Social Impact Assessment: a different way of approaching environmental approvals

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Uncertainty + Lack of Social licence to Operate = Delayed approvals

SIA approach to approvals

Certainty + Social licence to operate = More efficient and effective approvals

SIA approach to approvals
Assumptions

• A ‘social impact’ is anything linked to a project that affects or concerns any impacted stakeholder group

• Almost anything can be a social impact so long as it is valued or important to a specific group of people

(Vanclay et al 2015)
If not managed, potential social impacts are project risks
Start of business case/concept study

Start managing social impacts here by asking who is going to be impacted and how would they like to be involved?

Impact Assessment (including scoping)

SIA (as a technical study)

Pre-feasibility

Feasibility and Planning

Construction

Operation

Closure
Social impacts vs Environmental Impacts
Step 1 – desk-based research

a. Who will be impacted
b. How will they be impacted across the life of the project
c. Suggestions for how these impacts can be mitigated or managed
Step 1 – desk-based research

Identify who may be impacted across the life of the project and how:

- Landholders, residents and businesses
- New neighbours
- People in ‘host communities’ of the project
- People whose livelihoods and wellbeing may be affected as a result of the project
- Indigenous people with a connection to the land and waters
- People who have an interest in the flora and fauna in the area (including weeds and pests)
- People who have an interest in the water in the area
- People who have an interest in the heritage values
- People who are more vulnerable, such as the elderly and people with disabilities
- People in the wider region who may have an interest in the project
Step 2 – ask/ground truth

Ask how people would like to be involved in:

1. Scoping
2. Baseline - choice of indicators and data collection
3. Impact identification - choice and significance
4. Management – development of management plans, mitigation strategies, shared responsibilities
5. Monitoring – data collection and share responsibilities
Challenges?

• Its our project/we are the experts, they are our decisions not theirs
• People want certainty and we can’t provide it in the time we have
• They will be against the project and won’t want to work with us
• People will take advantage, they’ll want more influence they can have
• But we are the experts, we have the university degrees and experience
• The process won’t be independent or objective
• We won’t be able to agree, there are too many and diverse opinions
Concluding remarks

• Anyone can do this
• Growing importance of managing social risks
• Builds a strong foundation
• Invest at the beginning
• Go on the journey together
• Legislation doesn’t cover everybody
• Our work is about building relationships
• It’s aligned with our code of ethics
Key references


Photo references

Slide 3
http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-25/ashburton-residents-protest-against-housing-development/8386544
http://www.lockthegate.org.au

Slide 11
https://saveregionaltowns.com.au

Slide 12

Slide 13