

Kate Sinclair
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Services
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Presentation

A Christmas Carol – the EIA relevance challenge; adding value in the next 20 years

Biography

Kate Sinclair is a Senior Environmental Consultant at MWH (now part of Stantec) with more than 15 years' experience in environmental assessment, construction environmental management, and regulatory approvals. During her career, Kate has provided environmental expertise on various major infrastructure projects across Queensland, New South Wales, Fiji and the United Kingdom where she commenced her career in 2001. At present, Kate is providing regulatory approval and environmental management support in the construction of a major trunk sewer in Brisbane. Her role is to assist the Contractor in the preparation of all regulatory approval requirements and to provide input to the project Construction Environmental Management Plan. Prior to this, Kate spent 18 months working on the Australia Pacific LNG project providing environmental management support to the site based team that were responsible for delivering seven major Coal Seam Gas (CSG) plants and associated water treatment facilities in the Surat Basin. Before relocating to Australia in 2006, Kate also spent 18 months on-site monitoring contractor compliance on a major water pipeline project in the Lake District National Park, England.

Kate has a Masters in Environmental Sustainability from the University of Edinburgh, preceded by an Undergraduate degree in Environmental Geography (MA Hons) from the University of Aberdeen.

Abstract

While the need for practicing "sound" environmental science has not changed; the need to respond quickly to unprecedented global challenges, has changed in recent times. The challenge is amplified by continually shifting social attitudes and associated political and legislative change. The paper will commence by focusing on the delivery of Environmental Assessments in the United Kingdom and Australia, commenting on some of the major changes that have impacted the profession in the last fifteen years. This includes the Global Financial Crisis, climate change, digital technology and the rise in social media. The paper will then highlight emerging issues that may further impact the profession for example environmental ethics in big business, citizen science, adaptation to climate change, and industry disruptors. Against this background, while the scale of the challenges may not necessarily be different, the rate at which environmental scientists are expected to respond with certainty, has increased significantly. With this in mind, key skills that practitioners must be able to deliver include:

- The ability to detect and address increasingly complex issues, often with trans-boundary causation;
- The ability to collect and rapidly communicate information to clients, policy-makers and the public;
- The ability to use technology and social media for the collection and dissemination of information; and
- The increased need to justify value when finances are constrained.

Notwithstanding the need to adapt our skills, there is also the need for constancy. That is, scientists are problem solvers aiming to assess the environmental impacts of change whether at policy, plan, or project level. Our role is to understand the connections of environment and society, to present an objective view of impacts and how they may be realistically managed. Ultimately, the key challenge is ensuring sound environmental science, in a period of rapid change which is robust to withstand political and public scrutiny.

Kate's presentation is unavailable for download.