

MOVING BEYOND TRANSITION  
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## ABSTRACT

**The similarities and differences between Australia and South East Asia associated with ESHIA approvals processes for major project developments – An ESHIA practitioner’s perspective and lessons learnt to de-risk major project approvals.**

Across many industries, international developers and proponents of major projects are faced with material decisions about which country they should invest in, and what level of risk they are willing to take in order to invest in any particular location and country. In addition to the commercial business case, consideration needs to be given to the relative certainties and risks associated with: • navigating the regulatory framework, including but not limited to the ESHIA process and regulatory approvals; • the timeline from project concept through to investment decision, construction and operations; • any challenges associated with securing investment capital (either from corporate, investors or development banks); • any complexities regarding stakeholder expectations and stakeholder influence; and • Non-technical risks (such as political, market, reputation). Having recently relocated back to Australia after 5.5 years in South East Asia, there are numerous takeaways presenter Meg Lawson can apply to ESHIA and approvals processes for developments in Australia. The takeaways can be broadly categorized into two general buckets, the first are universal regardless of jurisdiction, for example the influence that proactive project planning, timely deployment of specialist subject matter expertise, communication and agility during the ESHIA process can have on an approval timeline. The second bucket relates more to jurisdiction specific factors such as regulatory framework maturity and stability, or the depth and breadth of experience in locally experienced subject matter experts such as ecologists or social scientists. In an increasingly global and competitive development landscape, insights into the difference in pursuing project approvals in Australia compared to South East Asia can be a helpful perspective to bring to the discussion.

### Three key takeaways

1. Good practice fundamentals of the ESHIA process and project approvals regardless of jurisdiction;
2. Key jurisdictional differences in project approvals in Australia compared to South East Asian countries;
3. How to de-risk a development’s ESHIA process

## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Meg is a passionate business leader in the sustainability field, focused on supporting organizations better manage their ESG business risks & opportunities. Meg’s 27-year career spans roles in SE Asia, Australia, Russia, The Netherlands & Italy, with 14 of her 23 years with ERM as a Partner. In conjunction with her Business Leadership roles, Meg has specialized in environmental & non-technical risk management of major projects, having delivered regulatory approvals, ESHIAs, due diligence & related advisory services to clients in >15 countries.