Strategic Environmental Assessment:
Back to Basics

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SEA: Back to basics ….

- What's SEA got to do with it?
- What do we *focus* on?
- How do we *strategically* assess?
- What is an *adequate* outcome?
- What do we measure to facilitate *adaptive management?*

- Using examples of SEAs of the Great Barrier Reef, Tasmanian Midlands Irrigation Scheme and BHPB's Iron Ore Mining in the Pilbara

What's SEA got to do with it ?

- Fundamentally SEAs examine impacts of implementing a Plan, Policy or Program
- Occur earlier in the 'development' process with potential for a landscape-scale view
- Intuitively SEAS are a more powerful approach ……
- Seizing this potential depends on framing and identifying alternatives

What do we *focus* on?

- Both a strength and a weakness of SEA is the breadth of assessment
- Consequently we need a defensible focus: Values [ala VECs =Valued Environmental Components from Canter and Ross's works on Cumulative Impact Assessment]
- Need to identify and understand the likely impacts on key *receptors* that are valued by the community; valuation may be statutory or implicit

Values for the Great Barrier Reef

- In 2014 a comprehensive strategic assessment of the adequacy of 'program(s)' of management and decision making to protect the values of Reef
- GBRMPA identified the current and desired condition and trend for 62 Environmental Values and 20 Ecological Processes as the basis of the SEA

Tasmanian Midlands Irrigation Scheme Values

- Assessed the application of existing farm management planning modules to identify and protect critically endangered grasslands and other listed threatened species under national environmental law

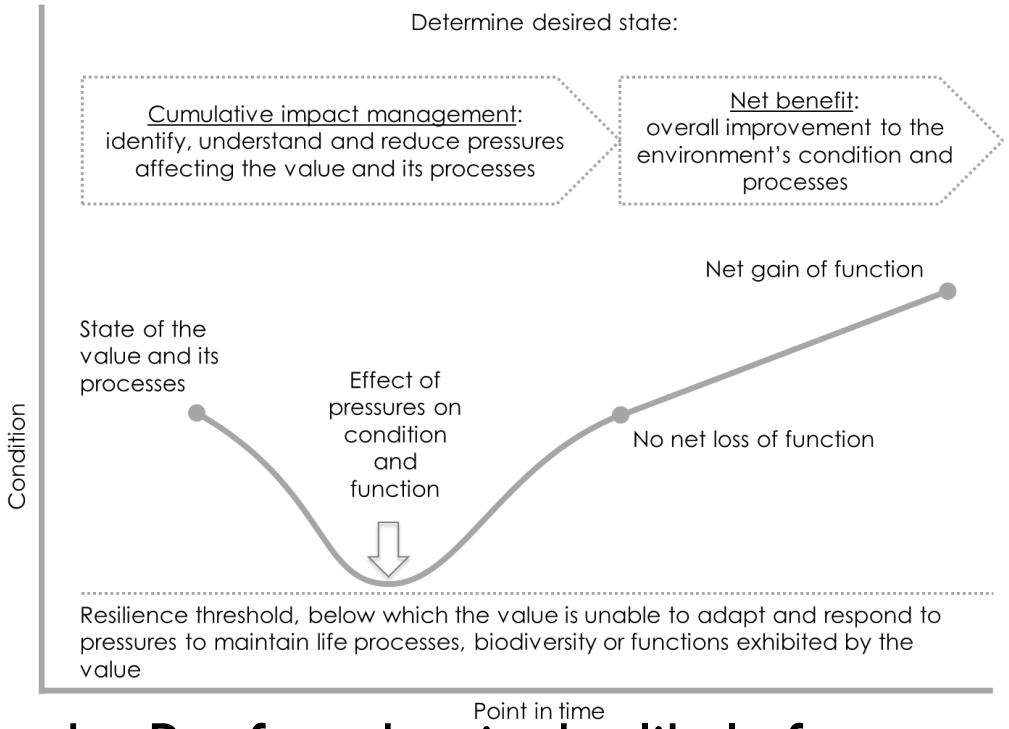
In the Pilbara BHPB

- documented how its forward mining program would identify, avoid, mitigate and offset impacts on nominated high value ecological assets and listed species

How do we *strategically* assess?

- Taking a systems view from the perspective of the value(s) and usually at a broader scale in time and space….
  - What alternatives are there to the Plan, Policy or Program?
  - How can we avoid impacts on values ?
  - Mitigate … reduce, redesign, restore? [iterate!]
  - And then and only then, what are the options for [strategically] offsetting impacts on the value(s)?

What is an *adequate* outcome?



- For the Reef = what is the likely future condition of the identified value/ process compared to the desired condition for that value?

How we measure *adequacy*?

- Apply a systems analysis to focus measurement and reporting on critical decision factors for the value
- In Tassie SEA parameters were to have
  - No impact on critically endangered grasslands
  - No significant impact on other matters of national environmental significance and
  - To protect catchment scale water quality indicators
  - Assessed by auditing 15% of farms annually and regional water quality monitoring program

How do we adaptively manage?

- Use systems analysis to highlight areas for alternative action if measurements indicate value is not tracking as assessed and/or moving towards desired outcome
- What are additional measures that can be applied to improve trajectory for the value?
- Think innovatively about optional approaches = In the Pilbara BHPB is reducing a range of threatening processes on the values

Recommendation to EIANZ

- Foster good practice through raising awareness of the pivotal role for nominated values in SEA
- Let's get a really good turnout and discussion at tomorrow morning's Roundtable
- See you there !

How do we adaptively manage?