

28th Annual Meeting of the International Association for Impact Assessment
THE ART AND SCIENCE OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT
IAIA08 Session Chair's Report

Session number and name: TF4.1 Excellence in Marine and Coastal Impact Assessment

Day: Thursday **Date:** 8/5/08 **Time:** 14:00-15:30 **# Persons attending session:**

Name(s) of Session Chair(s): Adam Smith

Contributors Too many.....

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

1. Does the expectation of EIA exceed the ability of environmental management
2. Lack of marine environment baseline data & understanding
3. There is no criteria for what is excellent

(b) One or more emerging trends

1. The level of prediction required/undertaken in EIA
2. Limitations in understanding (lack of knowledge)
3. The degree of uncertainty in the outcomes

(c) Issues relating to impact assessment effectiveness:

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

- Good policy and regulatory frameworks
- Good principles and objectives
- Good multisectoral communication
- Good modelling and prediction of impacts

(ii) challenges/barriers to IA effectiveness

- The final EIS has to be readable - It has to be legible for a wide audience, especially for environmental managers interpreting the recommendations, and the public exposed to the development
- Availability of data
- Short timeframes, issued by the consent Authority, proponent

(iii) how these barriers might be overcome

- Improving communication and stakeholder engagement
- Knowing when to use the right tool (modelling/monitoring etc)

(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)

For anyone working in the marine environment it is imperative that some background knowledge is held by the EIA practitioner. Also understanding and identifying the right marine receptors and indicators are imperative to the effectiveness of IA in the marine environment.

Discussion was held around the need for longitudinal research studies to be undertaken during and after many of the large marine developments have occurred. This requires a cultural shift in EIA. However research and understanding is considered the critical link between EIA and effectiveness.