

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: CS 5.10 Challenges and Solutions in Linear Project Development

Day: Thursday **Date:** 8th May 2008 **Time:** 11:00-12:00 **# Persons attending session:** 60

Name(s) of Session Chair(s)

John Morrell

Contributors

Dr Amanda Banks – Hydro Tasmania Consulting, John Morrell Western Power, Helene Letourneau Hydro-Quebec

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

1. Significance of visual impact in linear infrastructure developments
2. Importance of stakeholder involvement in impact assessment / mitigation
3. Use of constraints analysis and geographic information systems to minimize impacts

(b) One or more emerging trends

Use of risk based assessment methods to reduce project impacts

(c) Issues relating to impact assessment effectiveness:

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

Reduced overall environmental and social impacts resulting in lower levels of government assessment, shorter time frames for project impact assessment and stakeholder involvement in impact assessment and mitigation processes.

(ii) challenges/barriers to IA effectiveness

1. Short project time frames
2. Project scope / design finalized prior to impact assessment
3. Inability to react to community / stakeholder concerns

(iii) how these barriers might be overcome

Early identification of critical issues through risk assessment, wide ranging stakeholder consultation and incorporation of impact mitigation in project design.

(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)

The case study presented by Helen Letourneau clearly illustrated the pitfalls of not considering the interplay between stakeholders values such as amenity and political imperatives associated with risk of power supply failure. The other two case studies illustrated methods to include people's values and preferences in impact assessment and project design. In considering these values the art and science of impact assessment merged to produce low impact project outcomes.