Reform – Social Well-being

The Local Government Act 2002 saw the introduction of a model of collaboration with encouraged public participation (Thomas & Memon, 2007, p173). It signalled a continuation of the idea that local government should be involved in the welfare of citizens (Cheyne, 2008, p36) with the introduction of the four well-beings – social, environmental, economic, and cultural.

Rowe (2008) discussed social well-being as traditionally being thought of as the focus of central government, with central social functions including education, health, housing, welfare, and safety. With the introduction of the four well beings in the Local Government Act 2002, this perceived centralised model disappeared and local government was legislated a mandate to pursue social well-being; schooling and health delivery have been devolved from the centre. Rowe (2008) identified how central government agencies increasingly saw their roles as collaborative, influential, focused on building on the strengths of local

communities rather than dictating what should happen. This approach to local government appears to be the dominant perspective of the respondents.

This new requirement to develop and monitor agreed community outcomes and provide annual plans stating financial arrangements represented a significant shift in attitudes for many local authorities, because prior to 2002 the requirement for local authorities to engage with the public and include social wellbeing was at the discretion of the authority. This provided an opportunity for the public to participate and affect the decision-making process; subsequently creating social investment and community interest.

Capacity and Capability – Social Investment

Cheyne (2002) identifies the role of the wellbeings in local government, but contests that local government was not provided the capability to take on the new roles that were introduced with the Local Government Act 2002. This was identified in the interviews with one stakeholder stating that *“A healthy organisation needs more open agendas, and self-aware people who know how to build trust. We have a system that could work, but needs a culture of engagement”*. This opinion reflects a shortcoming of the broad perspective on the role of local government. While local government may be given a mandate to address social issues, they also require the resources and expertise to do so. This requirement for resources and expertise can provide a rationale for a more centralised approach that would be better resourced to provide these requirements. Throughout the interviews, however, it was almost unanimously asserted that the system currently in place that could work well, but that the issue is with the capacity and capability of local government for social wellbeing to succeed. This capacity and capability of local authorities is inherently affecting social investment, as systems and structures to support community awareness, input and investment are not present at the local authority level.

Poverty Reduction – Social functions of Local Government

The interview asked questions of functions and structure; about what should be provided centrally, and what local government should provide. These questions essentially established the respondent’s position of identifying with either a broad or narrow

perspective, or in some cases, a mixture of the two. A district planner stated that local government is involved in promoting the welfare of its citizens by providing potable water, effluent disposal, solid waste disposal, welfare housing, libraries, museums and art galleries. However, he stated further that local government should not be involved in the provision of health, education services or social welfare, which could better be provided at a national level. While local government, as of 2012, is no longer responsible for providing for the well-being of citizens, the respondent suggested that even provision of strictly essential services has a 'well-being' component involved. It is almost impossible to completely divorce local government from social welfare responsibilities, suggesting that the broad perspective on the role of local government plays a role even if the role of local government is interpreted very narrowly.

Another interviewee stated that *"Council should be as responsible for the social well-being as it is for the structural and physical well-being of the community"*. This point of view echoes the principles of devolution, stemming directly from the broad perspective.

Social well-being issues in Auckland and Christchurch

Christchurch faces similar social issues and challenges to those seen in Auckland prior to the 2009 reforms, with Councils in Auckland failing to respond adequately to the desires of their communities (Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, 2009a p. 3). This occurred pre-earthquakes in Christchurch, with decisions being made by the local Council without public consultation. Auckland experienced some other social challenges, such as mass growth and immigration issues, with many refugees and migrants struggling to find work (Rowe, 2008). These issues do not sit comfortably with poverty reduction and social investment criteria, and are a matter to be taken into account when considering local government reform in Christchurch.

Summarising their view, one academic interviewee stated that *"we have a very constrained view of what local government is; and it is highly revealing when you look at other countries including the United States they are far more inclusive. It comes from the Rodney Hyde review, which asks what local government services should provide. I think a far more useful*

question is ‘what functions should central government retain?’” This question again raises the issues of capacity and capability, of functions and structure, and of participation and consultation that affect poverty reduction, social investment, and safe and caring communities. A strictly narrow view on the role of local government in regard to social issues did not hold a great deal of appeal for the respondents, and likewise, received little support in the literature. Economic considerations for local government reform which arose from the interviews conducted will now be discussed.

4.2.3 Economic

‘Economic sustainability’ is a highly contentious concept. While it can be questionable as to whether economic growth can be considered sustainable in the environmental sense, providing a balance between short and long term economic wellbeing is an important consideration for the broader public, and in the context of local government reform, economic considerations are attributed considerable importance. The discussion that follows takes the approach that economic issues need to be considered over the long term. The criteria therefore consider inter and intra-generational economic concerns.

Economic Growth:

Many respondents stated that financial issues, if not economic growth directly, were among the most significant issues facing Canterbury over the next 5-10 years. The tensions identified between the three tiers of government, and between these tiers of government and communities were cited as a major factor retarding economic growth in Canterbury, and the greater Christchurch area in particular. One interviewee commented that: *“The community must all be seen to be working towards common objectives; otherwise you discourage investment and compromise your city. This is particularly important in a post-earthquake environment, because we are not working towards common objectives, and we need to look like we are.”* The philosophy behind this view was supported by the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance’s 2009 report, which listed as one of its four guiding principles the need for ‘common identity and purpose’, saying that:

“Auckland’s governance arrangements should encompass the interests of the entire Auckland city-region and foster a common regional identity and purpose, which supports integrated planning and decision making.” (Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, 2009a p. 5).

It was also proposed by some that reforms to management of local resources should be made to further realise their economic potential in order to help fund the reconstruction of Christchurch. Water in particular, and its potential use in expanding the dairy sector, was identified by almost all stakeholders as one of the most important issues facing Canterbury – and Christchurch - over the next five to ten years, not only in an environmental context, but also economically. In addressing the tension between economic growth and inter-and intra-generational equity, participants strongly advocated the role of local government structure in supporting a sustainability agenda in managing natural resources while promoting economic growth. There was no questioning as to whether sustainability and economic growth are compatible. Based on the responses, sustainability is equated to taking some environmental actions, rather than actually operating within the environment’s life-supporting capacity. Nevertheless, there was a strong belief in pursuing a sustainable growth agenda, reflecting a common rhetoric, both internationally and in New Zealand, over recent decades. This approach acknowledges limits to the Earth’s carrying capacity, and the repercussions the unconstrained pursuit of economic growth at any cost can have on both current and future generations. This concept is also reflected in the guiding principle of the Resource Management Act 1991, the legislation that directs, controls, and legitimises local government in this country.

In terms of reflecting this goal of sustainable development, several respondents suggested that the structure of local government must promote streamlined, efficient, and effective strategic planning for growth and development or utilisation of resources, while at the same time protecting environmental bottom-lines and ecosystem health. The suggested scale of local government required to achieve this differed between respondents.

It was questioned by a number of interviewees whether a Greater Christchurch Council would affect the balance between promoting environmental concerns and facilitating economic development. There was some concern that development could be given a

greater priority in an attempt to try and compete economically with Auckland. Those who represented a narrow perspective emphasised the need for Christchurch to compete financially with other regions. This is an interesting concept, as it does not appear that this concept of regional economic competition has much of a historical precedent; however it was taken as for granted that it was a necessity of some urgency by some respondents.

Current local government arrangements were seen as not delivering the full potential for economic growth in Canterbury, but some respondents expressed real concern that a shift to a unitary authority in Christchurch would remove the environmental/economic balance they believed exists under the current system, resulting in a greater emphasis in favour on maximising profits and economic growth.

Economies of Scale in Regional Economic Competition:

Opinions on whether reform was required to drive or enhance financial growth were mixed, with some arguing that duplication and inefficiencies were a major barrier to the prosperity of the Canterbury region, while others questioned whether the cost of amalgamation or reform would be recovered by the envisaged savings. As mentioned previously the idea of regional economic competition, especially with Auckland was a common theme of the interviews. The literature suggests that the increases in efficiency and decreases of cost imagined under a unitary authority may not eventuate to the levels claimed, and this was seen to be the case in Auckland after the 2009 'Super City' reform, where promised rate reductions and lowered operating costs were not realised, and were exceeded by the expense of transition.

Of particular importance for the research is what the literature has to say about economies of scale as a rationale for local government amalgamation: Generally, the research on local government amalgamation suggests that larger local authorities tend to be less efficient than medium-sized or smaller authorities. Evidence shows that achieving economies of scale (while important and worthwhile) does not provide a rationale for local government amalgamation; the evidence for savings as a consequence of large-scale amalgamation initiatives, such as that undertaken in Auckland, is at best equivocal, and the anticipated

gains from structural reform most often do not eventuate (McKinlay, 2006 p. 2). By contracting with commercial firms or other governments (and through joint purchase agreements with other councils), smaller districts can often provide the quantity and quality of services desired by their limited number of constituents and simultaneously enjoy the cost advantages deriving from scale economies in production. To the extent that opportunities along these lines actually exist, scale economies are thus removed as an economic argument for the optimal size of councils in the argument over amalgamation (McKinlay, 2006 p. 31). This is a critical finding from the theoretical literature on the economics of local government, as economies of scale are often advanced as a key justification for amalgamation.

A common recommendation amongst interviewees was that the structure and role of the proposed reform to council structure should be based more on a corporate style, similar to that of a company board, where councillors, led by a more powerful, directly-elected mayor, would commit approximately 10 to 15% of their time to making high-level, executive decisions, but be less involved in everyday management and administration of the council. This corporate-style approach, it was claimed, would attract higher-calibre participants to local government, as it would avoid career-politicians in favour of altruists, as well as being more efficient, cost effective, and faster. This line of thinking stems directly from a narrow perspective on the role of local government. The narrow perspective was promoted to a much higher degree in relation to economic matters than it was for social and environmental matters. Unlike with environmental and social issues, where proponents of a narrow perspective on the role of local government acknowledged its shortcomings, such an acknowledgement was not found to the same degree in regard to economic concerns. A conclusion that can be drawn here is that as the different criteria favour a different perspective on the role of local government, the criterion that receives the most public attention at any one time will influence which perspective on the role of local government is given the most support.

Provision of Services:

There were also particular concerns raised from some respondents about the importance of local government recognising the interdependencies between sustainable healthy business and sustainable healthy community, with one stating, *“No community means no business, and no business means no community. Similarly, sick community means sick business, and vice versa.”* In regard to the provision of services beyond those categorised as core services, such as roading, rates, and rubbish, interviewees were unanimous that local government did have a role to play in contributing to the well-being of communities, although the degree or extent of this role was a matter of differing opinion depending on the perspective of the respondent. While some stakeholders believe that it is imperative for Local government to encompass all aspects of involvement in service provision, others strongly disagreed, arguing that local governance should avoid service provision that is better handled economically by central government, such as state housing, and that it should not interfere in matters that the market could adequately address, as this will stifle economic growth by limiting private profits. Instead, it was suggested, local government should intervene only when it identifies failure of the market to provide such a service. However, this should be strictly limited to ‘necessary’ expenditure that would see an economic return for businesses and the city, such as a convention centre, or a stadium. Events such as the Ellerslie Flower Show, for example, should not be funded by local government it was argued, because they do not deliver an economic return. Another belief was that local government should be precluded from involvement in speculative enterprises, such as the V8’s in Hamilton, the Wellington Sesqui, and the Aoraki Development Board. Lyons (2007 p.54) argues, from an economic stand point, local government is not subject to the same levels of pressure that exist in a competitive market place. The ability to take money from citizens by compulsion through taxation is seen by some critics as providing little incentive to deliver services efficiently (Lyons, 2007 p. 54). However, it must also be remembered that many public goods and services, especially those defined as common-pool resources, are not well managed by the market.

National Competitiveness:

There were interesting points raised about the economy from a national, rather than regional or greater-Christchurch perspective. Current arrangements, it was argued, favour Auckland due to its high proportion of the population, and the relatively high number of MPs in Auckland, making it the proverbial 'squeaky wheel'. With New Zealand's relatively small economy and tax-base, there is strong competition for funding at a regional level. In addition, with the amalgamation of the Auckland City Council giving the mayor, and some of the councillors elected at large, a stronger mandate than leaders elected at the national level, it is suggested that the Auckland lobby now has a particular advantage in terms of influence over competitive funding decisions, and infrastructure investments such as transport, housing, and health. There was firm suggestion that a strong unitary authority could help Canterbury compete with the rest of the country for funding and attention, and that without some form of unification Canterbury will suffer under the austerity of the current international financial climate. This sentiment appears to have wider support than just that within Canterbury, with the formation of the South Island Alliance and the Upper North Island Alliance forming as a direct response to the Auckland governance reforms (TVNZ, 2012).

Administrative Ideology:

The clear shift towards an economic-centred approach to governance can be seen demonstrated in the Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Act 2012. As a result of this amendment the role of local government has been altered from a requirement to provide for the four well-beings within communities to meeting "the current and future needs of communities for good quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost-effective for households and businesses." This presents a clear preference of the current administration for a focus on economic growth, which they believe can be best achieved through centralised governance structures, with a more top-down, command and control approach to local decision-making, with greater focus on faster decision-making than community-based processes, or community-driven outcomes, which it believes will lead to maximum economic efficiency (New Zealand

National Party, 2011 p. 3). This departure from the current local governance aims of sustainability and the related concepts of inter-and intra-generational equity is not able to be reconciled with the requirements of the RMA 1991, or with the desires of stakeholders ascertained through the current research.

4.2.4 Cultural

New Zealand is considered, in the most part, to be a bi-cultural society (Sibley and Liu, 2007 p. 1222). As of 2006, Europeans made up the largest population group at 67.6% and Maori the second largest at 14.6% (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). The other two cultural groups making up a significant proportion of the population are Asian and Pacific Island peoples who collectively comprise around 16% of the total population. While all cultures should be considered to some degree by local government, this discussion will focus on incorporating Maori in a local government reform process. The reason for taking this approach is that Maori, out of all other cultures, have the most widely recognised, and legislated for, stake in local government issues. However, as will be discussed, the involvement of Maori in local government has been lacking. This discussion reflects the need to provide a stronger role for Maori in local government, and working towards setting a precedent that will facilitate the inclusion of people from multiple other cultures in the local government reform process.

The history of Maori involvement in the affairs of local government does not reflect a high degree of inclusion (Human Rights Commission, 2011 p.4). To obtain a cultural perspective on local government reform in Christchurch multiple sources were drawn on. Respondents from several disciplines and backgrounds provided information of cultural issues, as well as Ngai Tahu. Ngai Tahu, the local iwi of the Canterbury area, has undergone a long and difficult process of transformation and adaption to arrive at their current position in affairs of regional governance.

Ngai Tahu settled their treaty grievance with the crown on 23 September 1997. The settlement saw Ngai Tahu receive an apology from the crown, cultural redress restoring some of Ngai Tahu's cultural and spiritual responsibility for their lands, and economic

redress to the value of \$170 million, plus the option to purchase a number of crown assets (Shain, 2003). A group of influential Ngai Tahu tribal leaders with political and business experience were then able to put together a coherent strategy for the iwi's development (Nixon, 2003). These leaders were able to develop an institutional structure to reflect the traditional and cultural principles of Ngai Tahu, and apply them in the business world. Although the settlement provided vindication and money for Ngai Tahu, it was not the only contributor to their economic success. As early as 1987, Ngai Tahu developed a highly profitable Whale Watching enterprise in Kaikoura, which has grown to win multiple tourism and environmental awards (Kōkiri, 2005). Whale Watch now operates with an annual turnover of NZ\$10 million and highlights the ability of iwi to not only compete in a global economic environment, but to do so while promoting environmental awareness (newzealand.com, 2010).

As Ngai Tahu has grown economically, politically, and socially they have been able to exert greater degrees of influence on all levels of government. While the majority of local government reform has focused on place-based communities, Treaty of Waitangi settlements have created decision making roles based on both place and identity (McNeil, 2011a p.127). Treaty settlements have led to increased Maori participation in local decision-making that has strategic planning implications for local government, particularly in regard to freshwater management. The Land and Water Forum and the Canterbury Zone Management Committee structure experiments reflect a shift in the way that local government interacts with Maori and other stakeholders by circumventing traditional bureaucratic approaches and building networks of people (McNeil, 2011a p.133). These approaches to cooperative decision making (amongst others throughout New Zealand) do not point to any 'right' approach but rather recognise that different areas and populations have different requirements. It is increasingly recognised that one size does not fit all in local governments (Local Futures Research Project, 2006). Despite multiple legislative reforms providing for Maori interest, 'goodwill' on the part of the local authority is the key to a successful relationship with local Maori (Hayward, 1999 p.190). This sentiment is reflected in the views of Ngai Tahu on a Christchurch 'super city'.

The Views of Ngai Tahu on the Christchurch 'Super City'

Ngai Tahu is less concerned with the notion of the creation of a unitary authority than they are with "what position at the table we would have as a statutory partner". This reflects the nature of the relationships that exist between Ngai Tahu and CCC, and Ngai Tahu and ECan. This is a key aspect in the cultural aspects of local government reform in Christchurch. While there is a clear and established relationship between central government and Maori, this relationship is much less clear at a local government level (Rikys, 2004 p.273). While Maori are seen as partners with the crown based on their treaty relationship, Maori are often seen by local government as simply a special section of the community, a community of interest, or a special interest group. Another reflection of this desire for greater involvement in the management of local affairs is the attitude of Ngai Tahu towards the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery (CER) Act 2011. Like the situation with ECan under the Environment Canterbury Temporary Commissioners and Improved Water Management Act 2010, the CER Act 2011 has centralised decision making powers and resulted in a weakening of local democracy. However, the CER Act 2011 also contained provisions for the greater involvement of Ngai Tahu in recovery plans that will shape the future of Christchurch. In a similar fashion to the situation with ECan, by developing better direct lines of involvement with the decision making powers, cultural involvement in local decision-making processes have been improved in Canterbury. This propensity for pursuing relationships with central decision makers is understandable given the historical context. Local government has long asserted that it is not 'The Crown' and therefore has no Treaty obligations thereby limiting its obligations to interact with iwi (Bargh, 2004 p.67). The main conclusion here is that Ngai Tahu is not ideologically opposed to the idea of creating a unitary authority; instead, they are more concerned with relationships than details of bureaucracy and politics. They also caution that while they would like to see more engagement with local government, they do not want this engagement to become a way for the crown to step back from engaging with Ngai Tahu.

Ngai Tahu is very focused on water management issues, and argue against a unitary authority for the entire Canterbury region, based on the risks they see this as posing to water management issues. Due to the good relationships between Ngai Tahu and ECan, they are very much in favour of maintaining a Regional Council for Canterbury. Ngai Tahu argues

that because the rivers in Canterbury run from the mountains to the sea, they create natural catchment boundaries that district authorities should operate within. Based on this reasoning, Ngai Tahu is rather supportive of the idea of amalgamating Christchurch, Selwyn, and Waimakariri Councils (the greater Christchurch area). Ngai Tahu, as described earlier, is much more than simply a cultural group, they are also a significant economic stakeholder in Canterbury. There is a certain degree of symmetry between the greater Christchurch area, Ngai Tahu's property developments, and their cultural community boundaries. From the perspective of Ngai Tahu, therefore, a Greater Christchurch Council would be beneficial. In summary, Ngai Tahu have a one primary objective in any local government reform: they wish to be a key player at the table.

Ngai Tahu did not mention the possibility of establishing Maori wards and Maori Constituencies available under Local Electoral Amendment Act 2002. While these tools for improving Maori involvement are available, they are not utilized by the majority of local authorities. It has been argued that by making Maori wards mandatory, Maori involvement and election to local government could be greatly improved (Hayward, 2011 p.186). This could, however, be an example of what Ngai Tahu sees as bureaucratic changes that have little real consequence.

Other views relating to cultural aspects of the Christchurch 'Super City'

Other respondents also highlighted the need for Maori to be in a partnership relationship with all levels of local government. They pointed to the fact that the Auckland Unitary Council reform has not significantly improved cultural relationships, and that relying on a statutory process to do so may not be the correct approach to these issues. Some concerns were raised that under a unitary model, communities will be further distanced from the decision making powers. If Maori were given no greater priority than any other special interest group under a Unitary Council, they would no more likely to be involved in the decision making process than they currently are. A leading Maori academic expressed concern that any re-structuring of local government in Christchurch is just 'fiddling' and can lead to no significant changes from a cultural perspective. Instead, it was contended, that what is needed is a radical change in the framework on which local government pins its philosophical reasoning, expand it to include a holistic interpretation of people and place.

This idea shows some congruence with the opinions of Ngai Tahu, which suggest that the players within the system are not the problem, it is how the system is constructed that matters. These views stem from a broad perspective on the role of local government. The respondents believe that local government would be strengthened through diversifying its ideology and the way it approaches issues. This would result in a more knowledgeable local government, better equipped to more efficiently meet the needs of local citizens without the need for a high degree of central government influence.

Cultural concerns were also raised regarding the boundaries of different local government reform options. Many areas of Canterbury have very low population densities. A good example of this is Marlborough and in particular Kaikoura, which also happens to be an area of significant importance for Ngai Tahu. Currently, Kaikoura benefits from relatively high levels of funding provided by ECan, which draws money itself from a much larger population base throughout Canterbury. There is some concern that if ECan was to be amalgamated into a unitary authority, this funding may be directed more towards urban areas, and less towards places like Kaikoura. Culturally significant areas like Kaikoura may (according to respondents) face a reduction in available resource management funding under a unitary model, especially if that model is focused on 'efficiency and effectiveness'. This is because it is more 'efficient and effective' to spend money on areas with higher population densities.

4.2.5 Democracy

While democracy related issues have arisen throughout the four preceding criteria, the prominence of democracy related concerns that arose throughout the interview processes warrants a more in depth investigation. The democracy criteria outlined in section 4.1.5 require that citizens be given an opportunity to participate in as well as influence the agenda for the local government decision making process. This section outlines the key considerations from a democratic perspective that arose during the research and the interviews.

Threatened Democracy – Effects on the Welfare State

McNeill (2011b) argued that the democratic makeup of regional councils has caused problems for the ability of elected councillors to adequately represent their large and diverse constituencies, while addressing environmental issues for which they are responsible for managing. The diverse landscape of Canterbury and dispersed population challenged the ability of the Environment Canterbury Councillors to provide fair and even representation. Respondents suggested that this caused relational issues internally, which consequently led to inefficient decision making and relationship issues with territorial authorities. An interviewee stated that *“there is a perception here that local democracy has been eroded. Although everyone says Environment Canterbury is much better under commissioners, it is anti-democratic”*. In this circumstance democracy and input and investment into the political system seem more important than efficiency in a majority of interviewees’ opinions. Democracy facilitates social involvement and caring communities.

Another democratic issue that was apparent from the beginning of this research was the power of the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA). Throughout the interviews different perspectives were presented of the necessity of the central government authority although it was agreed upon by all respondents that democracy has decreased in Christchurch because of CERA. Whether this constitutes a problem or not depended on the perspective of the respondent. Those respondents who advocated a narrow perspective on the role of local government tended to view this weakening of democracy as perfectly acceptable, while those who advocated a broad perspective viewed Christchurch’s weakened democracy as a major threat that needs to be addressed instantly. A third perspective saw the weakening of democracy in Christchurch as a ‘necessary evil’; while undesirable from a democratic standpoint, it is required to get Christchurch through a difficult time.

Relating to this issue, a planning academic stated that *“I think the powers that have been given to Gerry Brownlee are quite over the top, although those have been lessened in the courts. They have created some social issues with the rich and the poor side of Christchurch”*.

Community Participation and Consultation

A quote from an interviewee provides a good outline of community participation issues in Christchurch post-earthquakes - *“People feel disenfranchised, including the council. People don’t feel engaged, and this isn’t good. People who feel engaged after a disaster recover much faster than those who don’t. There is anxiety because people don’t feel engaged. Consultation does happen, but nothing comes of it, and we don’t have the right processes. They are consulting in the wrong places. Decision-makers don’t know what local community wants”*. This is supported by Cheyne (2012, p 276) who recognised that public participation can enhance the accountability of elected members to citizens, improve the quality of decisions, and assist with successful implementation of decisions. This is a requirement of the democracy criteria. It is one thing to consult the public, however, it is more beneficial for social well-being to impact the decision-making process.

The structure of local government should be intimately connected to local conditions

Public participation plays an essential role from an environmental standpoint. While some mention of public participation relating to environmental issues has already been made in section 4.2.1, the topic warrants further discussion. The New Zealand environment has a large degree of territorial diversity, which provides a variety of settings for human occupancy, ranging from mountainous, sub-alpine to maritime and subtropical (Memon and Perkins, 1993 p8). The New Zealand environment is therefore complex ecologically and socially. This complexity underlines the need for a planning approach which is sensitive to local and regional diversity (Memon and Perkins, 1993 p8).

According to a number of academics interviewed, when regional councils were created, the underlying philosophy was one of devolution, with the aim of allowing local decision makers to have a greater say on decisions as they best know the conditions of their own area. It is clearly recognised that one size does not fit all when it comes to local government (McNeil, 2011b p132). Such a statement is also consistent with a number of the respondents from the interviews. The majority of respondents felt that a largely centralised approach to environmental management would be inappropriate.

One of the research ideas put to the respondents was that of using a central government body such as a much strengthened Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) to deal with the country's environmental matters. A response from a leading environmental academic was that if a centralised model such as the EPA consumed regional decision making, and for example was used by central government to fast track or streamline approval for major projects (as anticipated by the Resource Management Reforms 2012), it would not be effective. Palmer et al (2012) also came to a similar conclusion and believed the creation of an Environmental Protection Authority model for whole of New Zealand might have some impacts on regional governance.

The EPA model again emphasises centralised decision making in keeping with the narrow perspective, something which was almost unanimously opposed by respondents as it had the potential to oversimplify. Centralisation risks crowding out local authorities' ability to progress their wider place-shaping role which involves strengthening and enhancing the local environment (Lyons, 2007 p81). A respondent stated that a strengthened and expanded central EPA model would be too open to the agenda of central government, and would not bode well for environmental protection, while at the same time weakening the role of public participation.

A clear theme that arose through an investigation into the relationship between local governments and environmental issues is that a broad perspective on the role of local government provides for a more effective environmental response while increasing opportunities for public participation. While some respondents favoured a more narrow perspective on the role of local government for certain environmental issues, there was a general belief that to attract the attention of larger more centralised organisations, environmental issues needed to be obvious and in some ways, sensational. Therefore, while centralised organisations have a role to play in some environmental issues, they cannot replace or take on the roles of more localised organisations if a high degree of responsiveness to environmental issues is desired. Public participation is a significant factor in facilitating a response to environmental issues. The public response is better provided for by a broad perspective on the role of local government.

Part 5: Options analysis

This section builds on the three options for possible governance reforms within the greater Christchurch area, which were previously presented in Part 3. The three options for local government reform will be assessed from both a narrow and broad perspective based on the findings from the literature and the preceding findings and discussion.

5.1.1 Option 1. Status Quo

It has previously been discussed that the Auckland super city reforms of 2009 have the potential to have serious implications and ramifications for local governance throughout New Zealand's major cities. This raises a number of questions for local government reform in the Greater Christchurch area. Retaining the status quo and the current local government arrangements is an option that needs to be assessed further.

The reform of the 1980s established the fundamental role of local government in New Zealand, providing functions, structure and organisation of authorities with new requirements for consultation and accountability. This change has produced the current local government arrangements in Christchurch. The arrangements provide for local government as a place for representation, discussion and decision making, and as a deliverer of the welfare state and public services.

The problems experienced in Auckland including infrastructure capacity, generated by the constant and rapid rate of growth as well as the complex governance arrangements called for reform. The Auckland governance reform was met with some unease with some suggesting that the community would be stripped from the new council. This is a common criticism of unitary/larger authorities, and it is considered that the retention of the status quo would maintain a sense of community from a broad perspective. From a narrow perspective, some criticisms questioned the possible agenda of privatisation behind the reforms.

Christchurch, however, has a different set of issues and challenges that it faces in the recovery of the earthquakes and with governance arrangements but this does not

necessarily call for reform. Maintaining the status quo would meet some of the issues discussed.

Democracy has been adversely affected with the replacement of Environment Canterbury's democratically elected council and with the creation of the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority; although in terms of the status quo the research has found that decision-making under these changes to governance in Christchurch has been more efficient and effective, with better engagement with statutory partners, such as Ngai Tahu.

The status quo allows local authorities to maintain a close proximity to the area and to the public they represent. The smaller size of district and city councils provides for more engagement with the local community, as is seen in the case of Selwyn District and Waimakariri District Councils. Boundaries, as discussed in Skaburski (1992) are concerned with size and shape of areas, as well as the interest and welfare of the community; they stress a sense of community.

The public perception of local government, especially the Christchurch City Council, was found to be influenced by the appointment of a government-appointed observer to sit on council proceedings. From both perspectives on the role of local government this identification of dysfunction suggests a possible need for reform.

Funding issues for the smaller councils, partly due to migration from Christchurch City, has put pressure on infrastructure and services. From a narrow economic efficiency stand-point the status quo may not be the most efficient option for economic recovery. Other issues that have evolved from earthquake recovery are the cross-boundary issues of population shift, infrastructure rebuild, and such like. Land based issues have been addressed in the Land Use Recovery Plan drafted by the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority. The Plan strengthens partnerships between Councils, although it is unclear if the policies within will effectively address the issues discussed.

5.1.2 Option 2. Greater Christchurch Council

There are a number of challenges that face Christchurch, such as long term environmental issues, maximising regional competitive advantages amid continuing globalisation, and the growing perception of economically competitive cities and regions. To address the challenges that the greater Christchurch councils will face in the next ten years, amalgamation would appear to be a valid option for consideration. This option is more favourable than a Unitary Council model, as changing the boundaries of ECan would create further complication for other Canterbury communities, as well as inviting the risks outlined in the preceding section. Furthermore, it would add little to resolving issues within the greater Christchurch area, particularly those specific to earthquake recovery.

Greater Christchurch faces specific circumstances related to the Canterbury earthquake events; a number of existing issues across its three districts have been intensified whilst a raft of new issues have been created. Some of these issues, it has been argued, drive the requirement for an integrative approach between the greater Christchurch councils.

Amalgamation can help to respond to short and long term challenges as communities must work together to ensure common objectives are achieved. This is particularly important in a post-quake environment, as under the status quo it is seen as unlikely that the wider issues of greater Christchurch that have been identified earlier, particularly the key issues of the earthquake effects and rapid population growth, will be managed successfully.

Key challenges of increasing and improving infrastructure to cope with growth, housing, and urban sprawl, as well as the importance of water, and an improved transport network were all consistently identified to be challenges that each council will face over the next ten years. Integrating solutions to these challenges through amalgamation would achieve a consistent approach that would help ensure the issues are addressed through one arm of governance rather than three independent (potentially inconsistent) solutions under each authority on their own. A single Greater Christchurch authority would also have a stronger economic basis given the higher number of rate payers and may reduce administration costs through the provision of services to be achieved through one local authority, rather than three.

Simplifying greater Christchurch's governance structures through the amalgamation of councils may, however, be seen as a particularly narrow approach, as it aims to address key challenges of the respective councils by focusing on the effectiveness and efficiency of developing infrastructure and services. The option of amalgamation would closely align to the principles of the 2012 amendment to the LGA: *"meeting the current and future needs of communities for good quality local infrastructure, local public services and performances of regulatory functions in a way that is cost effective"*. Amalgamation is therefore a preferable option from a narrow perspective on the role of local government, however, it could be argued to be too heavily weighted towards economic concerns to be justified from a broad perspective.

While the narrow perspective may deliver economically efficient outcomes for citizens and be important for a post-quake recovery, it can, however, lead to a weakening of public participation and a reduction in social welfare. The question of whether the scale of the amalgamation of the councils would be appropriate could arise, as a larger council could struggle to be responsive and agile to its communities.

Focusing narrowly on a service delivery approach that aims to operate at maximum efficiency for the lowest cost can often overlook the needs of individuals or communities, and therefore be undesirable from a broad community perspective. Amalgamating the three councils into a greater council may result in distancing citizens from their decision makers, resulting in a loss of engagement. When the districts operate individually they have the ability to be more engaged with their local community and more responsive to their needs, through community boards. From the broad perspective of community wellbeing it can be seen that amalgamation does not fulfil the same outcomes that would be achieved under the status quo. Balancing the needs between economic efficiency and community needs will therefore be a key determinant of the success of an amalgamation option for greater Christchurch. Boundaries are another important aspect to consider when deciding to amalgamate multiple district authorities.

When it comes to boundaries and amalgamations, natural boundaries need to be considered as it makes little sense to erect new boundaries for territorial authorities by merger and ignore the implications that this will have for resource management functions

(Palmer et al., 2012 p24). Restructuring governance boundaries can, therefore, matter a great deal in environmental terms.

One potential problem arising from amalgamation of greater Christchurch Councils is that although all three councils are facing issues related to the earthquakes and population growth, these issues extend to a much wider area for the Selwyn and Waimakariri districts, as their catchment areas are largely rural. For example, water management across Canterbury requires separated zoned management because of the vast variation of requirements and constraints on the system across different areas. This is another major potential shortcoming of the amalgamated model of governance.

Changing boundaries can also alter the interest and welfare of communities in a broad sense, not only through the four well-beings, but also in terms of population adjustments. Boundaries withhold important distributional implications as they determine whose preferences are represented within public choice. Therefore, boundaries emphasise the sense of community, providing the balance of diverse groups, effective functioning, facilitation and cooperation. Amalgamation, therefore, poses a risk that an element of the sense of community may be lost.

5.1.3 Option 3. Status Quo Plus

As a means of compromise between the status quo and the amalgamation of Christchurch City, Selwyn District and Waimakariri Councils, the status quo plus is an option that addresses both the broad and narrow perspectives. As stated in section 3.2.3, this option will include the creation of a combined statutory plan. Such a plan would be able to accommodate the high-level strategic planning required to direct the greater Christchurch recovery phase post-quake, and allow planning to accommodate the current rapid growth and redistribution of the population, while maintaining the operational benefits of agility and responsiveness of smaller councils.

The comparison with the Auckland reform is difficult in this sense, as the problems experienced in Auckland extended far beyond those controlled by strategic land-use planning. However, the status quo plus option provides a plan for Christchurch that all the

authorities could work and operate under, addressing all cross boundary issues, including those of population migration and growth, and the consequential need for supporting infrastructure and community services, such as transport and utility funding.

This option would provide for an integrated approach to decision making and resource management and would still allow for local authorities to be accessible by their respective communities as the plan would allow for effective engagement with the public to enhance local democracy. All local government authorities in the greater Christchurch region would operate under the one plan, but local decision making would still be possible for issues singularly concerning the district or city councils. Therefore, the issues with democracy, participation and community cohesion are addressed at a local level and all of the public are able to participate in the plan formation stage, which addresses the broad perspective of community wellbeing.

Such a governance structure could also result in successful outcomes for iwi interests within the region, as their concerns lie with the position they would hold as a statutory partner. Under a Unitary Plan iwi and all associated runanga would be able to participate more effectively, and assert greater influence over the decision making process.

A single plan would have the ability to maintain the dual roles of upholding both the narrow and the broad perspective, at both regional and territorial levels. Retaining individual districts through territorial boundaries, and allowing these authorities to retain local choice within their communities, would enable both a sense of community and a strong level of local democracy. In terms of achieving the narrow perspective, this governance structure would assist in the effectiveness and efficiency of the greater Christchurch recovery and provide consistent service delivery across all three boundaries. It would also give the greater Christchurch area greater competitive strength against other centres economically, while providing the certainty and clarity of direction necessary to attract investment.

5.4 Summary

Based on the literature review, discussion and the context of this research the research has identified the preferred option for Christchurch governance as the status quo 'plus'. In terms of the broad and narrow perspectives analysed throughout the research the status quo and amalgamation of the Greater Christchurch Councils appear to only strongly address one perspective, while weakening the other perspective. On the other hand, the status quo 'plus' addresses both perspectives by retaining local choice and participation whilst providing consistent service delivery and effective and efficient local government functioning. The status quo 'plus' option not only addresses the recovery of Greater Christchurch from the earthquakes, but would also seek to address some of the wider challenges the district and city councils within the greater Christchurch area are facing.

Part 6 Instigating Reform

6.1.1 The Decision Making Process

Making a decision on local government reform in Christchurch will require an open, transparent, and comprehensive decision making process. It is essential that the decision making process actively involves the wider citizenry as well as the key stakeholders, such as those whose views have been canvassed by this research. This section lays out a possible process for investigating and making a decision on the local government reform options that have been put forward in this report. A three part process is laid out by which a decision on local government reform could be made. Firstly, a Royal Commission would be established that would investigate the issue and recommend a preferred option. Secondly, an electronic referendum would be held that would present the public with the choice of maintaining the status quo, or adopting the Royal Commission's preferred option. Finally, the central government would make a final decision, based on the findings of the Royal Commission as well as the result of the electronic referendum, and their own Regulatory Impact Analysis process.

Establishing a Royal Commission

The research recommends that a Royal Commission be established to investigate the potential local government reform options for Christchurch. A Royal Commission is one of the most powerful mechanisms available to the government to inquire into serious and complex issues. A Royal Commission investigates such an issue before reporting its findings, giving advice, and making recommendations (Department of Internal Affairs, 2013). Royal Commissions are established under the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1908, and are able to inquire into any matter of major public importance of concern to the Government. However, they are usually reserved for matters of very significant public interest; they are often appointed to consider social policy initiatives with a large public impact, or make adjustments to the institutional structure of government (Simpson, 2012). Their effectiveness lies in their ability to focus solely on the questions presented to them

and to inquire into any matters they see fit in order to get to the bottom of issues (Simpson, 2012). This allows them to remove a sensitive or moral issue from its political context in order to get non-partisan, professional advice, and build a consensus on how to proceed (Simpson, 2012). A Royal Commission is created by the Sovereign, represented by the Governor-General, on the advice of the Government and formally appointed by Letters Patent. The terms of reference for the Commission are then set by the Government and formalised by way of an Order in Council signed by the Governor-General. The Department of Internal Affairs provides administrative and secretariat support to Royal Commissions (Department of Internal Affairs, 2013). Royal Commissions are independent of the government, and once a Commission has been established the government cannot dissolve it. Commissions are a remarkably flexible means of looking into a wide range of situations, and while the Commissioners must act strictly within their terms of reference and ensure their processes are within the law, they have considerable powers - generally greater than those of a judge - but restricted to the Terms of Reference of the Commission (Department of Internal Affairs, 2013). They have wide investigatory powers to summon witnesses under oath and require production of evidence, including classified information. Royal Commissions also usually involve in-depth research into an issue, consultations with experts both within and outside of government, as well as extensive public consultations. In doing this they provide a unique and powerful channel through which stakeholders and the wider public can directly participate in making public policy (Department of Internal Affairs, 2013). For example the Royal Commission inquiry into Auckland included:

- Over 3500 written submissions
- 550 oral submissions over 27 days of hearings in nine locations in Auckland
- Five hui with Maori and workshops with Pacific and other ethnic groups
- Numerous consultations with individuals and organisations
- Extensive research undertakings
- Visits to major international centres to study governance structures and meet with foreign experts.

The Royal Commission on Auckland Governance also developed four principles for shaping Auckland Governance: common identity and purpose; effectiveness; transparency and

accountability; and responsiveness (Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, 2009a p.31). These guiding principles for Shaping Auckland Governance are particularly helpful because they can have wider application on outcomes for local government reform (Palmer et al., 2012 p.38). A key challenge for local government reform is to foster genuine local engagement and decision making while ensuring the wider community is engaged at a regional level (Palmer et al., 2012 p.42).

While their findings and recommendations are not legally binding upon the Government, they can be highly influential; if a government disregards a commission's advice it risks voter-displeasure, reluctance of prospective commissioners to be involved in the future, and public distrust (Simpson, 2012).

A Royal Commission would be best placed to comprehensively undertake the further research into Canterbury Governance recommended in the findings of this report, as well as providing vital public participation opportunities. The proposed Royal Commission would include the input of stakeholders from all levels through public opinion surveys, public hearings and inquiries, establishing citizen jury panels for each area or district, and focus groups for smaller areas.

This inclusion of stakeholders preferences from all levels can play a particularly important role in shaping strong community involvement activities (Brammer and Millington, 2003 p216 & Carmin et al 2003 p530). Involving a wide variety of actors within the decision making process means not only that vital resources will be utilised to ensure the best policy goals and outcomes are realised, but that different perceptions of problem definition and diverse information and ideas on solutions will also be contributed (Edelenbos and Klijn, 2006 p419). For this reason, the Royal Commission should use a variety of techniques to involve the public in the process and techniques should be tailored to specific situations. For example, public opinion surveys could be conducted for the entire Canterbury region, focus groups could be held in small rural areas, and citizen jury panels could be established in larger urban areas. By involving more actors in the decision making process, various aspects of the problem can be included in the search for potential solutions rather than a fixation on a problem formulation early on. It is expected that the outcome of the Royal Commission would be the presentation of a range of potential options, with one single preferred option.

The next step proposed by the research, following from the findings of the Royal Commission, would be to hold a local electronic referendum either strictly within the Canterbury region, or perhaps wider to include the entire South Island. An electronic referendum would put to the public a choice between maintaining the status quo or adopting the Royal Commission's preferred option.

Electronic Democracy

The research recommends the use of an electronic referendum to allow citizens a higher degree of influence in the decision making process. While a regular referendum is also a possible option, an electronic referendum provides an opportunity to involve many people in the process with a relatively lower cost and time commitment on the part of central government

In spite of the results that traditional forms of decision making have produced throughout history, these processes can be cumbersome, expensive, and sometimes indecisive and unresponsive to the desires and needs of people (Stiefel, 1970 p33). More radical approaches to decision making have therefore been seen and adopted around the world in an attempt to overcome inefficiencies within decision making processes; one of these solutions is electronic democracy.

Rapid world-wide growth in Internet and Web use has stimulated many initiatives aimed at applying information and communication innovations to create what has been called "electronic democracy" (Bouras et al., 2003 p256). Electronic democracy is the term coined to describe the use of new technologies of communication to enhance political participation and the exchange of political information (Street et al., 2001 p4397). While the idea has been advocated and experimented with since the early 1980s, the increasing capability of the Internet has intensified the discussion of, and interest in, the topic. The emergence of the internet has essentially altered the environment in which governments are able to deliver its services to its citizens (Prosser and Krimmer, 2004 p.1).

A number of different terms are used and discussed within the literature to describe this changing relationship between citizens and governments (Kardan and Sadeghiani, 2011 p466) in terms of decision making. In many cases terms such as e-government, e-governance, and e-democracy are used as buzzwords to refer vaguely to information technology or the use of the internet to assist in decision making efficiency. Although all built on the same underlying premise, the research promotes the use of electronic democracy specifically. Electronic democracy or E-democracy has been defined by Gronlund (2003 p93) as the use of Information Technology in democratic processes.

The underlying goal of electronic democracy is to set up information technology to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of democracy (Mundy and Watson, 2001 p.1). On the efficiency side, the intention is to increase the convenience and timeliness of citizen/government interactions and reduce their cost. This line of reasoning is in keeping with the current political ideology in New Zealand and provides justification for the use of E-democracy. Information will be more readily available and transaction costs significantly reduced. It has been suggested that people may be more engaged in politics if it were more accessible to them (Bouras et al., 2003 p258). In other words, voter participation and civic engagement will increase if people could easily cast votes from their computers wherever and whenever they choose.

Globally, local and national government bodies share certain common beliefs about the practical benefits of e-government, including improved services for citizens, reductions in costs and redundancies, and increases in revenues, transparency, accountability, and economic development (Kardan and Sadeghiani, 2011 p468). There is a high potential for technology to facilitate democracy and potentially increase public participation.

Implementing a true e-democracy, however, is not without its limitations. As a new phenomenon, its implementation would require careful and comprehensive planning for citizen education in using such a process (Mundy and Watson, 2001 p.1). Other factors that would need to be considered include the ability of all citizens within a country or place to have access to internet services or technological devices to enable them to participate. Although the literature (Kardan and Sadeghiani, 2011 p468) states that technology can

facilitate democracy and increase participation through public access to information, it is not without limitations. Equity must also be considered when applying forms of electronic democratic decision making. Not all citizens that may wish to participate will have access to technology allowing them to do so.

The option of using electronic forms of decision making in New Zealand has already been identified in a report on Wellington governance; Palmer et al., (2012 p.42) stated that responses to decision making might include better use of online tools that are increasingly expected by younger citizens, who tend to be absent from the more formal decision-making processes of local government and who are growing up within a generation that is constantly connected to technology every minute of the day, and at the push of a button. Although specific mention of younger citizens as the target audience has been made in this particular case, a form of electronic democracy could be used as an alternative decision-making option for deciding on options for Christchurch governance by all voters in the future. Two options would be presented to the public: the first option would be to maintain the status quo; while the second option would be to adopt the preferred option put forward by the Royal Commission. Ultimately, the final decision would rest with the government, however, it is expected that the outcomes of the Royal Commission and the public referendum would hold significant weight for the government in making its decision.

Regulatory Impact Statement – Options and analysis for Canterbury Local Government Arrangements

In the interest of maintaining a rigorous decision making process, following on from the Royal Commission and the public referendum, the research recommends that the government produces a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS). RISs incorporate empirical data into decision-making, and construct a rational decision framework to assess the impacts of regulation (OECD, 2008, p. 7). In New Zealand, Regulatory Impact Statements (RIS) inform the policy formation process and provide a summary of regulatory impact analysis (RIA) to Cabinet in the policy decision making process (Treasury, 2009, p. 3). The purpose of an RIS is to inform the government about the range of feasible options to address a problem, highlight costs and risks associated with the preferred option, and enhance transparency

and accountability for decision making through public disclosure once decisions are taken. The RIS process also aims to provide the basis for consultation with stakeholders, and with other government agencies, and to provide the basis for engagement with Ministers and therefore helping to inform and influence the policy discussion and Ministers' decisions (Treasury, 2009, p. 22).

An RIS could be used to provide an analysis of options for local government reform in Christchurch. The RIS would provide background, status quo and problem definition, objectives, evaluation criteria, desired outcomes. The RIS would also provide options and analysis of these options, including costs, risks and benefits and assessed against evaluation criteria such as administrative practicality, democratic capacity, and capacity to provide effective governance outcomes. Part of the RIS process involves incorporating the views of the public and taking them into account in the decision making process. Producing an RIS would mean that the public would be able to see how the findings of the Royal Commission as well as the results of the public referendum were taken into account when making a final decision on local government reform in Christchurch.

The Royal Commission (as previously discussed) is a desirable option for assessing all the relevant information for the purpose of making decisions on the outcome of what the structure for local government should be in Christchurch. However, the government must ultimately make the final decision.

Summary of the Decision Making Process

The decision making process recommended above presents an opportunity to involve a high degree of transparency, citizen involvement, and rigorous attention to the issues into accessing local government reform in Christchurch. The three stage process allows for citizen input through all stages. Adopting the use of electronic democracy in the form of an electronic referendum presents an opportunity to involve a wide and diverse range of views into the process. While the government makes the final decision, it is expected that the government would experience significant pressure to take into account the views of the wider public. The structure and functioning of local government is essentially a local issue that should be guided as much as possible by the local people.

Part 7 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1.1 Summary of the Key Findings

Environmental

- The responsibility for managing the natural environment should remain at a local level of government for the purpose of providing a long term perspective; this can be achieved through long term plans under the Local Government Act 2002.
- The concept of centralised decision-making based on national standards is not supported. Although many stakeholders recognise that national standards can be important as benchmarks in some areas, it was widely found that local authorities are best placed to deliver the outcomes of such standards.
- There is no 'one-size fits all' solution (such as adopting the Auckland 'super city' model) as regions have unique and diverse natural resource and social issues, requiring customised approaches.
- While centralised government units are arguably more efficient, smaller ones (local government authorities) are more responsive due to their immediate knowledge of the area.
- Because many national environmental policy initiatives get ignored or thrown out due to short government political cycles, the role of environmental management needs to be left largely to local governments. This is facilitated by each region developing environmental policies that address both short and long term needs.
- The creation of a strengthened Environmental Protection Authority model as a centralised approach for environmental management in New Zealand may adversely impact on regional governance, due to the risk of oversimplification and loss of accountability. Centralisation also threatens local authorities' ability to fulfil their wider place-shaping role, which involves strengthening and enhancing the local environment.

- There is a need to ensure that the current government's focus on effectiveness and efficiency within local government functioning is not at the expense of vital conservation expenditure.
- Local authorities need to demonstrate their ability to work with other authorities across boundaries and between tiers in a way which addresses long-term environmental challenges. Better integration and collaboration might have avoided many of the tensions identified in the Canterbury region.

Social

- Local Government should be involved in the welfare of citizens to the extent that citizens direct.
- Smaller Councils have better communication with local communities, enhancing trust and contribution towards local government processes.
- Local government has previously lacked capacity to manage social well-being. Therefore, institutional, administrative, financial and political capacity should be fostered to provide for social investment and sustainability.

Economic

- Better integration of local authorities, such as that enabled under s80 of the RMA, could provide more strategic direction, common identity, and purpose to attract investment, and maximize economic growth potential over both the short and long term.
- Councils working together within the greater Christchurch and surrounding rural areas could better compete at a national level for regional funding and investment opportunities.
- Those undertaking review of local governance arrangements should avoid the popular assumption that amalgamating local governance bodies to create a single, larger entity will attract economies of scale, as this is not supported by research.

- From a narrow perspective, the current council structure could be changed to more closely resemble a corporate board, with a strong mayor, and councillors committing 10-15% of their time, making high-level, executive decisions, rather than dealing with managerial or administrative functions. Lower-level decisions could be left to individual community boards. This would be more efficient, effective, and cost-saving, while still returning democratic, community-driven decision-making.
- Natural resources (in particular water) need to be managed locally - at both a catchment and regional level - in order to maximise potential for long-term economic returns.

Cultural

- A Canterbury Unitary Council model is undesirable as low population density areas that are culturally significant could receive less funding than they do currently, as local government attention increasingly focuses on the centre.
- Different areas and populations have different requirements; there is no one right approach to local government from a cultural perspective.
- Ngai Tahu is not ideologically opposed to any particular model of local government, including the amalgamation of the Christchurch, Selwyn, and Waimakariri Councils.
- Governance models that promote a shift away from traditional bureaucratic approaches towards a focus on building networks of people can be more beneficial to Maori.
- From an academic cultural perspective, a large philosophical shift in the way local government includes Maori is required.

Democracy

- Tensions within local government are not a reason to remove decision making from local authorities; what is needed is a focus on building more effective relationships within local government and strong leadership.
- There need to be improvements to systems and structures in place to enable participation and consultation to influence decision making, as there is a perception that public participation is ignored during decision making processes.
- There is a lack of community input in Christchurch due to democracy issues. Facilitated community governance and awareness through transparency, education, and promotion would increase participation and social cohesion.
- The creation of CERA and the sacking of the Environment Canterbury Councillors have severely reduced democracy in Christchurch and reduced public participation in decision-making. Improved democracy and accountability are required in local government.

Decision Making Process

- A Royal Commission should be established to determine what should be the preferred option for local government reform in Canterbury.
- A public referendum should then be held which would involve potentially using methods of electronic democracy. This referendum would provide two options to choose from, the status quo and the preferred option that has been recommended by the Royal Commission.
- The Government should make a decision based on the findings of the Royal Commission, the results from the electronic referendum, and the findings of a RIS.

7.1.2 Future Research

As a scoping exercise, this research touched on many significant issues both affecting, and affected by, local governance in Christchurch. Before any consideration of whether or not reform of local government bodies and their structure is necessary, significant further research is recommended to consider in-depth the diverse factors at play. A much more inclusive and systematic round of consultation should be instigated, with a strong emphasis on public participation. To stimulate public engagement and remedy the current social apathy towards local politics, a series of public seminars, debates, and workshops should be conducted in local centres. Research into how better to incorporate tangata whenua as partners in local decision-making is essential, in order to avoid further deterioration of the relationship between Ngai Tahu and some local bodies. Specific investigation of Council structures and processes need be undertaken to accurately assess efficiency and effectiveness of current arrangements, against modelling of potential alternatives. In some respects, time will be a major factor in better understanding the impacts of recent changes to local government in Auckland, as more complete information emerges from evaluation and monitoring reports. To a large degree, most of these further research requirements could be best directed and coordinated under the guidance of a Royal Commission, the establishment of which is strongly supported by the research group before any such reform is considered.

7.3 Conclusion

The research has been informed by the recent transitional period of local government reform and restructuring, with a number of local governance academics having predicted that the Auckland 'Super City' reforms of 2009 will have serious implications and ramifications for local governance arrangements in other major cities. The New Zealand Government's decision to establish the unitary authority in the Auckland Region has provided much of the context and direction for this scoping research of the current governance arrangements in the Greater Christchurch area.

The research aimed to determine whether the current local government arrangements are optimal for providing for the greater Christchurch area and its communities now and in the future. To do this the research investigated the advantages and disadvantages of Christchurch becoming a 'super city'. The research assessed the information from both a broad perspective: defined as the belief that government should be involved in the welfare of citizens; and a narrow perspective: which considers the role of local government as only the provision of core services.

By adopting the four aspects (or pillars) of sustainability as criteria; environmental, social, economic, and cultural, and a fifth criterion of democracy, local government reform was analysed in order to determine its appropriateness and suitability by looking at the information gained in the interview process and a literature review. One important finding from this discussion and interview process was the identification of the current prominence of the narrow perspective, as there has been a clear shift towards an economic-centred approach to governance, which can be seen demonstrated in amendments made in the Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Act 2012. None of the interviewees took an extremely narrow perspective in their view of local government, with all subscribing to the broad perspective view that local government should be involved in the welfare of its citizens. The importance of the regional council's environmental management role is also discussed throughout literature and in the interviews. It is considered likely that relations between regional and territorial will be tinged with conflict, due to the auditing role that regional councils must play over territorial authorities. The findings of the interviews were that this does not constitute reason to drastically reform the local government structure in Canterbury. One interviewee asked rhetorically, "if it works why change it?", and the

majority of interviewees agreed that pre-earthquake arrangements did work, although at some cost to efficiency. There were a number of significant reasons raised that did not support change to local government structures. While the reasons for change were clearly evident in the restructuring of Auckland governance, the raft of issues and challenges that existed within the Auckland region were vastly different to the issues currently experienced in Greater Christchurch. The Canterbury earthquakes of September 2010, and February, 2011 have provided a unique set of issues and subsequent governance responses. While democracy, based on the findings, has been weakened through the creation of CERA and the sacking of the Environment Canterbury Councillors, efficiency of decision-making has been gained at the cost of this accountability, and some interviewees were in favour of this centralisation on account of these perceived improvements.

Throughout the interviews and research there has been a general perception that smaller councils are better than larger ones. Smaller councils are seen as beneficial economically, socially, environmentally and culturally. However, due to the sub-regional nature of issues that exist across the whole of greater Christchurch, some aspects of local government would be better managed across these boundaries. Potential opportunities were recognised for boundary changes, and the connection between challenges that each district is facing suggests that a rationale for altering territorial boundaries may exist, and should not be ruled out.

The research presented three options for local government reform in Greater Christchurch area, each assessed against both the broad and narrow perspectives. These options include the status quo; amalgamation of the Greater Christchurch Councils, and the status quo 'plus'. The status quo 'plus', which was found by the research to be the preferred option, was found to satisfy both perspectives, as the option retained local choice and participation whilst providing consistent service delivery, and effective and efficient local government functioning.

With these options in mind, the research group recommended a decision making process by which a decision on Greater Christchurch local government arrangements could be made. The decision making process would involve the establishment of a Royal Commission to investigate the options for Christchurch local government arrangements. A preferred option

would then be put forward to a public electronic referendum with the public deciding on the preferred option versus the status quo. Taking into account the Royal Commission and the electronic referendum results, the Government would then make a decision on whether to change local government arrangements for the Greater Christchurch area.

While the scope of the research does not provide for a determination of an ideal structure or 'solution' for Christchurch governance issues, a number of common themes have been identified that could provide for improved governance. These themes have been identified and summarised in section 7.1.1 as key findings and recommendations. These findings and recommendations could be used as a basis for further investigation into local governance in Christchurch.

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Appendix 1 – Research Brief

ERST 635 Group Case Study 2013

A preliminary assessment of the idea to create a Christchurch ‘super-city’

Introduction

The ERST 635 Group Case Study is an important part of the requirements of the Master of Environmental Policy (MEP) degree offered by Lincoln University. It is normally geared towards meeting the needs of an external ‘client’ through work on a ‘real life’ policy question, whilst maintaining standards of academic rigour. The final output is judged academically by the course examiner at Lincoln University, based in part on feedback on a final report and a presentation provided by experts on the topic in question. This year the topic focuses on the idea of establishing a Christchurch ‘super-city’, following and analogous the creation of such a city for Auckland.

Background

Following the report of the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance (Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, 2009b), the Government created a ‘super-city’ for Auckland, amalgamating eight councils. In the draft legislation, the Government noted that “The intent of these reforms is to reduce local government inefficiencies and weak, fragmented regional government in greater Auckland, to create a prosperous, world-class city to benefit Auckland and ultimately New Zealand” (New Zealand Government, 2009b).

The creation of the Auckland super-city involved the replacement of the Auckland Regional Council, 3 district councils, 4 city councils and 30 community boards by a single Auckland Council and 21 elected local boards. The new Council has one mayor and 20 councillors elected from 13 wards. They replace 7 city mayors and a regional council chair, 13 regional councillors and 96 territorial authority councillors. Under the new scheme the single mayor and the 20 councillors are expected to focus on the “big picture” and to make decisions that affect the Auckland region, including the rates. The 21 elected local boards are responsible for issues specific to their communities such as community environmental and cultural well-being.

The changes also included the setting up of seven business units, known as Council-Controlled Organisations (CCOs) to run about 75 per cent of council services – including the management of public transport, tourism, parks and reserves and water care.

One source listed the following advantages of the creation of the super-city:

- One rating system instead of 8 rating authorities.

- One rates bill instead of two per property.
- One IT data system instead of 8 separate council data systems.
- One regional transport authority instead of 8 local transport entities.
- One water and wastewater provider instead of 8 water providers.
- One Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP).
- One district plan instead of 7 different district plans.

This source also expressed the hope that, apart from “reducing wasteful duplicated expenditure, trimming administration numbers, and making it easier for homeowners to understand and deal with their rates [...] the Super City will also facilitate better ways of aligning central and local government initiatives on improved social wellbeing” (Jeffries, Undated)

In 2011, the Minister of Local Government, the Hon Rodney Hide, suggested that Christchurch and Canterbury residents may want to consider following the example set by Auckland (Sachdeva, 2011). According to some commentators, the Auckland super-city restructure has been so successful that it provides a model for Wellington and the South Island, making its replication elsewhere virtually inevitable (Harvey and Robinson, 2012).

However, the creation of the Auckland super city also provoked considerable opposition and criticism, including with regard to the process by which it was established, the institutions that it created, and the potential privatisation of assets involved (Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2009). Two years after the establishment of the Auckland super-city, in the first major review of the amalgamation process, the Auditor-General Lyn Provost said that although much had gone well, not all the promised benefits to Aucklanders had materialised (Robinson, 2012).

Regardless of the merits of the amalgamation of councils in the Auckland region, it is unlikely that the Auckland experience or ‘model’ can simply be transplanted to other parts of the New Zealand, given geographical, historical, social, economic and other differences. Arguably, the case for amalgamation in the Auckland region was unique. Nonetheless, cases for amalgamation could possibly be mounted also for other regions, including Canterbury.

The Task

Acting as if you were policy advisers working for an independent 'Think Tank', you are to assess the merits associated with the idea of creating a Christchurch super-city. Amongst other things you are to:

1. Explore the rationale(s) for creating a Christchurch super-city as advanced by advocates of the idea, and assess to what extent the rationale(s) for creating such a city for Auckland are relevant to the Christchurch (Canterbury) region;
2. Scope the (potential) political, economic, social, environmental and possibly other issues, advantages and disadvantages of the idea, taking into account regional (geographical, historical and other) characteristics and developments, as well as the wider implications for New Zealand;
3. Gather views on the idea from a range of stakeholders, including the councils involved and a variety of (community) groups and individuals, including experts;
4. Assess the findings of steps 1-3 against criteria derived from theories and perspectives relevant to local/regional government and governance, selected and developed by the Group;
5. Offer suggestions regarding an appropriate process for the way forward, including for further research, and for consultation and decision-making.

It is important to note that irrespective of the specific questions or tasks set out above the report must be theoretically and empirically robust within the logistical parameters of a ten-week study. It must have a structured analytical framework to meet the questions and tasks set and have a stand-alone quality as a written piece of work.

Your examiner is Ton Bührs. Ton will act as conduit for liaison with officials where practicable and appropriate and/or where case study team members have not been able to access information or people after diligent efforts to do so. The budget allocated to the task for 2013 is \$2500. Please liaise with FESD Financial Administrator Alyson Gardner, Forbes 612, Ext. 8247 email Alyson.Gardner@lincoln.ac.nz as soon as possible to set up expenditure practices.

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Appendix 2 – Research Invitation and Research Questions

Dear

This letter requests your input for a study on *assessing the possibility of creating a Christchurch ‘super city’*. The research is being conducted as part of a Master of Environmental Policy degree at Lincoln University by a group of four students.

The research proposes to explore the rationale for creating a Christchurch ‘super city’, and assess to what extent the rationale for creating such a city for Auckland is relevant to Christchurch and the greater Canterbury region.

The research will be conducted primarily by way of interviews with a range of key stakeholders. The research group has identified you as a key stakeholder who could provide valuable information to the research. We are seeking your views from your professional standpoint. The information obtained through interviews will be used to inform our understanding of the issues around the creation of a Christchurch ‘super city’. All views will be reported anonymously with the upmost care taken to ensure that no individual will be identifiable from the report.

We would be very grateful if you were able to provide approximately 30 minutes of your time, at your convenience, to undertake an interview with one or two members of our group. This interview could be conducted in person, by phone, by Skype, or by email depending on your preference. I have attached to this email a list of questions that would be asked in the interview for your consideration.

We would like to conduct this interview sometime from *March the 25th* to April the 15th if possible.

The research would benefit greatly from your input, please let me know by phone or email whether you are willing to take part in this research. If you are unable to undertake an interview but can recommend another person/organization, or if you would have any other information you feel is relevant, we would be delighted to hear from you.

A summary report of the research and a full research report can be sent to you during early July 2013, regardless of your ability to take part in an interview with us. If you are unable to undertake an interview but would like the report, please let me know so that I may send it to you.

We look forward to your input on this research.

Research Group	Supervisor
Amelia Ching George Enersen James Mills-Kelly Jay Whitehead Faculty of Environment, Society, and Design Lincoln University	Dr. Ton Bührs Associate Professor in Environmental Policy Faculty of Environment, Society, and Design Lincoln University Ton.Buhrs@lincoln.ac.nz

Interview Questions

1. Do you think creating a 'Super City' for the Greater Christchurch Region is a good idea? If yes, why? If no, why not?
2. If you do not support the creation of a 'Super City' for the Greater Christchurch Region, do you have any ideas/suggestions for how issues affecting this region could be better addressed or managed?
3. If you support the idea of creating a 'Super City' for the Greater Christchurch Region, which existing Councils, and what area, should it include? Would the new Council also incorporate the Regional Council (ECan), which has responsibilities for the whole of Canterbury?
4. *Should local government be involved in promoting the welfare of citizens? Why/why not.*
 - *Any areas in particular that it should (not) be involved in?*
5. *Should local government's role ONLY be confined to so-called 'core services', and if so what are these? For example: libraries, swimming pools, botanic gardens/parks, cycle paths, events like Classical Sparks and others organised in Hagley Park?*
6. *How important do you feel local choice is in regard to the management of local resources, i.e how do you see the balance between national standards and local choice? (For instance, with regard to water allocation and water quality)*
7. What do you see are the key issues facing Christchurch/Selwyn/Waimakariri in the next 5-10 years?
8. Do you think that current governance arrangements will be sufficient to address these issues?
9. There are known tensions between territorial authorities and regional government in Canterbury; what is your opinion on the relationship between territorial authorities and regional government in Canterbury? Do you see any issues with cross-boundary governance? I.e. District Councils relationships with other District Councils. How could these possible tensions be addressed
10. What effects have the earthquakes of September 2010 and February 2011 had on the way you perceive local government?

11. What has the creation of CERA, and the sacking of Environment Canterbury Councillors meant for local democracy in Canterbury? How much longer can these solutions be justified to continue? What other arrangements could be made when these solutions end?
12. *What are your thoughts on the services currently provided by regional and district councils in Canterbury? (I.e. too many, too few, wrong type)*
 - *What would you change?*
13. In a practical sense, what changes do you think would contribute to improved governance in Canterbury? This may include changes to decision-making processes, public participation, jurisdictional boundaries, administrative arrangements etc. e.g. A common overarching plan, specialised agencies/authorities for some of the 'issues' facing Canterbury, more resources for councils, or reform of Ecan.
14. *What are your thoughts on the amount of power ECan has in Canterbury?*
 - *Do you see any room for improvement or change?*
15. Do you think abolishing regional councils as suggested by some would adversely affect the capability of the New Zealand system for environmental management and the relationship between communities, local councils and central government? If so, why/ in what way(s)? If not, why not?
16. How do you see the role of the Regional Council in New Zealand, and would Canterbury benefit from the establishment of a unitary council, similar to that seen in Auckland?
17. Currently the New Zealand EPA model recentralises some of regional council decision making (major consents etc.), worldwide other EPA models have showed that recentralisation can occur further, meaning that an EPA model would be responsible for all environmental issues. Do you see this as a good option for NZ for resource management?
18. *Do you see the centralisation of decision making in New Zealand as a positive or negative shift with regard to local government? Why or why not?*
19. *How transparent do you feel local governments are in Canterbury?*
 - *Do you feel they are accountable enough?*
 - *How do you think having a unitary council would affect accountability and transparency?*
20. How well do you think that local governance structures in New Zealand balance the values of democracy and efficiency? Is there, at the moment, the right 'balance' between size and efficiency and accountability? How might this be improved?

21. How important do you think community involvement/public participation is in local governance? Is there enough of that at the moment (in Chch and other councils)? If not, how could/should this be improved?