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Conducting social and economic impact assessment: a practical guide for regional NRM bodies

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Readers should be aware that some information might be superseded with further scientific studies and evolving technology and industry practices.

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Introduction

Social and Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA) is a process for predicting impacts of a management or policy action. Regional NRM bodies can use this ‘tool’ to help avoid, reduce or manage impacts that may be experienced by a community. These may occur before, during and after the implementation of management actions within regional NRM plans, which result in a change in land use or policy. The purpose of an SEIA is to identify the impacts that might arise from a proposed change to determine if the proposal should become a reality, and if so, what actions should be taken to reduce the negative impacts identified and promote the positive ones. It can also provide advice on which one of a number of options available to a regional NRM body is the most appropriate from an economic and/or social perspective. Clearly, decisions should also be made with consideration of the biophysical environment, and the potential environmental impacts.

This guide offers practical advice to regional NRM bodies in Queensland for undertaking social and economic impact assessments when designing Natural Resource Management (NRM) plans and investment strategies. These can be used in conjunction with Jim Cavaye’s guidelines, “*Integrating Economic and Social Issues in Regional Natural Resource Management Planning*”, which is a significantly more detailed document. The Joint Steering Committee (JSC) has developed requirements for social and economic assessments – *Joint Steering Committee Statement of General Expectations for social and economic assessments undertaken for natural resource management plans (8 April 2003)*. These are outlined in the Cavaye guidelines and reproduced in Appendix 1. This practical guide has been formulated to help meet these requirements, and has been divided into:

- An overview of social and economic impact assessment, including:
 - What are social and economic impacts?
 - What is the social and economic impact assessment process?
 - Why a social and economic impact assessment should be done?
- The importance of involving communities in the impact assessment process;
- Information on conducting a social and economic impact assessment, including:
 - steps in the process;
 - what to do in practice; and
 - advice for incorporating social and economic impact assessment within plans.

An overview of social and economic impact assessment

What are social and economic impacts?

Social and economic impacts are the changes that occur in communities or social groupings, or to individuals, as a result of external change such as environmental, industry or landscape policy changes. They include all the ways in which an individual or society experiences changes to their living, working and leisure environments as a result of policy or development change. Changes may effect:

employment, income, production, way of life, culture, community, political systems, environment, health and well-being, personal and property rights, and fears and aspirations. These impacts may be either positive or negative.

Economic impacts outline the consequences of the policy or investment shift on the way resources are allocated in the community in terms of efficiency and equity. Social impacts include all social and cultural consequences that alter the ways in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organise to meet their needs and generally cope as members of society. It is important to consider any flow on effects from management decisions for the economy and community as a whole. The social and economic must be considered together to gain a full understanding of the impacts.

What is social and economic impact assessment?

Social and economic impact assessment (SEIA) is the process of *predicting* the social and economic impacts that are likely to follow from specific management or policy actions, allowing decision-makers to understand in advance the potential consequences on the human population from a proposed action or policy change.

Social and *economic* impact assessments are interdependent. For example, an increase in unemployment has been identified as an economic impact but has obvious social ramifications and subsequent effects on community well-being. As a result, social and economic impact assessments are frequently conducted together. It is important to make these links as social outcomes are invariably tied to economic change.

Social and economic impacts are also closely entwined with biophysical impacts, making it almost impossible to completely separate the impact assessment processes. Therefore, impact assessment processes should be integrated with the biophysical context in which it is embedded. Importantly, communities and stakeholders must be involved through consultative and participative techniques, in the impact assessment process.

Why do a social and economic impact assessment?

Identifying potential impacts is an important part of the planning process. Planning for natural resource management requires an understanding of the social and economic impacts of proposed management actions. This need arises because management actions identified within the plan will need the support of the community to be successfully carried out. Thus, it is necessary to understand the range of social and economic impacts that may occur. To do this it is essential that the involvement of communities and stakeholders is integrated throughout the impact assessment process.

The SEIA process essentially alerts the various stakeholders in an issue – community, planners, government and regional NRM bodies – as to the likely benefits and costs of a proposed project or policy change. These may be social and/or economic in nature. Knowing these impacts should assist decision-makers in determining whether the

proposal should proceed or which alternative option is preferable. Thus, SEIA can be seen as a *prospective* or *anticipatory* decision-making tool rather than *retrospective* analysis, as well as a way to facilitate negotiation amongst interest groups.

The most useful outcome of an SEIA is to develop mitigation techniques to overcome the potential negative impacts of policies and developments. There can also be emphasis on identifying ways that benefits of the development or policy can be increased.

In summary, SEIA allows decision-makers to:

- Identify affected and interested people;
- Facilitate and co-ordinate participation;
- Document the local historical setting and cultural context;
- Develop an understanding of local values;
- Predict likely impacts from management actions or policy changes;
- Develop and assess alternative ways to achieve a desired outcome/target;
- Identify and implement mitigation strategies to minimise negative and enhance positive impacts;
- Develop strategies in the community to deal with impacts while raising community consciousness to better understand the changes;
- Contribute to skills and knowledge development – capacity building;
- Deal with impacts as they do arise; and
- Develop monitoring programs to identify un-predicted impacts and keep track of predicted ones.

Involving Stakeholders and Communities in SEIA

Regional NRM bodies should actively attempt to engage all stakeholders, regional communities and sub-communities throughout the assessment process. Ultimately, a properly conducted SEIA has the potential to allow people to play a direct and active role in natural resource management decision-making, reducing uncertainty and conflict, and enhancing the benefits of the policy change. Through a considered community engagement process stakeholder groups can become informed about the proposal and the potential ways it might affect them, both positive and negative. In turn, regional NRM bodies become better informed as to the likely impacts on stakeholder groups, to indicate the likely community reaction.

The public participation process also allows insight into community values, attitudes and priorities towards NRM. Thus, regional NRM bodies can prepare themselves for, and even avoid, any antagonism and hostility by comprehensively understanding their community/ies and stakeholders. This will help to avoid community protest and reduce delays in the implementation of proposed changes and management actions. This in turn can lead to significant savings on project expenditure due to reduced impacts and higher community acceptance. Ultimately, if an action or policy is

developed with consideration of social, economic and biophysical needs and expectations, the likelihood of its success is greatly increased.

Aside from the practical reasons for involving the public, there is a growing acceptance that stakeholders and communities have a basic right to participate in decisions about changes which may affect them. By ensuring that all stakeholders and sectors of the community are involved, there is some ability to redress social injustices that frequently occur in highly politicised decision-making environments. An SEIA which embraces public participation empowers a community by giving it an opportunity to actively contribute to its own future, while embedding a sense of ownership over social and natural resources and resource problems.

It is imperative that all attempts are made to include Indigenous peoples in the NRM process in a participative manner. Please refer to the “*Guidelines for involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in: the establishment of NRM bodies; and the development of the regional NRM plan and investment strategy*”, which provides guidance for the appropriate inclusion of Indigenous people.

It is important to acknowledge that SEIAs will not necessarily lead to perfect solutions and united, satisfied communities. Individuals and different sectors of society will always have differing views on development and policy, and even the most detailed and conscientious SEIA is unlikely to change this. However, by identifying key problems before they arise and by involving the community in both the problem identification as well as the problem solving processes, negative impacts can be reduced or at least managed for and negotiated.

Conducting an SEIA

There is an institutionally accepted process for conducting SEIA. The detailed list of steps in the process follows but can be summarised as 3 distinct phases: impact assessment, the decision, and impact management.

It is recommended that regional NRM bodies strongly consider seeking assistance, guidance and expertise of social science and economic practitioners for social and economic impact assessments if suitable expertise does not exist ‘in-house’. This expectation is identified by the *Joint Steering Committee* (JSC, 2003: Appendix 1). It is the responsibility of regional NRM bodies to identify where assistance is needed.

The 11 steps in the SEIA process, detailed in the following section, are:

Step 1: Prepare a social and economic profile for the region

Step 2: Identify and clearly articulate the management ‘target’ and consider alternative management actions

Step 3: Determine whether the proposal requires an SEIA

Step 4: Conduct a preliminary assessment

Step 5: Re-examine the social and economic profile

Step 6: Estimate the future potential impacts of the proposal

Step 7: Analyse the impacts

Step 8: Develop mitigation measures

Step 9: Compare alternative management actions to achieve the desired outcomes

Step 10: Recommend appropriate action

Step 11: Ongoing monitoring and evaluation

An SEIA should include a social and economic profile of the community or region that will be affected by the development or policy change. A social and economic profile basically tells a ‘story’ of the community, identifying a wide range of information such as demographic information and trends, historical and economic characteristics and community resources (see “*Compiling regional social and economic profiles: a practical guide for regional NRM bodies in Queensland*”)

Some data for an SEIA will be already available for regional NRM bodies and can be collated from the Queensland Regional Body Information System (QRBIS) the Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS) or other state and local government agencies, and through the public participation process. A public participation process during an SEIA is vital to engage stakeholders and to determine what the community perceive as the likely impacts of the proposed change. This can be done by inviting submissions to publicly released documents, holding forums and workshops and conducting surveys of stakeholders to collect more detailed and in-depth data.

An SEIA should also examine other less measurable data referred to as the ‘social condition’. These are the subjective indicators of quality of life, which reflect feelings, expectations and satisfactions of individuals within the social setting. While these factors are intangible and difficult to accurately represent through most methodologies, they can illustrate quite accurately the general feeling towards the policy or management action proposal and therefore often offer the most illuminating perspectives with respect to impacts. The public consultation process is the most effective way of identifying these social conditions.

While this document discusses the process of a single SEIA, in reality, regional NRM bodies will most likely have to conduct many impact assessments, for all major targets and/or actions with potential impacts. However, the extent and depth of these assessments might vary significantly, depending on the significance of the potential impacts, and the likelihood of their occurring. The appropriate extent and depth of the impact assessment process will have to be determined by the regional NRM body, according to the estimated/predicted extent of potential impact, and the availability of resources.

Practical Steps in the SEIA Process

This section outlines the ‘steps’ to be taken in the SEIA process and includes practical suggestions for completing them.

STEP 1: PREPARE A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROFILE FOR THE REGION

This should include any relevant sub-regions, communities of interest etc. that will enhance the planning process. This process should be started within the Natural Resource Management plan, however it is an ongoing process and should be continuously added to and enhanced. See “*Compiling regional social and economic profiles: a practical guide for regional NRM bodies in Queensland*”, for details on

how to prepare a regional profile, the sort of social and economic characteristics which can be collected and key sources of the data.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY AND CLEARLY ARTICULATE THE MANAGEMENT ‘TARGET’ AND CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

There may be a range of potential management action options to achieve the desired management target. Each option should be considered within impact assessment processes to ensure that the most appropriate social and economic outcomes are achieved while still reaching the desired natural resource management target.

Regional NRM bodies should ask

- What is the management target trying to achieve?
- What problem is it trying to ‘solve’?
- What are the objectives of the target?
- What is the scope of the target – geographic or otherwise?
- What alternative management actions may achieve the desired outcome?

STEP 3: DETERMINE WHETHER THE MANAGEMENT ACTION/TARGET REQUIRES AN SEIA

Essentially, if there is likely to be any social or economic impacts on the region, or communities and/or sub-communities within it, then it is necessary to conduct an SEIA. The depth of the SEIA would be dependent on the significance of the potential impacts. According to the *Joint Steering Committee Statement of General Expectations for social and economic assessments undertaken for natural resource management plans (8 April 2003)*, the JSC would expect more detailed and robust assessments where the potential social or economic impacts are significant. At this stage it would almost certainly be appropriate to conduct desktop research to determine the likelihood of impacts occurring.

Regional NRM bodies should ask

- Is anyone likely to be affected?
- Is there any likelihood of social or economic impact arising from the proposal?
- Are the impacts likely to be inequitably distributed between different sectors of society?
- Is there a legislative requirement to conduct an SEIA either independently or as a component of an environmental impact assessment?

Keep in mind that many impacts cannot be identified in these initial stages. Many impacts are unique to a community and therefore cannot be predicted without an SEIA. As this decision-making process is subjective it should be decided on in consultation with key stakeholders. If the proposal is likely to impact, or even be perceived to impact, ANY stakeholder or community group in a negative way than some level of SEIA should be considered.

When deciding whether to conduct an SEIA, regional NRM bodies should consider that the assessment process serves to identify impacts and allow mitigation and enhancement measures to be identified. Conflict in itself is not something to be avoided as it allows people to convey their feelings and perceptions. Additionally, if impacts arise in the future, the regional NRM body has some defence that they did conduct an assessment process to identify impacts. Alternatively, the SEIA process might identify benefits which can be used to increase the proposal's attraction to the community.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the regional NRM body to determine whether an SEIA should be conducted on any given management action or target. Given the time and resource constraints of regional NRM bodies, the decision whether or not to conduct an SEIA should be based on management priorities, likelihood of impact, and severity of potential impact.

What to do in practice

- At a minimum, desktop research should be conducted to determine the likelihood of impacts occurring
- Conduct a 'mini' consultation process
- Hold meetings with invited representatives to gain some perspective into potential impacts
- Identify possible stakeholders and interview a small sample

STEP 4: CONDUCT A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

The potential issues of concern and benefit need to be identified, as well as all stakeholders. This is an initial assessment that should not attempt, as yet, to determine the *level* of impact, it should just be trying to identify all of the issues and affected parties to 'get all the cards on the table'.

Regional NRM bodies should ask

- What is the range of social and economic impacts resulting from the proposed management action?
- What are the likely social and economic benefits?
- Is there any factor unique to the region which might effect the level or type of impact?
- Who are the likely affected parties and what is their level of contribution to the region?
- What flow-on benefits or impacts might be expected, and which groups might be affected?
- What are the likely geographic boundaries of predicted impacts?
- What are the linkages between social and economic issues and the biophysical asset being managed?

It is important to realise that an SEIA process may not identify all stakeholders. This is where the social and economic profile will be useful to more fully understand the community and its strengths and weaknesses, and to identify those community sectors who may have an interest or 'stake' in a proposal but who may be too disenfranchised or crisis impacted to engage. It is vital that these sectors are engaged – often it is these very groups who are most impacted on. Strategic techniques will need to be selected to target these community sectors.

What to do in practice

- Examine the social and economic profile to identify communities of interest and communities under threat, to allow insight into the best means of public communication. Knowing your community gives you insight into how they might react. It also allows you to identify those community sectors who might not have the capacity to engage.
- Search for previous examples of similar proposals in other communities. This will allow the prediction of many of the impacts as issues do tend to recur throughout most communities. This can NOT be solely relied on as some of the most significant impacts may be community specific.
- Identify previous experiences of conflict within the community. Has there been a previous proposal or development that the community have supported or not? If so, it allows the identification of community values – what does this community consider important to them? Again, it does not give the full story but it does allow identification of some community values.
- Engage in a public consultation process, holding public meetings, forums, workshops and/or interviews designed to target all community sectors. These need to be very broadly encompassing. Some data can be gathered via a desk-top process.

STEP 5: RE-EXAMINE THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROFILE

Determine if there is any missing data or information that might be useful to include for this specific management action/target. Remember that the original community profile was a *generic* one, developed without a particular action, or proposal in mind.

STEP 6: ESTIMATE THE FUTURE POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSAL

Step 4 should have identified a broad sweep of potential impacts, which should now be examined in detail. This is an important part of the impact assessment process, when it is crucial to actively engage the community in order to accurately estimate potential impacts.

Regional NRM bodies should ask

- What impacts might occur – positives and negatives?
 - Will there be impacts on employment and/or wages/incomes?
 - What will be the effects on prices, markets and competition?
 - What will be the effects on industry production and growth?
 - What will be the effects on equity and distribution of income and wealth?

- What will be the effects on international competitiveness and trade?
- What will be the effects on the regional economy?
- Will there be the impacts on community values? *cont...*

Regional NRM bodies should ask, cont...

- Will there be impacts on social and economic infrastructure?
- Will community services be affected/improved?
- Will there be impacts on subpopulations (e.g. low income households)?
- Will there be impacts on social resilience?
- How likely are the impacts to occur?
- Who are the winners and losers?
- How are they likely to be affected and to what severity?
- How long will the impacts last?
- Will there be cumulative impacts? A management action on its own may not have significant impact but when combined with external influences as well as other management actions, there may be significant *cumulative* impact.
- What 'flow-on' effects might occur?
- What might happen if the proposal does NOT go ahead? A picture of the community *without* the proposal and *with* the proposal should be compiled.

All impacts (immediate, medium term, long term, positive and negative) need to be identified, described, and where possible evaluated against a 'do nothing more' scenario. Many social impacts particularly, are difficult or impossible to quantify. Similarly, monetary values are difficult to determine and even the extent of the community who will be impacted may not be able to be identified. However, even if a numeric level of impact cannot be determined the impact may still be significant. For example, a community might be concerned that a proposal will impact on a specific historical value that might have no direct economic value, but still holds significant community value. These impacts need to be included. We may not be able to prioritise them, but we can still identify them.

It is important to consider flow-on effects as these are sometimes the most severe impacts experienced by a community or region. For example, the 'impact' of an industry closure may be the loss of jobs. The 'flow-on effects' may be the closure of schools and the loss of community services as the population base decreases, and a collapse in community resilience and cohesiveness as the community absorbs increasing stress and divisiveness. These effects may not be measurable but they are significant and the likelihood of these should be identified.

What to do in practice

A comprehensive community engagement process should underpin the entire impact assessment process, utilising as many of these options as appropriate:

- Request public submissions on the proposal
- Request comment on the identified impacts. Does the community view each impact as an important/significant one? Is it an impact that they are prepared to tolerate to receive the benefits?

- Conduct targeted consultation with marginalised or disenfranchised stakeholder groups identified in the social and economic profile (step 1).
- Conduct public surveys *cont...*

What to do in practice, cont...

- Hold public meetings
- Conduct workshops with identified stakeholders
- Hold qualitative interviews with key stakeholders
- If more quantitative results are desired then exploratory open-ended interviews with key stakeholders can be followed by a closed, relatively short questionnaire to be conducted with a much larger number of people to test the results.

STEP 7: ANALYSE THE IMPACTS

After identifying the range of impacts that are predictable (there may be unpredicted impacts which still need to be managed for when they arise) it is now necessary to assess the level of importance of each impact to the community. Because many impacts will not be quantifiable it is impossible to rank most impacts without making subjective judgements. This should therefore be done in consultation with affected stakeholders.

It is important to recognise the importance of community *perception* versus what the regional NRM body may consider to be the *reality*, of an impact. Community perceptions are sometimes based on misunderstandings, or lack of scientific knowledge, and may therefore determine or bias community attitudes in some respects. However, at least to some extent perceptions must be managed as if they are the reality – if a community or stakeholder group believes it to be an impact it must be managed for accordingly. This may simply amount to an education and re-information strategy to ensure that people have access to the appropriate information on which to base their perceptions.

There may be other external changes impacting on the community at the same time as the management action. It is not always easy to differentiate between the changes resulting from the management action and the effects of other unrelated economic or social factors. The type of SEIA analysis that enables differentiation of these impact is ‘with’ and ‘without’ project analysis.

Consider and weight criteria such as:

- Impacts that are separated from impacts of unrelated change;
- Magnitude;
- Duration of impact;
- Number of people affected;
- Current conditions;
- Future conditions;
- Local policy goals, aspirations and values; and
- The ‘greater good’ ie. Are the regional or community level impacts acceptable given the expected benefits of the proposal for the wider population?

Regional NRM bodies should demonstrate

- Whether the impact is positive or negative for *each* relevant stakeholder group;
- The degree of impact (low, medium or high level);
- The duration of impact (short, medium or long term);
- Whether there may be cumulative impacts when the management action is combined with other actions; and
- Whether the impact is likely to lessen/increase over time.

These should be quantified if possible, but should not be discounted if this is not possible.

There are several assessment techniques which can be used to identify and demonstrate the impacts. An outline of the techniques is included in the box below. These techniques require a level of expertise which may demand outside assistance.

What to do in practice

- **Auditing:** An audit or account examines the broad social and economic impacts of an organisation or a government and/or community project. It is usually used to determine those areas where improvements could be made to reduce negative impacts.
- **Social indicators:** This is a technique which is used to monitor changes in particular social areas, which takes place over a period of time. By using this technique we can monitor quality of life or social well-being of social factors which are hard to quantify. This technique is most valuable as a monitoring device to reduce long-term impact.
- **Cost-benefit analysis:** This method lists the benefits and costs associated with a proposal and attempts to quantify them in monetary terms. These are then discounted to estimate the net present value (NPV) of the proposal. The options which provide a positive (NPV) and benefit-to-cost ratio can then be identified and options can be ranked.
- **Cost-effectiveness analysis:** This is similar to the cost-benefit analysis but used when all the costs and benefits cannot be quantified in monetary terms. The method is used to identify the least costly means of achieving a specific goal.
- **Multi-criteria analysis:** This is a technique which attempts to analyse the effects of a project or development proposal by considering a range of criteria. Such criteria might be social effects, economic impacts and environmental impacts. It requires weighting the criteria by some means to determine the final decision.
- **Impact display table:** This is a table which lists and describes the various benefits and costs that have been identified as possibly resulting from the proposal. Rather than weighting impacts against each other they are simply displayed on a table, identifying the likely stakeholder groups who will be

Impact Display Table cont...

affected and possibly what level of impacts are estimated for each group (eg. low, medium, high). This paints a picture of the impacts and allows an overall decision regarding the proposal. It also identifies priority areas for mitigation. This allows some comparison and identification of priority areas without needing to be overly subjective. As this technique does not require measurement of the impacts it is an effective technique when resources are limiting the extent of the impact assessment process.

STEP 8: DEVELOP MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT MEASURES

Evaluating the impacts should take into account measures for managing impacts that might help prevent or alleviate negative social impacts, build community resilience, and enhance positive impacts. So, even if an impact is considered to be high by the community, it might be relatively easy to develop mitigation to overcome it, thereby virtually removing it as a deciding factor.

Mitigation is the adjustments that are made to reduce risks and unwanted effects, while enhancing the potential benefits.

STEP 9: COMPARE ALTERNATIVE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE THE DESIRED OUTCOMES

Step 2 involved identifying the range of potential management actions which would achieve the desired management target. These should be compared and contrasted to determine the most economically and socially desirable action which will still manage the environmental issue or action originally proposed.

STEP 10: RECOMMEND APPROPRIATE ACTION/S

When all of the impacts, benefits, potential mitigation measures and alternatives have been weighed up, an appropriate action should be recommended.

The social and economic impacts need to be considered together with the environmental information available to ensure the best possible outcome. Regional NRM bodies need to consider whether an action should proceed if the impacts have been identified as significant. If it is decided to pursue an action which has impacts, mitigation and enhancement techniques should be identified to deal with the impacts. Regional NRM bodies may consider incentives as a means of easing impacts.

STEP 11: ONGOING MONITORING AND EVALUATION

After actions have been implemented it is necessary to develop and maintain an ongoing monitoring and evaluation program.

In the long-term regional NRM bodies should be determining:

- Whether predicted impacts and benefits have eventuated;
- Whether unpredicted impacts and benefits have arisen;
- Whether mitigation measures are effective;
- Whether further mitigation measures need to be identified;
- Whether the action has had the intended environmental benefit.

Incorporating social and economic impact assessment within NRM plans

As consideration of social and economic impacts is an expectation of the JSC (JSC, 2003 – appendix 1), it is important that the assessment process be transparent and well documented. Regional NRM bodies should ensure that they:

- Use accepted methodologies; document their methodology; and, develop a clear justification for the use of their methodology. If engaging consultants for the assessment process regional NRM bodies should develop an agreed process for such documentation;
- Fully consult and engage the range of stakeholders; document the participative process; and document and justify how stakeholder input was incorporated into the planning process;
- Clearly and fully document the range of impacts identified during the assessment process, including management action options which were not pursued; and, provide a clear rationale for why a particular management action was chosen, and how impacts will be mitigated.

Summary

SEIA can act as a means of identifying how industries and communities might be affected by projects and policies developed and implemented by regional NRM bodies. By following the basic procedures outlined in these guidelines and involving the public in the SEIA and decision-making process, regional NRM bodies can both identify potential impacts, while also avoiding conflict of proposed management actions. Ultimately, SEIA can help to sustain communities through in-depth consideration of management policies, actions, and targets.

These guidelines have outlined the series of ‘steps’ that should be followed in SEIA, and provided practical suggestions for regional NRM bodies to develop and implement SEIA as a component of both their NRM plans and investment strategies.

Contacts:

For further information and assistance on social and economic impact assessment please contact Jeanette Stanley (07 32247741) or Beth Clouston (07 32247734) at the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, for social and economic advice respectively.

Useful Readings

Becker, H and Vanclay, F. (eds) 2003: *The international handbook of social impact assessment*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham.

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Appendix 1: Joint Steering Committee Statement of General Expectations for Social and Economic Assessments Undertaken for Natural Resource Management Plans, 2003

The Queensland/Commonwealth NAP Joint Steering Committee (JSC) has provided a general set of expectations for social and economic assessment and its incorporation into natural resource management plans. Key requirements are:

1. The assessment undertaken is cognisant of the relevant sections of the NAP bilateral agreement and guidelines for the development of plans.
2. Without requiring the use of any particular information or methodologies, the assessment should demonstrate the use of broadly accepted relevant information and methodologies. Information on this issue can be sourced from available guidance products, any other relevant documentation and professional advice / input from recognised practitioners in the fields of social sciences and economics.
3. Where strategies and proposed actions are likely to have significant impacts, advice should be sought on appropriate approaches to assessment. This advice may include, but is not limited to, problem specification, the revision of data, assistance with the development of terms of reference for assessments and peer review of assessments.
4. Where regional bodies do not have any “in-house” expertise in social and economic assessment, the JSC will seek evidence of the astute use of recognised social science and economic practitioners in the development of the Plan.
5. Social and economic issues should be considered, and where necessary, specifically incorporated at each stage of the Plan development process (plan scoping, target setting, strategy development, investment strategy development, and monitoring and evaluation).
6. It is expected that the social and economic assessment will become more detailed and robust as the development of the Plan progresses, particularly with respect to investments that may have significant impacts.
7. a social and economic profile of the region should be undertaken to identify general social, cultural and economic trends and to enable the determination of any impacts of proposed investments. This profile should include trend information wherever possible. The profile should demonstrate an understanding of any social and economic dependencies on and linkages to the use and health of the resource base.

8. The social and economic profile of the region including trends should help establish the 'do nothing more' or base case against which the impacts of proposed actions and investment strategies are evaluated. This should be clearly described in terms of taking no further action apart from a continuation of current effort.
9. Where it is apparent that there are potential material social and / or economic impacts of any proposed investment, the affected parties (individuals, industries, regions, communities, cultural groups etc) should be identified. Immediate, medium term and long term positive and negative impacts should be considered. Each impact should be described, and where possible, evaluated, preferably against a 'do nothing more' base case.
10. Where a number of options are available to achieve a desired outcome identified in the Plan's investment strategy, evidence will be sought that the relative social and economic impacts (including potential trade-offs) of each option are identified and evaluated.
11. Evidence will be required that affected parties have been consulted and any social and economic issues raised by them have been appropriately considered and incorporated into the assessment.
12. As a general rule, the JSC would expect a more detailed and robust assessment where the potential social or economic impacts are significant (ie. the greater the potential impact, the greater JSC's expectation for a more detailed and robust assessment).
13. All assessments should be transparent, clearly documenting:
 - The information used;
 - The methodologies used and their rationale;
 - The specific application of any analysis techniques used and the assumptions made;
 - How any input / feedback from stakeholders was considered and incorporated into the assessment, and
 - The findings of the assessment, including clarification of the likely accuracy of the findings.