



EIANZ 2025 IMPACT ASSESSMENT SYMPOSIUM

AERIAL FUNCTION CENTRE AT UTS, SYDNEY | 27 – 28 AUGUST 2025

ABSTRACT

Making the connections between policy, the community and stakeholders, strategic planning and project EIA in a way that delivers effective environmental outcomes.

When considering the issue of achieving good outcomes in impact assessment, the discussion really needs to start by asking what we mean by good environmental outcomes, and how we as a society rank the importance of 'environment' alongside broader social, economic and (at the proponent level) commercial considerations. The EIA practitioner must also consider how things such as the political environment, legislative and policy framework, strategic planning and community and stakeholders influence how these intended outcomes are implemented. And finally there is the need to consider the role of proponents and contractors, i.e. those responsible for delivering projects, and how their values and strategic objectives align with broader environmental policy, and how this manifests in project development and delivery. The role of the EIA practitioner is central to bringing this range of considerations together. This presentation starts by exploring the policy, regulatory and stakeholder drivers defining good environmental outcomes, and the role of EIA in delivering on these. Specifically it looks at the challenges facing EIA practitioners, including the tension between good environmental outcomes and a proponent's (client's) commercial and timeframe priorities, the importance of connecting EIA at a project level to broader environmental and strategic planning policy objectives, and the challenges for EIA practitioners who may only be engaged on a project once the project is substantially defined, and who may not remain involved for long enough to oversee the implementation of the environmental objectives implemented, and good outcomes achieved. The presentation will draw on experience from the presenter's experience in EIA for major government infrastructure projects such as Sydney Metro, as well as involvement in strategic assessment for transport corridor reservation, complex cumulative impact assessments, and collaboration with project development teams to ensure project development is subject to active consideration of good environmental outcomes by all involved.

PAUL GREENHALGH
WSP Australia Pty Ltd

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Paul Greenhalgh is a Sydney-based town planner and environmental scientist. He is currently a Technical Executive with consulting firm WSP, specialising in environmental impact assessment and planning for major infrastructure projects. Paul's early career was spent in his homeland of the UK, initially in the waste industry before moving into regional planning policy for London and the South East. Since arriving in Australia 25 years ago, Paul's experience has encompassed natural resource strategies, statutory and strategic planning and increasingly, environmental impact assessment, primarily for major public infrastructure projects in transport and energy. His recent EIS projects include the Sydney Metro-Western Sydney Airport and Central West Orana Transmission project. Paul has also undertaken EIS peer review roles for projects such as the Commonwealth Western Sydney Airport. Paul is passionate about environmental issues, and outside his professional life is a keen traveller, bushwalker, wilderness camper and cyclist, despite the limitations of full time work, kids and inner city living.