

What is impact assessment?

Impact assessment is used to assess and improve proposed policies, programmes, plans, or projects, inform decision-making, and understand and manage the effects of social, environmental and economic change. In particular, it comprises two key activities:

- first, *foreseeing* the social, cultural, biophysical, and other relevant effects of proposals; this involves the identification, prediction, and evaluation of the significant beneficial or adverse effects;
- second, *managing* the significant effects of proposals; this may involve modifying a proposal to maximise beneficial effects, and minimise or avoid adverse effects; it also often involves the use of monitoring and other post-implementation studies to help manage effects in the long term.

Depending on the context, impact assessment can involve a range of methods from the social and natural sciences - data analysis, observation, interviewing, focus group discussion, experimentation and modelling. Impact assessment is noted for encouraging participation by the people affected by change in the assessment and management process.

The objectives of impact assessment

- To ensure that social and biophysical considerations are explicitly addressed and incorporated into decision making processes.
- To promote social justice and cultural integrity in the management of natural resources.
- To ensure a long-term perspective on managing the effects of proposals.
- To protect the capacity of natural systems and promote sustainable development.

Impact assessment in practice...

Impact assessment is practised in many contexts in New Zealand; these are a few examples:

- It is used internally by public and private sector organisations alike. For example, firms reducing staff numbers may carry out a *social assessment* to help manage the effects on employees.
- Government agencies developing policy use a range of *strategic assessment* approaches and methods to explore the pros and cons of policy options.
- Many runanga produce *cultural impact assessments* to make sure resource developers understand the concerns of Maori. Increasingly they are also turning to *health impact assessment* in working with funding authorities on issues of Maori health.
- Regional and district councils require *assessments of environmental effect* (AEE) in applications for resource consents and permits under the Resource Management Act.
- The Department of Conservation uses *environmental (including social) impact assessment* when assessing recreation concessions on the Crown conservation estate, and making decisions on national parks and marine reserves.
- The Environmental Risk Management Authority has included environmental impact assessment and *risk assessment* into its approval processes.
- *Social impact assessment* is an important part of the process managed by the Casino Control Authority.

There is, then, a diverse community of impact assessment *practitioners*, and NZAIA has been established to serve the needs of that community.

In addition, many people work **with** impact assessment: some people, including individuals and interest groups, need to be able to review and comment on assessments, others need to manage impact assessment activities, or to implement their finding and recommendations.

There is also an important educational and research dimension to impact assessment, involving academics and students from a variety of institutions and disciplines, often working with practitioners on practical problems in impact assessment.

NZAIA draws members from all these areas of interest.

Te Kahui Kaitiaki

The NZAIA recognises the pivotal role of the Tangata Whenua of Aotearoa in relation to the kaitiakitanga of the mauri of Papatuanuku and Ranginui (the sustainable life-giving force of all elements and living things).

Maori wisdom is given acknowledgement in the association through the Te Kahui Kaitiaki - a Maori Caucus - which has been established to assist in the continued growth and development of the NZAIA and the improvement of impact assessment practice at all levels of the organisation.

Further information and membership details for Te Kahui Kaitiaki can be found on the NZAIA web site at <http://www.nzaia.org.nz/kaitiaki/index.htm>.

About NZAIA...

The purpose of the New Zealand Association for Impact Assessment is **to promote the use, and better practice, of impact assessment**. The Association's activities include:

- publication of a quarterly newsletter
- the operation of a web site and an email list, to link members of the IA community
- running an annual conference for practitioners and other interested people on aspects of IA theory and practice in New Zealand
- organising training and professional development
- promoting regional groupings of IA practitioners and encouraging their activities
- advocating on behalf of the IA community
- making submissions on IA matters in public involvement processes

NZAIA evolved out of the ASA (and before that the SIA Network) and maintains an active social assessment component. Since incorporating as NZAIA, the Association has been developing a wider membership, to reflect the diverse community of impact assessment practitioners. Its activities now embrace the full range of IA practices

nzaia

IAIA

NZAIA is an affiliate of the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA), and personal membership of both associations is encouraged.

The IAIA web site is: www.iaia.org

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION REFER:

NZAIA's Web Site : www.nzaia.org.nz
or contact

The Secretary
NZAIA(Inc.)

P.O. Box 2581, Wellington, New Zealand
Email to: sec@nzaia.org.nz

nzaia

∞ Promoting the use of impact assessment to inform decision-making in New Zealand.

∞ Supporting the development of high ethical standards in impact assessment practices.

∞ Keeping practitioners in touch.

∞ Running conferences, training courses, and regional meetings on impact assessment themes.

∞ Representing New Zealand practitioners at the international level.



nzaia

NEW ZEALAND
ASSOCIATION FOR
IMPACT
ASSESSMENT