

# THE NEW GOLD RUSH

# THE FUTURE FOR WATER IN CANTERBURY

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## ABSTRACT

Water has been described as the new gold, and there is at least one book that is predicting future global conflict about water. New Zealand may avoid that scenario but recent reports do mark increasing demand amid competing interests and declining quality. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in Canterbury, where unprecedented demand for abstraction continues.

A strategy for managing freshwater in Canterbury has been developed collaboratively. This paper compares the Canterbury Water Management Strategy (CWMS) and the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2011. The paper explores the collaborative dialogue used to prepare and implement the CWMS, as an alternative to reliance upon statutory processes of the Resource Management Act 1991, and asks whether the approach aligns with recommendations in the second report of the Land and Water Forum (the 'Forum'). Finally it considers the extent to which the CWMS is influencing water plans and policies.

## KEYWORDS

**Canterbury Water Management Strategy, Collaboration process, Land and Water Forum**

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Freshwater is an essential resource underpinning much of New Zealand's economic prosperity. Over 70% of our exports are based on primary production and Canterbury contains over 70% of New Zealand's irrigated land. Access to reliable clean water is a key component to generating this wealth. Canterbury waterways are also highly regarded for their recreational, ecological, and landscape values and Ngai Tahu has a long association and strong cultural relationship with water.

New Zealand allocates rights to use water through the Resource Management Act 1991 (the RMA). Regional Councils prepare regional policy statements and regional plans to address how this may be done and people that want to use water generally have to apply for resource consent to do so. Practice has developed whereby water is usually allocated on the basis of applications made (i.e. first in first served), with existing consent holders afforded priority to renew consents. Consents are not granted in perpetuity and can be granted for a maximum period of 35 years.

The RMA has attracted much criticism in recent years because although it prevents the sort of conflicts that might be seen or predicted in other nation states, it does pit parties against one another through consent processes, and it does not easily provide for efficient use of water (Note: there are three aspects to efficiency. Allocative efficiency is using water in a way that has the best value to society; technical efficiency describes the process of gaining the most output for the least amount of input; and dynamic efficiency is the ability of the allocation system to adjust the use of water over time (as defined in the first report of the Forum)). The RMA was hailed as innovative legislation but a gap has emerged between the promise and the reality of effects based environmental legislation (Gunningham, 2008). Particular problems include the difficulty of addressing cumulative effects, relying on adversarial processes to test scientific understanding, and limited rights of participation in decisions that allocate water (Gunningham, 2008). A position paper prepared by Regional and Unitary Councils in 2010 identified eight issues with the current management approach and concluded that we

cannot expect the RMA to deliver all the answers on freshwater management (Regional Affairs Committee, 2010).

This paper explores an alternative to the RMA that has been developed in Canterbury. Titled the Canterbury Water Management Strategy (CWMS or 'Strategy'), it was developed collaboratively in response to concerns about freshwater management. It was adopted by Environment Canterbury in 2009 and is now being implemented. The paper evaluates the vision, principles and targets of the Strategy against the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2011 (the 'NPS'). The paper also evaluates the influence of the CWMS on RMA water planning in the Canterbury region.

How society makes decisions around water is of interest to the Land and Water Forum, and its second report (April 2012) outlines some thoughts and recommendations about collaborative working. This paper looks at collaboration as envisaged by the Forum in light of what has been done in Canterbury to see how well the two are aligned, and whether there are any lessons that can be gleaned from the Canterbury experience.

## **2 CONTEXT**

### **2.1 THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT 1991**

Regional Councils are responsible for the management of freshwater in New Zealand under the RMA. They must identify issues of regional significance and prepare a Regional Policy Statement (RPS) to address those issues, and to achieve integrated management of natural and physical resources. Functions of Regional Councils are set out in s30 RMA and include control of the use of land for purposes of water quality and quantity, control of water abstraction, and controlling the quantity, level and flow of water in any water body. Regional Councils also control discharges into water.

Regional councils may prepare regional plans to assist them to carry out any of their functions (s63 RMA). The regional policy statement sets out a policy response (in the form of objectives, policies and methods) to significant issues, and can provide direction to district and city councils about how a resource issue should be managed. The RPS must give effect to higher order policy documents such as a national policy statement (these are prepared under the RMA), and plan makers must have regard to management plans and strategies prepared under other Acts (s61).

### **2.2 CANTERBURY WATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

Following the passing of the RMA, the Canterbury Regional Council (Environment Canterbury, or ECan) prepared a regional policy statement and some regional plans but it was 2011 before a comprehensive regional plan, the Natural Resources Regional Plan (NRRP) was in place.

The Canterbury Water Management Strategy was initiated by the Canterbury Mayoral Forum to address competing values and interests in water and attempt to find negotiated solutions as an alternative to the competitive processes under the RMA. It was published in 2009 and has been endorsed or accepted by all of the councils in the Canterbury region. Its vision for the region's water is:

*To enable present and future generations to gain the greatest social, economic, recreational and cultural benefits from our water resources within an environmentally sustainable framework.*

The intent of the Strategy is that progress will be made in all areas simultaneously, and '*ensure that all aspects of the solution are advanced in parallel (p39 CWMS).*' To meet the vision, the Strategy establishes broad targets in the areas of drinking water, irrigated land area, energy security and efficiency, ecosystem health and biodiversity, water-use efficiency, kaitiakitanga, contribution to regional and national economies, natural character of braided rivers, and recreational and amenity opportunities. Targets are clustered in timeframes of 2010, 2015, 2020 and 2040. The Strategy lists principles that underpin the vision and that must be met. These

include three primary principles, six supporting principles, and first and second order priority considerations for the use of water.

Since adopting the Strategy, Environment Canterbury has set about establishing and supporting the catchment based committees that are tasked with preparing detailed activity plans (titled Zone Implementation Programmes, or ZIPs) that implement the CWMS. The ZIP integrates infrastructure development with security and efficiency of energy supply, more efficient irrigation and land management practices, and improved river flows and groundwater recharge (Strategy, p61). The ZIPs identify the priority actions for a catchment which may be specific to water bodies in that catchment or applicable to the catchment as a whole. Seven of the ten ZIPs have been prepared, and the remaining three are in progress, and may be completed by the end of 2012. There is also a regional committee that has released a Regional Implementation Programme (RIP) that addresses regional issues of environmental restoration and repair, land use impacts on water quality and water storage. The RIP identifies priorities for water storage projects in Canterbury that, combined with greater efficiency, will support a substantial increase in irrigated land (the Strategy has a 2040 target of 850,000 ha with 95% reliability, whereas there is currently 500,000 ha irrigated).

## **2.3 THE ENVIRONMENT CANTERBURY (TEMPORARY COMMISSIONERS AND IMPROVED WATER MANAGEMENT) ACT 2010**

In April 2010, the Environment Canterbury (Temporary Commissioners and Improved Water Management) Act (the 'ECan Act') came into force with the twin purposes of appointing Commissioners (in place of elected Councillors) and providing the Council with special circumstances to address the efficient, effective and sustainable management of freshwater (s3 ECan Act). Specifically these are the limitation of appeal rights in the preparation of RMA policy documents, and a requirement to have particular regard to the Vision and Principles of the CWMS when drafting plan provisions (s62 ECan Act). The Vision and Principles are reproduced in the First Schedule to the ECan Act.

The ECan Act signals the importance of the Strategy for freshwater management, and how it is seen by central government as a way of resolving challenges in Canterbury.

The changes affecting the preparation of plans make it much faster to bring a plan into operation. This is important because plans establish a framework for resource consent applications, and they reduce uncertainty as to how water will be managed. Under the RMA a plan must be notified for public submissions, before hearings are held to address concerns raised through submission. Decisions are then appealable to the Environment Court, and the Court hears the matter 'de novo' or from the beginning. Appeals effectively allow a second chance to influence policy development and can extend the plan making process by two years or more. The ECan Act provides for appeals to the High Court on points of law only.

The ECan Act ceases to have force in October 2013.

## **2.4 THE NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR FRESHWATER MANAGEMENT**

The National Policy Statement (NPS) is a policy document under the RMA. It took effect on 1 July 2011 and sets out objectives, and policies on water quantity and quality, integrated management, tangata whenua roles and interests, and a progressive implementation programme. It provides direction to regional councils on how freshwater should be managed to achieve the purpose of the RMA, and it must be implemented as promptly as is reasonable in the circumstances, and fully completed no later than 31 December 2030. In its Preamble, it states that water must be managed in an integrated and sustainable way, while providing for economic growth within set water quantity and quality limits. Regional Councils are directed to establish freshwater objectives, quality limits, and environmental flows (Policies A1 and B1). Councils are further directed to provide for efficient allocation of freshwater to activities, within the limits established (Policy B2).

## **2.5 THE LAND AND WATER FORUM**

The Land and Water Forum was established by the National government as part of its Fresh Start for Freshwater programme. The Forum consists of industry groups, environmental and recreational organisations, iwi, scientists

and other freshwater stakeholders. It is tasked with developing shared outcomes, goals and long term strategies for freshwater.

It has established a national dialogue and released two reports. The first, titled Report of the Land and Water Forum: A Fresh Start for Freshwater, was released in September 2010. It describes the problems with water management, establishes a goal and some principles, and describes what needs to be done to achieve a better approach to managing water. The second report was released in April 2012 and addresses the setting of limits for water quality and quantity, and the making of freshwater plans and policy through collaboration. A third report is due to be released in the latter part of 2012.

### **3 DISCUSSION**

In setting out to evaluate the role and success or otherwise of the CWMS in influencing freshwater management in Canterbury, the author has considered three questions:

1. The extent to which the Strategy is aligned with the NPS because it is the NPS that has to be given effect to through regional plans;
2. The extent to which the Strategy has influenced the preparation of the Canterbury RPS and regional water plans;
3. Whether the regional committee and catchment based committee governance arrangements as a mechanism for continued collaboration are consistent with recommendations made by the Land and Water Forum, and whether any conclusions can be drawn from the steps toward implementation of the Strategy thus far.

#### **3.1 STRATEGY AND POLICY ALIGNMENT**

Table 1 evaluates the vision, principles and targets of the Strategy against the key themes of the NPS. Key points emerging from this evaluation are that:

- The NPS lists values of water in the Preamble but does not provide a national priority of how these values might be balanced against each other. The NPS does indicate that freshwater resources are allocated to users once limits have been set, but it does not advise how the resource might be allocated between users. In contrast the Strategy has first and second order priority considerations as a primary principle listing the order in which uses or values should be allocated water. It lists the environment, customary uses, community supplies and stock water as a first order consideration, following by irrigation, renewable electricity generation, recreation, tourism and amenity as a second order consideration.
- The Strategy is more growth and use oriented than the NPS. Both recognise limits to the extractive and assimilative capacity of water but the Strategy describes limits in the Vision through language such as “benefits” and “gain.”
- Both documents address resource sustainability, resource capacity and ecological processes.
- Both documents emphasise the importance of involving iwi in decisions on freshwater.
- The NPS explicitly requires a comprehensive and integrated approach to water management, whereas the Strategy sets targets that will require such an approach.

There is a high degree of alignment between the vision and principles of the Strategy and the objectives and policies of the NPS. Both address issues such as the values that are ascribed to water, water efficiency, water quality and quantity limits, and over-allocation. As might be expected of a Strategy developed to address the specific circumstances of a region compared to a national policy approach, the CWMS offers more detail concerning exactly what Canterbury is trying to achieve in its management of freshwater, and incorporates a plan of action to give effect to the Strategy.

Table 1: Comparison of the CWMS and the NPS

NPS Key Themes	CWMS			Observations
	Vision	Principles	Targets	
Water has multiple values (Preamble)	Social, recreational, economic and cultural benefits recognised	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> order priorities defined.		<p>NPS lists values but does not attempt to prioritise them.</p> <p>Not all NPS values are explicitly recognised in the first and second order priority considerations. Commercial/industrial processes (other than irrigation or electricity generation) are listed as a supporting principle.</p> <p>NPS sets out use values and ecosystem values – but the majority of its objectives address the latter (for example safeguard life-supporting capacity, ecosystem processes, improve overall quality). Objective B3 of the NPS is one objective addressing a ‘use’ value (efficiency).</p> <p>The Strategy is more growth and use oriented than the NPS. It does recognise resource limits but frames them in a consumptive way by using language of “benefits” and “gain” in vision</p> <p>CWMS places environment in first order consideration, but natural character and indigenous biodiversity as supporting principles</p> <p>CWMS is more explicit in establishing a priority of ecological processes, stock water and community supplies, customary uses first; then irrigation, renewable electricity, recreation, tourism and amenity second.</p>
Responsibility for future (ie. need to safeguard resource)	Refers to present and future generations	Managed sustainably	Restoration of health and functioning of ecosystems within	<p>Liberal use of the word sustainable in CWMS implying that water is a resource that has to support future communities as well as current ones. Recognition that some areas require restoration.</p> <p>The CWMS describes a fundamental problem as a management</p>

NPS Key Themes	CWMS			Observations
	Vision	Principles	Targets	
			5 years.	<p>system that does not incentivise existing development to allow further access to the resource (p32). The NPS seeks to enable water to contribute to economic growth and environmental integrity and provides for the values that are important to New Zealanders.</p> <p>Both documents address resource sustainability first, and then consider resource capacity and ecological processes.</p>
Resource limits in over-allocation of takes, and assimilative capacity	Greatest benefits within an environmentally sustainable framework	<p>Discharges do not compromise quality. Natural flow regimes are maintained</p> <p>Environmental flow regimes established for every waterway where abstraction occurs</p>	Catchment load limits by 2015	Uncertainty about what the phrase ‘environmentally sustainable framework’ in the Strategy actually means, however it could be taken to infer resource limits within which benefits are to be maximised.
Broad definition of efficient allocation and efficient use of water. Defines efficient allocation as economic, technical and dynamic	Greatest gain from limited resource implies efficiency	Need for efficient use recognised in primary and supporting principles	Water use efficiency is key target area, with 5, 10, and 20 yr targets	Strategy postulates an efficiency led solution whereby technical efficiency gains combined with water storage will release sufficient water for a substantial increase in irrigated area.

NPS Key Themes	CWMS			Observations
	Vision	Principles	Targets	
Recognition and reflection of iwi interests and values	Refers to cultural benefits	Primary principle of kaitiakitanga	Kaitiakitanga is key target area with 5,10, and 20 year targets	Both documents recognise the importance of involving iwi.
Whole of catchment management	Not explicitly stated	Implied in the principle of a regional approach but not explicitly stated	Targets themselves do not include whole of catchment approach.	<p>Integrated management is not explicit in the vision, principles or targets of Strategy. Principles address integration of land use and water; interdependence of waterways and coast; and addressing cumulative effects. These principles infer integrated management.</p> <p>Zone Committees must take a whole of catchment approach.</p>

## 3.2 POLICY AND PLAN MAKING

Collaborative measures around water management in Canterbury are moving from the strategic to the operational, from the general to the specific, from a conceptual framework to the prescription of plan-making under the RMA. The big question is: how well will agreements hold together when the detail of the resource management plans become apparent and stakeholders can assess the implications for their own operations?

In the two years since adoption of the Strategy, Environment Canterbury has embarked on an ambitious programme of plan preparation. In an environment where plans can take several years to become operative, ECan, aided by the 'limited appeals' legislative environment it currently operates within, has produced a second generation RPS and is progressing several other catchment specific water plans, including an integrated land and water plan.

Of these, it is the RPS that provides the overarching direction for water management in the region. The chapter on freshwater identifies the water management issues and sets out objectives, policies and methods for dealing with the issues. It sets the framework within which regional plans with regional rules governing water takes, use, damming and diversions, and discharges are developed. As RMA plans are in place for 10 years and establish thresholds for activities to operate, they are an important aspect to demonstrating faith with a community that has invested in a collaborative process. The Forum has recognised this, noting that for participants to participate in collaborative processes, they need to see benefits. Participants need to know that the result of their collaboration will have a real and substantial influence over final decisions.

Key risks in the process of developing plans to support the strategic agreements are that what seemed acceptable in principle could well be seen in a very different light when drafted into a statutory framework. The process of plan making could unravel agreements if they have not been fully tested and understood. A further risk is whether parties will revert to previous behaviour in the statutory process. Traditionally parties have used the statutory process of submissions, hearings and appeals, to promote their positions and maximise benefits. Regardless of the merit or otherwise of these positions, this behaviour is hardly likely to reinforce the social capital built up through collaborative processes.

Three plan-making projects were evaluated to assess whether the Strategy is being implemented through resource management plans. The first, affecting the Waitaki Catchment Water Allocation Regional Plan, is the result of a recommendation from the Lower Waitaki South Coastal Canterbury Zone Implementation Programme. They seek clearer guidance on the reliability of water supply for consents that were issued prior to the plan becoming operative in 2006, and that are soon to be renewed. Environment Canterbury has established a technical working party comprising members of the ZIP and planners to develop the plan change under the guidance of the Lower Waitaki Zone Committee. What this delivers in practice is yet to be seen, although the approach appears to be similar to the processes discussed by the Forum. Environment Canterbury has programmed a change to the plan to be notified later in 2012.

The second plan considered is the Hurunui and Waiiau River Regional Plan (HWRRP). This was notified in October 2011 and hearings are scheduled for the latter part of 2012. The plan makes specific reference to the CWMS and how the plan responds to the ZIP. It reiterates the vision of the Strategy, describes the work of the zone committee, and records the key recommendations of the ZIP. The two key recommendations are the establishment of flow and allocation regimes, and nutrient load limits, and the plan includes provisions to address these matters.

While it is too early in the process to draw conclusions about either of these plan-making processes, the Strategy is an obvious influencing factor underpinning the content and process of plan development. More definite conclusions can be drawn about the Canterbury Regional Policy Statement as it has been through the public submission process with Decisions released in July 2012. Table 2 assesses the provisions of the Regional Policy Statement to identify reference to the Strategy and consider whether stakeholders may feel that their collaborative efforts in producing the Strategy have influenced the final form of the RPS.



Table 2: The influence of the Strategy on the Canterbury Regional Policy Statement

<b>CWMS Principle (<i>in italics</i>)</b>	<b>RPS Provision</b>
<i>Sustainable Management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inherent in purpose of RMA and therefore RPS</li> </ul>
<p><i>Regional approach:</i></p> <p>First and second order priority considerations            Consistent approach throughout region            Impacts of climate change given priority            Cumulative effects managed            Cautious approach where limited information            Efficient use of water in infrastructure            Emphasis on integration of water and land            Effects of land-use intensification considered</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated solutions required</li> <li>• First and second order embedded in RPS approach whereby water can be used provided that natural processes are safe-guarded.</li> <li>• When setting environmental flow regimes must safe-guard life-supporting flows ahead of considerations of demand for abstraction.</li> <li>• Policies on over-allocation</li> <li>• Precautionary approach applied</li> <li>• Existing activities and infrastructure recognised but all infrastructure to meet increased efficiency requirements</li> <li>• Land use controlled for impacts on water</li> </ul>
<i>Kaitiakitanga -</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kaitiakitanga to be applied to all resources</li> </ul>
<p><i>Natural character</i> preserved and enhanced            Natural flow regimes maintained            Dynamic processes of braided rivers are protected            Restoration of degraded waterways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural character of braided rivers maintained</li> <li>• No dams on main-stem of major braided rivers</li> <li>• Existing structures protected</li> <li>• Restoration of degraded water ways required</li> </ul>
<i>Indigenous biodiversity -</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restoration and protection mechanisms</li> </ul>
<i>Access</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public access to be maintained and/or improved</li> </ul>
<i>Quality drinking water</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water quality limits imposed</li> <li>• Drinking water protected before water allocated for other uses</li> </ul>
<p><i>Recreation and amenity opportunities</i> – sufficient water quality to allow contact recreation throughout Canterbury</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental flow regimes to address recreation</li> <li>• Water quality limits imposed</li> </ul>
<p><i>Community and commercial use:</i>            Efficient and effective use of water            Business does not impact adversely on water</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parallel concept of CWMS taken up whereby further abstraction occurs with improvements in efficiency and restoration of degraded waterways</li> </ul>

The RPS Decision reiterates that the RPS must have particular regard to the Vision and Principles of the CWMS (as required by the ECan Act) but goes one step further in stating that the whole of the Strategy should be considered as it is a tool that will assist the regional council to give effect to integrated management of the water resource. The Decision has regard to the Strategy because of the relevance of its content; because it had widespread support from all the councils of the region; and because it was designed to be incorporated in planning instruments.

The objectives of the RPS address the concept of parallel process envisaged by the Strategy whereby water abstraction proceeds alongside measures to restore degraded waterways, and improve efficiency. The RPS supports the first and second order priority considerations, as in the view of the Commissioners, this is an appropriate way of giving effect to the NPS. Provisions strongly reinforce the collaborative model and promote an integrated and comprehensive approach. The RPS reinforces the need to work collaboratively encouraging community stewardship at a local catchment level and underscores the importance of the zone and regional committee structure as a mechanism for capturing community values, and negotiating solutions.

The Decision and provisions of the RPS reinforce the importance of the Strategy and offer a clear signal to stakeholders that the Strategy has been instrumental in preparing the resource management planning framework, which in turn will guide future water management decisions. Stakeholders should be able to draw encouragement from this that there is value in being involved in the collaborative processes.

### **3.3 COLLABORATION**

The Second Report of the Land and Water Forum claims to lead collaborative dialogue to resolve values and interests in water at a national scale, and refers to the pioneering work of the Canterbury Water Management Strategy (Forum, 2012). The work in Canterbury precedes the Forum in that Canterbury are now engaged in the finer grain challenge of embedding a collaboratively developed Strategy through governance structures and resource management plan and policy development (among other measures).

The Forum has made several recommendations about what and how a collaborative process might work in shaping and delivering regional plans. The Second Report includes recommendations about process, stakeholder engagement, and what should happen once a plan is publicly notified. Environment Canterbury is grappling with these issues as it prepares a policy framework under the RMA that gives effect to the Strategy. In Canterbury on-going collaboration is facilitated through the Regional and Zone committee structure that ECan has established. These committees are bound by the requirements of the Local Government Act and adhere to an operating philosophy. Table 3 considers and compares the committee approach with the Forum's views about collaboration.

Table 3: Collaboration

Regional / Zone Committees - Operating Philosophy	Land and Water Forum Recommendations
Appointees from councils, iwi, and 4-7 nominations from variety of backgrounds.	Legitimacy (reflected by balanced representation and with confidence of community)
Observe tikanga Maori	Iwi should be enabled to participate throughout and their values and interests should be addressed
Consider and balance views of all stakeholders.	Inclusive and equitable approach to different streams of information Avoid risk of process capture
Collaborative and co-operative working. Best endeavours to reach solutions that take account of the interests of all sectors of community.	Community and stakeholders actively engaged Incentivise good faith participation
Appointment on basis of individual experience and knowledge. Promoting views or positions of any particular interest and stakeholder group not acceptable.	Process should increase social capital
Promote a shift in philosophy from an individual rights basis towards using water resource to a collective interests approach to water management.	Recommendations around preventing stakeholders 'gaming' the process
Consensus in its decision-making. If unanimity not possible, view of the significant majority (i.e. 75% or more of members) acceptable. Meeting of the Committee shall be called and operate in accordance with the requirements of the LGOIMA. Use external facilitator if agreement cannot be reached.	Plan making – Council runs process but promotes culture of joint preparation Agreements in writing
If all avenues for agreement exhausted, new Committee appointed.	Forum recommendation that once a collaborative process is initiated, there is no opportunity to revert to a statutory process of the First Schedule of the RMA, but there needs to be a mechanism to move forward

Key points from this analysis are:

- The operating philosophy of the regional and zone committees is consistent with the recommendations of the Forum, particularly ensuring that the committees have legitimacy and respect from the communities of interest
- The Forum has given thought to avoiding the risk of the process being ‘gamed’ (ie manipulated in favour of one interest or value). Committees are encouraged to take a collective interests approach over an individual perspective.
- The Forum has made recommendations about fettering the ability of stakeholders to step back from a collaborative process. Regional and zone committees are, in the absence of specific statutory mechanisms, relying on voluntary commitments to the zone implementation programmes.

One of the challenges of the collaborative plan making model is the ability of the process to maintain faith with stakeholders through the entire process, and prevent stakeholders from reverting to pursuit of individual interests at submission and hearing stages. The Forum has recommended curtailing the rights of stakeholders to make submissions unless the collaborative model has been unable to achieve agreed outcomes. The Canterbury experience has relied on good faith relationships developed through close working relationships. It is too early to tell whether this is sufficient for the Strategy to be fully implemented through all regional plans, particularly after October 2013 when the ECan Act ceases to have effect and full appeal rights under the RMA are reinstated.

## **4 CONCLUSIONS**

The Canterbury region developed an alternative approach to water management which culminated in publishing of the Canterbury Water Management Strategy in 2009. Since then a sub-regional governance structure of regional and zone committees has been put in place, members appointed, and detailed implementation programmes developed for the majority of the catchments in the region. By the end of 2012, it is anticipated that all catchment areas will have a programme in place. The region is now engaged in implementing the Strategy ahead of recommendations made by the Forum. Implementation is directed towards time-framed targets addressing key areas of the Strategy.

The value of water strategies, integrated plans and collaboration are being recognised on the national stage. The Canterbury Water Management Strategy provides one example, and has been noted by the Forum as ‘pioneering.’ The Strategy cannot stand alone and for maximum effectiveness it must influence RMA planning. Significant progress has also been made in establishing a policy framework that relies upon and implements the Strategy, and this has been streamlined considerably by the passing of the ECan Act.

The rapid progression from Strategy to detailed implementation plans, from the governance of the Canterbury Mayoral Forum to zone committees provides strong indication of considerable social capital amongst stakeholders. Whether this social capital is sufficient to withstand the rigour of the RMA process of plan making is yet to be seen. Evaluating the process and the outcomes once the plan making process is completed should yield valuable lessons that will benefit other attempts at collaborative plan-making.

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