

**THE ART AND SCIENCE OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
IAIA08 Session Chair's Report**

**Session number and name: CS7.6 Community Participation and Sustainability Assessment**

**Day: Friday Date: 9 May Time: 8.30 # Persons attending session: 15**

**Name(s) of Session Chair(s)**

Caroline Raphael

**Contributors**

Caroline Raphael, PhD Candidate, Murdoch University  
Janine Barrow, Senior Environmental Planner, Sinclair Knight Merz  
John Morrell, Environmental Management Co-ordinator, Western Power  
Leah O'Brien, Team Leader Facilitation and Communication Services, GHD

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

- Who does the sustainability assessment ?
- Who is the "community" and how do you deal with the "difficult community members"?
- What happens after the assessment ?

**(b) One or more emerging trends**

There needs to be more information on how to undertake sustainability assessments and more examples on effective community participation techniques that can be applied (really specific information on processes, procedures, actions, tools etc.)

**(c) Issues relating to impact assessment effectiveness:**

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

A holistic approach to impact assessment wherever possible (unless there is a specific need to undertake a particular type of impact assessment e.g. health impact assessment) in order to achieve sustainability. This would support the integration of critical conditions, values, preferences and criteria into the assessment process and ultimately the decision making process.

**(ii) challenges/barriers to IA effectiveness**

Awareness, training and acceptance of undertaking sustainability assessment as an important tool in creating and generating higher levels of sustainability.

**(iii) how these barriers might be overcome**

Legislation that requires deliberative sustainability assessment on significant projects and ongoing and existing programs, plans and policies.

**(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)**

Science has an important role to play in providing information that supports decision making processes but ultimately impact assessment and the final outcomes generated, are a collection of all the values, preferences, assumptions and judgements that have been incorporated into the process. In science, there will always be limitations of uncertainty and value judgements and assumptions will be made on the validity of the data and outcomes. All in all, I would say that science is of relative importance but in line with the weight of the decision to be made and its long term potential impact.