



Community Consultation in Environmental Policy Making

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ABSTRACT

In 2001, a consultation experiment took place during an independent legislative review commissioned by the Minister for the Environment in New South Wales. Randomly selected citizens participated in a televote and citizens' jury on container deposit legislation, and contributed to the final recommendations of the review. The trial of these innovative participatory techniques took place because a research team from the Institute for Sustainable Futures conducting the review believed that it is crucial to include typical citizens if the community's preferences are to be determined. This consultation experiment confirmed community support for the contentious option of container deposit legislation after in-depth discussion and debate. The authors claim that the greater the level of deliberation, the more confident policy makers can be in the results of community consultation. Further, they contend that some consultation methods are more likely than others to stimulate creative resolution of complex environmental issues and can certainly add value to the policy making process, especially when policies are contentious and value-laden.

Dr Lyn Carson is a senior lecturer in applied politics at the University of Sydney, Australia. Dr Stuart White is Director of the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology, Sydney. Carolyn Hendriks managed the social research component of the CDL review while at the Institute for Sustainable Futures. Carolyn is now with the Social & Political Theory Program, at the Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra. Jane Palmer conducted the citizen jury while at the Institute for Sustainable Futures, and has previously run a consensus conference in the UK (Radioactive Waste) and a citizen jury Queensland, Australia (on a major road development).

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