



POLICY MANUAL

Policy title:	SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT POLICY
Policy number:	5.2.30
Objective:	To ensure minimal social impact on both the natural and built environments.
Link to community vision/service:	Quality of Life
Program Area:	Community Services
Policy created: 4/7/95	Council reviewed: 4/7/95, 10/4/01
Last reviewed by staff: 10/4/01	TRIM Ref: ED10/15910 & ED16/33218

Introduction

Few developments will have no social impacts whatsoever. Section 79C(1)(b) of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979 (as amended) states that: The likely impacts of that development, including environmental impacts on both the natural and built environments, and social and economic impacts in the locality.

For some developments, ie. Those developments which are designated in the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act Regulations or defined as advertised developments in the Lismore Local Environment Plan, it will be necessary to undertake more detailed formal assessment of the social impacts of the proposed development.

Major developments will usually have a mix of positive and negative social impacts. Social Impact Assessment seeks to predict, anticipate and understand what may occur from a development or project that is likely to affect people's living, working and leisure environments. It aims to find out how to maximise desired outcomes and to minimise costs or losses to communities. The fundamental objective is to improve people's quality of life and social wellbeing.

SIA is usually carried out in response to a specific proposal eg a rural residential subdivision. A social impact can be defined as significant events experienced by people as change occurs in one or all of the following:-

- people's way of life - how they live, work, play and interact with one another on a day-to-day basis;
- their culture - shared beliefs, customs and values;
- their community - its cohesion, stability, character, services and facilities.

It is often only in the cumulative effects of development that the social impacts become evident.

Applicants for identified developments are encouraged to contact Council's Planning Officers in the early stages of their proposal so as to obtain specifications for information that may be required to be submitted, particular to that proposal.

When is a Social Impact Assessment Required

Council requires a Social Impact Assessment be carried out where any one of the following circumstances apply:-

1. Designated development pursuant to Environmental Planning & Assessment Act Regulations.
2. Advertised development pursuant to Lismore Local Environment Plan 2000.
3. Major transport infrastructure projects.
4. Developments and subdivisions with a development value exceeding \$1,000,000.
5. Developments, particularly in residential, village and rural zones, which create significant social impacts or significantly change demand (services, programmes and policy) or create additional social infrastructure demands eg retirement villages, taverns, schools, child-care centres.
6. Significant expansion of urban or village areas.
7. Rural residential subdivision in Zone 1(a) (Rural).
8. Where the proposal is likely to have:-
 - a distinct (adverse or positive) effect on a particular social group either residing on or in the vicinity of the site;
 - an identifiable effect on the social composition and/or character of the locality in which it is situated; and
 - an identifiable effect on the availability and use of existing community services and facilities and/or may require the provision of such services and facilities.

Residential impacts are those impacts which remain after the best choices have been made among alternatives. The recommendations of a SIA need to address how to proceed with the project, that is, the specific impact management measures that should be conditions of approval in order to prevent or alleviate potential social impacts.

Guidelines for Social Impact Assessment

1. Community Profiling

- A description of the socio-demographic characteristics of existing and incoming communities. This may include age, ethnic composition, mobility, nature of households, population growth, educational levels, employment status, health statistics etc.
 - History of development and change in the community
 - Availability and location of human services
 - Availability of transportation

Every project will not necessarily require all of this detail. The extent and detail of this data collection depends on the nature and scope of the development.

2. Scoping

- Identification of the key issues of concern for the project. Delineate the study boundaries and likely areas of impact i.e. Identification of surrounding landuses. This involves consulting with affected individuals, groups or communities, in the assessment process.
- It may be necessary where major developments are proposed to have structured consultation or surveys when trying to identify those aspects of assessment that may be more difficult i.e. changes to quality of life.

3. Formulating Alternatives

- Examine and compare development options or proposals for change, including the “no go” option.
- Need to predict how the social environment would change if the project did not proceed

4. Projection and Estimation of Effects

- Examine in detail the impacts of one or more options for development against decision criteria.
- Examine similar occurrences elsewhere (if available) and reliable evidence of their impacts.

This involves taking into account mitigation measures to prevent or minimise potential impacts paying specific attention to the particular characteristics of the community which will be affected.

5. Impact Management Measures can generally be grouped into four categories as follows-

- mitigation measures aimed at minimising potential impacts and risks;
- compensation measures aimed at lessening of facilities and hardships; and
- contingency measures aimed at facilitating the detection of and timely response to potential problems.

Specific to Rural Residential Development

- Identification of possible landuse conflicts.
- Projected population increase in the locality;
 - projected demographics
- Identification of existing community.
- Identification of existing community's needs.
- Analysis of proposed changes to the existing community.
- Identification of projected needs as a result of the development if the proposal were to go ahead.
- Access to public transportation and other services.

Note: Coverage will depend upon the scale of the development and applicants for identified developments are encouraged to contact Council's Planning Officers in the early stages of their proposal so as to obtain specifications for information that may be required to be submitted particular to that proposal.

REFERENCE LIST

1. Becker, Henk. 1997. Social Impact Assessment. UCL Press Limited, London.
2. Bell Planning Associates and Andrew Jones Pty Ltd 1994. Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for Queensland Local Governments, A Training and Resource kit. Local Government Association of Queensland.
3. Cox, G 1994, Better Communities Through Social Impact Assessment, Best Practice Paper 4, Office on Social Policy, NSW Government Social Policy Directorate Sydney.
4. Cox, G and Stacey Meirs 1995, Social Impact Assessment for Local Government: A Handbook for Councillors, Town Planners and Social Planners, Local Government and Shires Association of NSW, Sydney and Office on Social Policy, NSW Government Social Policy Directorate, Sydney.
5. Cox, G 1995, Techniques for Effective Social Impact Assessment: A Practical Guide, Office on Social Policy, NSW Government Social Policy Directorate, Sydney.
6. Lang, J and M Singleton (ed) 1993, Social Impact Assessment, Faculty of Education, Work and Training, Southern Cross University, Lismore.
7. Menzies, G 1993, Ground Rules: A Social Planning Handbook for Local Government, Local Government and Shires Association of NSW, Sydney.
8. NSW Local Government Community Services Association. Social Planners Division May 1996 "All you Wanted to know About Social Impact Assessment But were Afraid to Ask!" Seminar Papers.
9. Taylor, Nicholas, C. Hobson Bryan, Colin G. Goodrich. 1995. Social Assessment theory, process & techniques Second Edition. Taylor Baines & Associates, Christchurch, New Zealand.

10. Vanclay, Frank and Daniel Bronstein (eds) 1996. Environmental and Social Impact Assessment. Jacaranda Wiley Ltd., Milton, Qld.

(Reference List Amended 1998)

NOTE:

This policy is effective from July 4, 1995.

Updated April 10, 2001.

