



Environment Institute of
Australia and New Zealand Inc.

ABSTRACT SPECIFICATIONS

Exploring the effect of environmental assessment

Presenting Author: Claire Gronow

Organisation: Griffith University

Country: Australia

Email: c.gronow@griffith.edu.au

Co-Author: Angus Morrison-Saunders

Organisation: Murdoch University and North West University

Country: Australia and South Africa

Email: a.morrison-saunders@murdoch.edu.au

Co-Author: Lex Brown

Organisation: Griffith University

Country: Australia

Email: lex.brown@griffith.edu.au

Co-Author: Peter Davey

Organisation: Griffith University

Country: Australia

Email: peter.davey@griffith.edu.au

Abstract:

Does the requirement to undertake environmental assessment (EA) have an effect on development and if so, what causes this effect? Arguably the most wide-reaching policy initiative ever, EA applies in jurisdictions across the globe as an appraisal tool for development. EA was intended to link a procedural mandate to consider the environmental consequences of development with more substantive policy outcomes, ultimately aimed at

enhanced environmental protection and wellbeing. However, the desired policy outcomes were vague and aspirational and while the procedural basis of EA has evolved strongly, a fundamental shift in the values and principles underlying decision-making about environment and development is not apparent. However, the requirement to undertake EA has been shown to have a range of effects. Procedural requirements promote rigour in assessment and transparency and accountability in public decision-making and are seen to promote and support governance. The core predictive activity of EA provides information on consequences to proponents and decision-makers. EA promotes design modifications and mitigation measures that reduce environmental impacts of development. Public participation stimulates debate and discourse regarding development. Decision-makers must respond to information generated through EA prior to making a statutory decision about development. Finally, organisations may transform knowledge gained through the procedural and information generating aspects of EA into ongoing action with resultant organisational transformation. While these effects have been observed, there is considerable inconsistency in outcomes and further research into the causal mechanisms by which EA has an effect is warranted. An inductive/constructivist approach is proposed to elicit the experiences and perceptions of purposively-selected informants representing regulator, consultant, proponent and activist perspectives. Semi-structured interviews will be undertaken in Australia and Indonesia, and analysed for insight into the effects that the requirement to undertake EA has on development and the causal mechanisms underlying these effects.