



RESOURCE

Developing social impact assessment guidelines in a pre-existing policy context

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Description / Abstract

Few jurisdictions have translated internationally agreed social impact assessment (SIA) principles into statutory provisions. Governments and regulatory bodies tend to provide developers with high-level frameworks, or require that social impacts be 'considered', without specifying how this is to be done. In Australia, this lack of clarity leaves all parties uncertain about requirements for SIA. The New South Wales (NSW) Government's 2017 release of the SIA guideline for State-significant mining, petroleum and extractive industry development represents an attempt to clarify requirements and provide guidance. In this paper, we describe the process of bringing this guideline to fruition from the perspective of being directly involved in its development, and highlight the challenges involved in integrating leading-practice principles into the state's pre-existing policy framework. While the guideline represents a significant advance in policy-based SIA guidance, some aspects leave room for improvement. The real test of the guideline's impact will lie in its influence on SIA practice in NSW, and ultimately in social outcomes for communities affected by resources projects.

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