

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

IAIA08 Session Chair's Report

Session number and name: CS4.6 Beyond impact assessment: The integration of social concepts in organizational decision-making

Day: Thursday **Date:** 8th May 2008 **Time:** 8.30-10.30am **Persons attending session:** Approx 20

Name(s) of Session Chair(s)

Dr Sheridan Coakes (Coakes Consulting – Social Impact and Community Consultants)
Dr Geoff Syme (CSIRO)

Contributors

Anthony DiNicola (Chevron)
Scott Phillips (Futureeye)
Tanya Burdett/Alex White (Dept of Communities and Local Govt/Scott Wilson)
Mette Fredsguard (Ben Cave and Associates)
Maria Valenzuela-Varela (University of Guadalajara)

Panel Contributors:

Dr Jaquie Tracey (Dept of Environment and Climate Change, NSW)
Dr James Baines (Taylor Baines and Associates)

(a) Three current issues in application of assessment processes discussed in this session

- Utilisation of company case studies, greater engagement of company personnel in the process, involvement of internal champions
- Development of appropriate systems, tools, protocols for impact practice – need for an applied, strategic and relevant focus
- Development of appropriate capacity (both internal and external)
- Understanding the organizational culture (internal understanding, awareness and capacity) in which the assessment is being undertaken – company capacity to embrace ESIA

(i) One or more emerging trends

- Alignment of policies/programs across governance levels
- Need to be more strategic – what information is required by decision makers (strategic SEIA)

I Issues relating to impact assessment effectiveness:

(i) dimensions of IA effectiveness (i.e. what are the characteristics of effective IA?)

- Building strong internal and external networks and capacity
- Using existing case studies to improve understanding
- Pragmatic development of useful tools, processes, procedures, protocols

(ii) challenges/barriers to IA effectiveness

- Education and awareness of SEIA practice – examples need to be provided
- Making the assessment process relevant to decision makers

(iii) how these barriers might be overcome

- Effective monitoring and evaluation of processes and assessment programs

(d) Comments on the Art and Science of Impact Assessment (i.e. the relative importance and interplay between science and values/politics/subjectivity in impact assessment)

Need for a compromise of Art and Science (experience/creativity/application/rigour)