



Effective Strategic Environmental Assessment

What might it look like?

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The Western Australian context



- One third of the continent
- 2.5 M square kilometres
- 2,400 km north to south
- Population 2.3 M - 3/4 in Perth
- Isolation and distance
- Extraordinary natural resources

Strategic environmental assessments in WA



- Government initiatives
 - System reports of the 1970's – nature reserves
 - Bush Forever – land for housing and nature
 - Midwest strategic review – biodiversity protection and mining
 - Kimberley LNG hub – 40+sites, preferred site
 - 2031 urban planning

Strategic environmental assessments in WA



- Private initiatives
 - Alcoa Willowdale – decades of mining (1978)
 - BHP Mining Area C – 14 pits (1998)
 - Goldmines on Lake Lefroy – 12+ pits (2000)

What are the benefits to proponents and the State?



- better understanding of cumulative impacts
- fill important knowledge gaps
- address multiple actions (eg. mine pits, water sources)
- early problem solving
- inform site selection and design, where there is more influence for less cost
- good fit with strategic and regional land use planning
- efficient use of scarce resources

Project planning



- A hierarchy of decision-making
 - concept selection (includes location)
 - front end engineering design
 - final investment decision
 - detailed design
 - construction
 - operation
- = increasing level of detail

Environmental assessment



- A hierarchy of tools
 - EPA policy, guidelines
 - Strategic assessment and advice (no conditions)
 - Strategic proposal assessment, derived proposals
 - Project assessment
 - Works approval to construct project
 - Licence to operate project
- = increasing level of detail

Pre-requisites for strategic approaches



- Certainty of process
- Match approval certainty with available level of detail
- Adequate strategic planning by State and proponents
- Robust regional environmental information
- Balance of specificity and generality around project definition
- Competent predictive modelling
- Sound evidence based policies and guidelines
- Commitment and good will – partnership approach

Future opportunities?



- Urban development on Swan Coastal Plain?
- Long life mining operations in the Pilbara and the Mid-West?
- Infrastructure planning in the Pilbara and the Mid-West
- Long life petroleum operations offshore?
- Long term water supplies?
- Other suggestions?

Limitations?



- Uncertainty about global drivers – economic, greenhouse, pollution etc
- Inadequate information and project definition
- Proponent confidence in process
- Timelines

EPA support



- EPA reform process recognised value of strategic approaches
- EPA strategic plan promotes front-end loading
- Early attention, at wide scale allows flexibility of solutions, at reduced cost to resolve competing interests

Solutions?



- Use project assessment strategically (eg long term mine planning)
- Collect strategic information (eg. EPA SEAK initiative)
- Focus on key development pressure regions and important environmental risks (eg Fortescue Marsh)
- Trust, confidence and goodwill built on working together (eg pre-1996 urban land)

**What must Strategic Environmental
Assessment deliver?**



one thing over all others...

certainty....

.....for all stakeholders.

For more information:



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