

Summary

Key points

- 1980s impact assessment (IA) had strong institutional homes and funding (e.g. development levy and government staff support) which enabled the development of the tools and methods.
- As professionals, it is our job to make applicants and councils pay attention to the requirements of section 32 and the 4th schedule.
- Ethics is very important. Professionalism is everything. You are not there as a mouthpiece of your client.
- Increasing power imbalance between affected parties and proponents because of the cost of participation. Do we need an independent body of researchers and technical experts funded by government to support communities to participate in hearings?
- There needs to be more co-ordination inside councils in order to promote interdisciplinary approaches to policy and planning.
- Enforcement needs to be an integral part of impact monitoring and reporting. Who pays for this? And where is the technical expertise to be found, nurtured and maintained?
- IA should be informed by theory and method.
- Collaboration is an emerging area for IA. While NZ needs science-based analysis there is a risk that technocrats will take over the IA process. Back to the dark ages. Keep spaces for the children with pictures alongside the scientists with diagrams.
- How can traditional practices be used as a tool for environmental management? Can NZAIA work on developing this?
- Large scale strategic assessments to avoid site specific in context.

IA issues in current context

- Tensions around data and integration—how much data do we need?
- Need more money support and be more relevant and demonstrate our value.
- Issues are becoming increasingly complex and the reality is we will need to spend more time and more money on them.
- The cost of Resource Management Act (RMA) processes and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes is far too high. Is there a role for NZAIA in looking at how this could be more cost effective?
- Limited budgets -> shortcuts. There is a need to resource communities.
- Decision makers are not critical enough about crappy IAs.
- Look for alternative sources of funding and partnerships (e.g. businesses, philanthropists).

Training issues

- Planners need better training in integrating IAs. They are under pressure as IAs become more fragmented, technical and compliance driven. Is this something NZAIA could help with?
- We need to foster young practitioners.
- We need more applied ecologists to undertake Ecological Impact Assessment.
- Risk Impact Assessment—need for more training in NZ?
- Promote capacity building in cultural competency in all graduates.
- NZAIA should educate the decision makers (e.g. through local government forum).
- Practitioners need a better understanding of s32 of the RMA as it is the part where all the information from an RMA process is brought together. Better understanding would help guide what should be covered in AEEs when practitioners are developing these documents.
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