

Introduction

Like many other parts of the world, the practice of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in both Australia and New Zealand is still emerging and application is not comprehensive yet (McGimpsey and Morgan, 2013; Kelly et al., 2012; Dixon, 2005). In Australia, SEA is applied to plans under Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act of 1999. In New Zealand, Section 32 report is applied for planning under Resource Management Act (RMA) of 1991 where section 32 report is similar to SEA (McGimpsey and Morgan, 2013; Kelly et al., 2012). There is a dearth of information on how SEA is working procedurally in both countries. This comparative study provides with valuable information and lessons learned from each other through identification of similarities, dissimilarities and shortcomings in practice.

Objectives

- to understand the extent of the practice of SEA in both New Zealand and Australia;
- to identify the similarities, dissimilarities and shortcomings of SEA practice; and
- to recommend for further improvement of SEA system with future research direction.

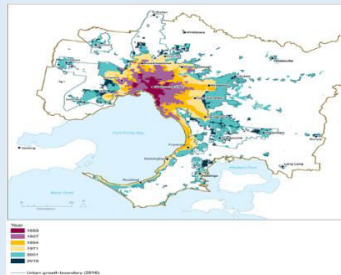
Research approach

- **Development of review criteria:** analysis of SEA practice and development of review criteria from SEA based literature.
- **Case study:** analysed SEAs (Section 32 report in New Zealand) of two major urban plans and evaluated against a set of criteria.

Evaluation

	Key criteria of SEA process	Australia	New Zealand
1	Organizational arrangements	√	√
2	Development of objectives	√	√
3	Scoping	√	*
4	Baseline information	√	√
5	Impact forecasting	*	*
6	Mitigation and monitoring	*	*
7	Public participation	√	√
8	Analysis of alternative options	*	√
9	Quality control	*	*

Legend: Yes=√, No=X, Partial=*



Key findings

- SEAs in both cases (urban plans) have confirmed most of the procedural requirements.
- Contributed to making plans with environmental sustainability.
- Common shortcomings include lack of assessment of cumulative impacts and inadequate socioeconomic impact assessment.

Conclusions

- Cumulative impacts assessment need to be assessed with due importance.
- Capacity development of local councils is necessary to undertake SEA with quality information for planning.
- Socioeconomic impacts need to be assessed clearly.

References

- Dixon, J., 2005, Strategic Environmental Assessment in New Zealand, in Jones et al. (ed.), *Strategic Environmental Assessment and Land Use Planning: An International Evaluation*, pp. 159-172. Earthscan, London.
- Kelly, AH., Jackson, T., and Williams, P., 2012, Strategic environmental assessment: lessons for New South Wales, Australia from Scottish practice, *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, Vol. 30(2): 75-84
- McGimpsey, P., and Morgan, R. 2013, The application of strategic assessment in a non-mandatory context: Regional transport planning in New Zealand. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 43: 56-64.