

Evolution of impact assessment in New Zealand, post RMA

Richard Morgan

Department of Geography, University of Otago

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- ▶ Title is a reference to my first research publication on EIA in 1983 paper
 - ▶ Much has happened since...
 - ▶ How *has* impact assessment evolved since the early 1990s?
 - ▶ what forms of IA have emerged? has practice changed in line with international models? is IA effective? what challenges does it face?



A butterfly view...

So many things to say, so little time



so I'll flit across various issues, a brief sip and then move on...

key themes:

evidence, effectiveness, practice, and IA “speciation”



Evidence

What can we use to evaluate IA in NZ?



- ▶ overall, surprising lack of real evidence
 - ▶ PCE 1995 report, useful but limited (and little effect)
 - ▶ 1996 survey of planners, etc.: IAIA effectiveness report
 - ▶ MfE monitoring is about deadlines, etc.
 - ▶ Research community: lacks coherence, investment
- ▶ fall back on academic observation, various student-led studies over many years, media reports, conferences, professional discussions...



possible role
for NZAIA?



Effectiveness

Popular theme in the IA research literature

very hard to judge in a definitive sense

but broadly, yes, IA has been effective (*compared to pre-1990*)

- ▶ RMA make effects central to decisions
 - and proposals are turned down on the basis of significant adverse impacts
- ▶ similarly, EEZ cases last year showed value of IA
- ▶ some specific evidence in Bobbi Schijf PhD, 2002: AEE findings did change decision-makers' ranking of issues in consent processes....



could it be *more* effective?



yes, we need higher quality IA across all areas of usage





Practice

- ▶ RMA: lack of a clear practice model in the fourth schedule or provided by MfE
- ▶ Practice driven more by compliance than good practice models of impact assessment

L.K. Caldwell's "Procedural vs substantive" perspectives

- ▶ scoping
- ▶ prediction/forecasting
- ▶ significance evaluation
- ▶ public involvement

It can be different.....



Qualities of a good Impact Assessment



I. The list below outlines the qualities of a good Impact Assessment as an effective tool to support decision-making.

- A Terms of Reference developed through a scoping process
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- Consideration of alternatives
- A Non-Technical Summary, which does not contain technical jargon
- Identification of predicted effects, mitigation and residual effects following mitigation (including cumulative and synergistic effects)
- Uses a clear methodology
- Considers the effects on environment and existing interests, as appropriate and relevant, of construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning stages of development
- Identification of the level of confidence in source information and conclusions about significance of effects
- Suggests outcome-based conditions and environment commitments, including an Environmental Management Plan, to secure proposed mitigation
- Articulates industry best practice.

EPA (2013) Approach to Impact Assessment [re EEZ Act]



IA speciation



Social IA
Ecological IA

Health IA
Cultural IA

But:

Cumulative effects assessment?

Strategic environmental assessment?

Clear need for both...but institutional and practice barriers...



Things to reflect on



- ▶ IA is our primary method for avoiding future damage to our natural and socio-cultural environments
- ▶ It continues to evolve, here and overseas
- ▶ It is also subject to ongoing incremental institutional changes
- ▶ We know little about the resulting landscape of IA practice

How can we change that so we can improve uptake, quality and effectiveness?



Thank you



job done....

