The influence of social media in Australian EIA

A Western Australian Case Study

Anthony Sutton and Donna Weston

@EPA_WA #IAIA15
Overview

• Global and Regional context
• Social media – the landscape
• The methodology – using a case study
• The Western Australian approach
• EIA and social media in 2014
• Analysis
• Conclusion
Regional Context - Western Australia

- Meelup Beach, near Dunsborough
- Salmon Holes, Albany
- Purnululu National Park

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Broad social media landscape

adapted from Cromity, 2012
and Nagle and Pope, 2013
Why use a case study approach?

• “How” or “Why” questions
  How effective is social media in positively influencing assessment processes and outcomes?

• Limited control over behavioural events
  We had no control over the community’s use of or influence through social media.

• Focus on contemporary phenomenon within real-life context.
  The focus was on the use of social media in relation to a number of assessments during 2014.
EIA in WA during 2014

Thousands of Cottesloe to fight for killer sharks

Great White Hope

Iron ore mine faces opposition

Comment period on sharks

Activists call for scrutiny

Have your say on cull

EPA rejects Sino expansion

Any further mining (to Mungada Ridge) will result in serious and irreversible impacts

Paul Vogel, EPA chairman

www.epa.wa.gov.au
The Western Australian approach

Public opportunity to provide comment and submissions at defined stages during the assessment process, e.g:

- Three levels of assessment:
  - Public Environmental Review
  - Assessment on Proponent Information – A (readily managed)
  - Assessment on Proponent Information – B (environmentally unacceptable)
The Western Australian approach

The EPA’s consultation hub:
- central point to manage all consultation activity;
- create consultations and surveys;
- publish and promote EIA consultations;
- analyse and report on responses; and
- feed back to the public.

https://consultation.epa.wa.gov.au

- Email autoresponse with unique ID for respondents to recover their submissions
- Subscriber mailing list for notification of any new items
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The EPA’s engagement in social media

adapted from Cromity, 2012 and Nagle and Pope, 2013
Social media in EIA in 2014

81 consultations
- Infrastructure: 178
- Iron ore mining: 569
- Sand mining: 27
- Gold mining: 209
- Uranium: 197
- Oil and gas: 45
- Waste to energy: 151
- Shark mitigation: 14,794
- Clearing: 27
- Other: 138

16,335 formal responses (hub)

Proforma responses
On-line campaigns and petitions on sharks (~25,000), iron ore mining on high biodiversity BIFs, uranium mining; organised community responses on (for example) gold mining, waste to energy

On Twitter:
- @EPA_WA: 319 followers, 271 tweets
  - 26 tweets
  - 214 conversations

On Facebook:
- #NoWASharkCull
  - 1,496 followers, 3,570 tweets

www.epa.wa.gov.au
How effective is social media in influencing EIA?

### Principles of EIA Best Practice (IAIA 1999)

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How effective is social media in influencing EIA?

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Conclusion

The Western Australian experience has shown that social media influences the EIA process through:

i. communicating a clear purpose
ii. enabling efficiency and cost-effectiveness
iii. allowing greater adaptability
iv. providing broader participation
v. enhancing credibility
vi. showing greater transparency

L'esperienza australiana occidentale ha dimostrato che i social media influenzano il processo di valutazione dell'impatto ambientale attraverso:

- scopo chiaro
- efficiente e conveniente
- maggiore adattabilità
- partecipazione più ampia
- credibilità migliorare
- maggiore trasparenza

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Take Home Message (or template)

Adapted from Cromity, 2012 and Nagle and Pope, 2013

Tailored for EPA in Western Australia, 2014

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Grazie Mille !

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