

Health Impact Assessment in WA Summary Document



The Purpose of this Document

Public health is the key to all human activities. The Department of Health (DOH) and many other public and private groups are committed to the protection and promotion of the public health of communities in Western Australia.

DOH believes that the health of a community should be considered in the development of policies and other developmental activities as part of decision-making processes. New proposals provide opportunities to enhance the health of communities as well as ensuring that public health risks are minimised. Over the past few years many proposals have been identified that have not adequately considered key health issues.

Consideration of health issues can be made using established mechanisms which demonstrate health components during the various stages of proposal development. One mechanism is to consider potential health issues during the planning stages of proposals using a formal process. This process is Health Impact Assessment (HIA).

This Discussion Paper has been developed to provide an overview of Health Impact Assessment and the means by which HIA can be integrated into current State and Local Government decision-making processes. The type of health issues to be considered and the depth of assessments should be decided by the people that the proposals are most likely to affect: the community.

Therefore this paper requests your feedback on what you consider to be the important and essential issues to be dealt with during assessments of proposals and the means by which this can occur. Questions have been posed at key sections throughout the paper.

Feedback from this discussion procedure will form the basis of recommendations to Government on the most appropriate means of delivering better consideration of health issues in new developments in Western Australia.

DOH will develop procedures by which both the positive and negative health impacts of Western Australian activities can be identified and examined during their planning stages to assist decision makers. There is potential for proposals to be improved if HIA outcomes can be included in decision making processes.

Consultation to date

DOH has undertaken extensive consultation with representatives of government, the private sector and tertiary education including coordination of facilitated workshops, to assist in the planning for implementation of the "HIA in WA" Project. The consultation was to determine how HIA could be integrated into existing approvals systems and to investigate potential roles for the Department.

Acknowledgements

Significant input to the development of this project has been given by government, industry and private tertiary education sector representatives. Their clarification of issues external to the activities of the Department of Health and discussion of the implications of the introduction of Health Impact Assessment in Western Australia is greatly appreciated.

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Executive Summary

Health provides us with the capacity to do what we want with our lives. It is determined by combinations of biological, behavioural, social, economic and environmental factors. Technological, industrial, economic and social development may bring hazards into our environment with the potential to harm community health or the environment.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a systematic process which aims to identify and examine both the positive and negative health impacts of an activity during its planning stages and provide decision makers with information about how the activity may affect the health of people. HIA provides the opportunity for stakeholders through community engagement processes to act proactively to share possible community benefits as well as minimise potential future problems.

HIA has the values of sustainable development, promotion of health, democracy, equity and ethical use of evidence. Many of the health and wellbeing issues that are currently dealt with inadequately or inappropriately in development within WA can be addressed through HIA.

The HIA framework follows the format of:

- Screening
- Scoping
- Profiling
- Risk assessment
- Risk management
- Decision making
- Evaluation.

The protection and enhancement of the health and wellbeing of the population should be seen as the responsibility of all and processes to meet these objectives should be addressed by government as a whole. The best approach is to integrate HIA into current approvals procedures and not as a stand alone process implemented outside the approvals process.

There are four key strategies for HIA inclusion:

- within Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Assessments
- within State and Regional land use planning and development processes
- within Local Government land use planning and development processes
- within Sustainability considerations and Sustainability Assessments.

This Discussion Paper has been developed to provide an overview of Health Impact Assessment and the means by which HIA can be integrated into current State and Local Government decision-making processes. This paper requests your feedback on what you consider to be the important and essential issues to be dealt with during assessments of proposals and the means by which this can occur. Questions have been posed at key sections throughout the paper.

Health Impact Assessment in WA

This Paper produced by the Department of Health (DOH) provides a range of strategies for the consideration of health and wellbeing in developments and asks you as a member of the Western Australian community to consider how best to provide for the health impacts that arise from development now and into the future.

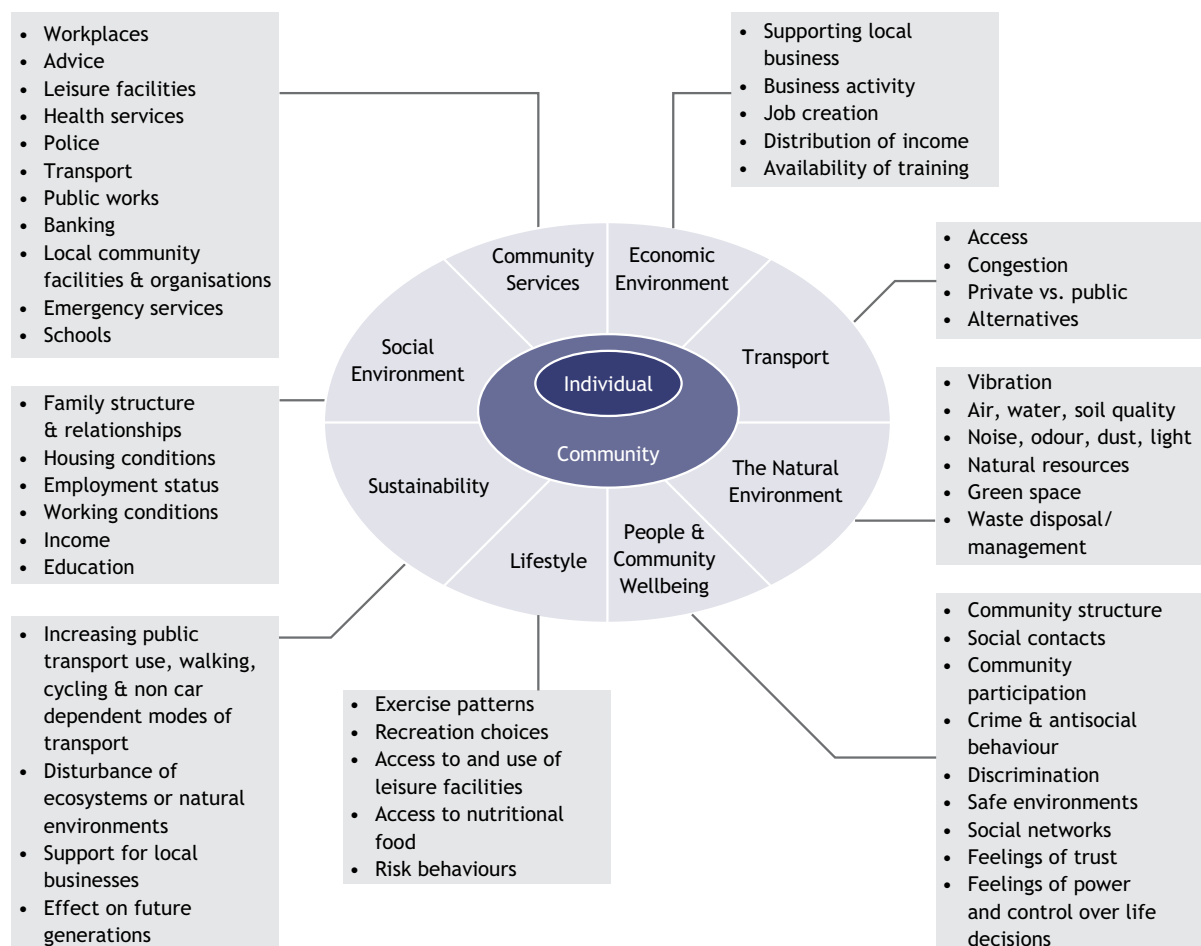
What is Health?

Health provides us with the capacity to do what we want with our lives. It is determined by combinations of biological, behavioural, social, economic and environmental factors. The World Health Organisation (WHO) Constitution¹ defines health as:

“...a (dynamic) state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”.

Hazards in our environment with the potential to harm the health of our community or the environment may arise from technological, industrial, economic and social changes. The World Health Organisation has estimated that: *“globally nearly one quarter of all deaths and of the total disease burden can be attributed to the environment”.*

Many environmental factors such as those following may give rise to positive and negative health outcomes.



Source: Department of Health 2006

Protection and enhancement of human health are priorities in Australia. The factors and conditions that influence health outcomes are referred to as the determinants of health² and those that may be most influenced through Health Impact Assessment include those linked to:

- the physical environment
- the social environment
- sustainable development.

What is Health Impact Assessment?

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a systematic process which aims to identify and examine both the positive and negative health impacts of an activity during its planning stages and provide decision makers with information about how the activity may affect the health of people. There is potential for the proposal to be improved if decision makers can be influenced through HIA outcomes.

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition of Health Impact Assessment³ is:

"...a combination of procedures, methods and tools by which a policy, programme or project may be judged as to its potential effects on the health of a population, and the distribution of those effects within the population".

The HIA process provides for a holistic assessment of the wider determinants of health and is used during the planning stages of any new development to consider the health implications of possible activities. HIA provides decision makers with information about how any proposal may affect the health of people and how the proposal may be improved.

Why Undertake Health Impact Assessment?

HIA is a formalised process that provides a tool for assessing health issues identified during proposal development and the opportunity for stakeholders to act proactively to share possible community benefits as well as minimise potential future problems.

The key reasons to do Health Impact Assessment are⁴:

- To assist proponents to consider all dimensions of sustainability
- To assist proponents incorporate evidence into proposals
- To promote cross-sectoral activities with other sectors
- To promote a participatory and consultative approach to proposal development
- To improve health and reduce health inequalities.

The Values Underpinning Health Impact Assessment

The following values provide a platform from which the benefits of HIA can be derived.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development (SD) is about meeting the needs of current and future generations through integration of environmental protection, social advancement, and economic prosperity which are critical to ensuring healthy individuals and healthy communities.

Promotion of Health

Processes should work towards attaining health gains as well as identifying risks to the health of individual and communities.

Democracy

Providing people with opportunities to participate in consultation and transparent decision making processes for proposals that may impact on their lives enhances democratic outcomes.

Equity

For many the opportunity for a healthy life is linked to social disadvantage. Proposals may affect the health of vulnerable people and they should be encouraged to participate in consultative processes.

Ethical use of evidence

The best available quantitative and qualitative evidence must be identified and incorporated.

Health Impact Assessment Internationally

Recognition of the links between the environments we live in and human health has been highlighted internationally. Legal and administrative rules and procedures for HIA have been developed to assess the impacts of policies or programmes on health specific factors or groups by the European Union, Canada, New Zealand and international organisations such as WHO and the World Bank.

Health Impact Assessment in Australia

In 1999, the Australian National Environmental Health Strategy (NEHS)⁵ recognised that environments that provide for good public health are integrated with effective planning and management of these environments. The NEHS endorsed the inclusion of HIA in environmental impact assessment processes and all States and Territories agreed to develop Health Impact Assessment processes⁶.

Why have Health Impact Assessment in Western Australia?

The Government of WA aims to improve the quality of life of all Western Australians. It identified that this can be achieved through collaboration among government agencies to work towards whole of government approaches to strategic planning, decision-making and resource allocation. A holistic approach to consideration of issues associated with development was expressed in the State Sustainability Strategy. DOH committed to developing and implementing Health Impact Assessments as part of the environmental and sustainability assessment processes⁷.

Linkages with Health Impact Assessment

A number of other issues have also been identified which should be considered linked to the implementation of HIA.

a. Legislation

The *Health Act 1911*, WA's current public health legislation, does not provide adequate responses to new and emerging environmental health problems or threats from public health emergencies, possible epidemics or bioterrorism. It has reduced ability to provide for appropriate leadership in health protection and prevention of adverse health outcomes.

The DOH discussion paper; a *New Public Health Act for Western Australia*⁷, discussed the issues and possibilities needed to take public health beyond its traditional and limited context. Included in the paper was the support for the Government's sustainability strategy and the use of legislation to support HIA.

b. Interagency activities

Ministers and public authorities empowered by law to make decisions for proposals are recognised through the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* and other legislation. A proposal may not proceed until specific activities have been undertaken by proponents and agreed to by the various decision making authorities.

Except for some activities DOH has not been formally recognised as a decision making authority and provides health information and advice on request to other departments or authorities, about potential health concerns associated with certain activities.

The Integrated Project Approvals System (IPAS) is a whole of Government process to assess complex and major projects. DOH participation provides for consideration of environmental and other resource development related health considerations during the planning stages of these projects.

However, decisions about what may require Department of Health advice is at the discretion of decision-making authorities. No mechanism exists for review of health potential in developmental activities, other than IPAS projects, without prior request. This diminishes the opportunity for proposals to be screened for possible health impacts and for decisions to be influenced using health evidence to produce better community outcomes.

c. Health Risk Assessment

Much public concern about developments focuses on specific major industrial projects and the potential risks these may bring to communities. Where there are levels of public health concern from government or the community the EPA often advises proponents that a Health Risk Assessment must be undertaken.

Health Risk Assessment (HRA) is a systematic process used for characterising the nature and magnitude of the risks associated with environmental health hazards. Its aim is to present relevant information about risks to inform decision making.

The information determined through an HRA forms the basis for risk management processes, a key component of HIA. Currently the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) manages the environment and thus environmental health risks through registration, licensing and other procedures. The current role of DOH in the risk management process for these projects is restricted to providing advice on public protection from environmental hazards if requested. Other formal mechanisms for management of health impacts are not available.

Community awareness

With increased knowledge and willingness to get involved in activities associated with developmental projects, members of the public are more ready to express concern about the health risks associated with new and existing proposals. Public consultation is regarded as an important component of all assessment procedures.

However, the most disadvantaged groups within communities are often those at the greatest risk and currently no formal mechanisms exist to ensure their needs are met. HIA requires equitable outcomes for all potentially affected community members and supports activities that acknowledge the health and wellbeing needs of vulnerable groups.

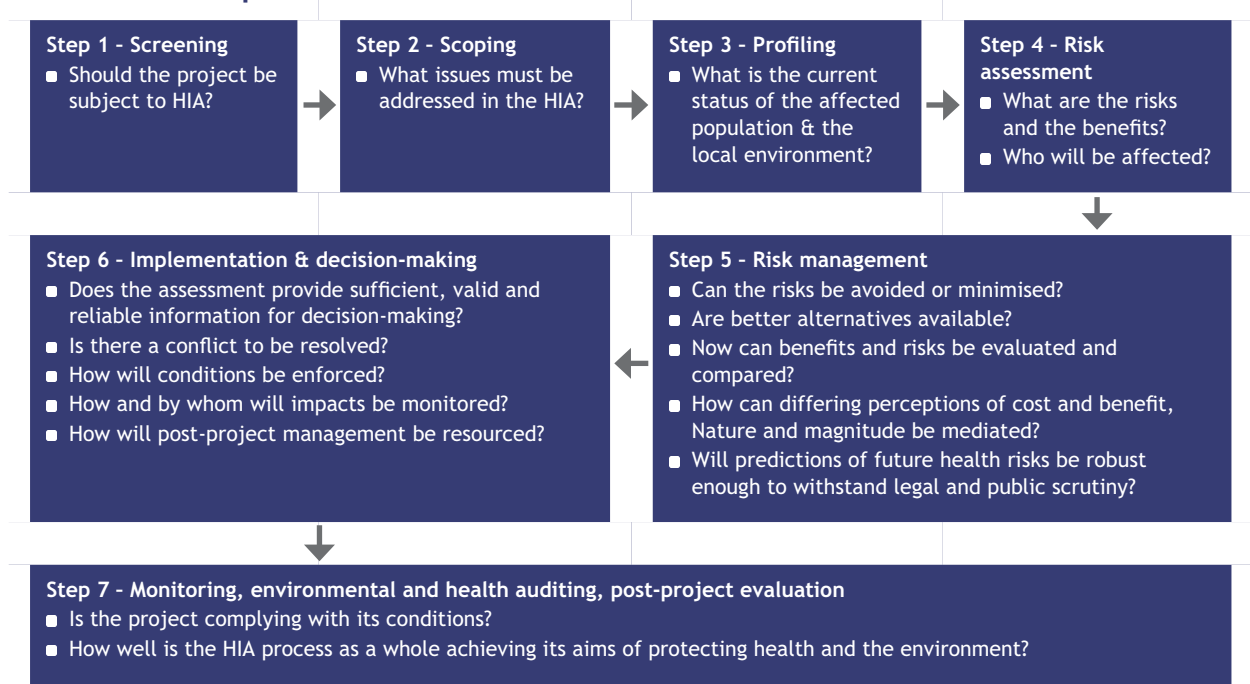
Stakeholder Questions

1. Do you think Western Australia needs a process such as Health Impact Assessment?
2. Do you think implementing Health Impact Assessment will make any difference to the protection of public health?

Health Impact Assessment Implementation

HIA is a step-by-step process. At each step a series of questions must be answered before progressing to the next step. The following diagram and text provide an outline of the HIA investigation process.

The Health Impact Assessment Framework



Stage 1: Screening

Screening provides a mechanism to consider the potential changes to health that may arise and therefore whether an HIA is required.

Stage 2: Scoping

Scoping identifies the aims, objectives and limits to the HIA. Stakeholder consultation is a key element and agreements should be reached amongst stakeholders on how to deal with emerging issues.

The form and extent of an HIA will depend on the location and the type of proposal. Different approaches⁹ provide for the complexity of the proposal associated health issues in a manner appropriate to the proposal.

a. Rapid health impact assessments

These are usually “desk top” exercises using information and evidence already available in published literature. A minimum quantification of potential health impacts can be used for screening and prioritising. Stakeholder consultation is usually limited to a single meeting with stakeholders.

b. Intermediate health impact assessments

Where a comprehensive analysis of health impacts is not required but there is justification for assessment beyond a basic literature review.

c. Comprehensive health impact assessments

A comprehensive HIA will require extensive literature searches, analysis of existing data as well as collection and quantification of new data and sensitivity analysis specific to the proposal. Stakeholder participation is often extensive and appropriate evaluation mechanisms of both the process and the outcomes are established and implemented.

Stage 3: Profiling

It is important to have a good understanding of the environment in which the proposal is to be established including the biophysical environment and the people within. Profiling assesses the demographic details of the potentially affected community to identify characteristics that are important in determining health status as well as to identify vulnerable groups. Data about the community that should be considered include its size, density, physical distribution, age and sex distribution, birth rate, ethnicity, socio-economic status and identification of at-risk groups¹⁰.

The health status of the population is also established to provide baseline data against which any actions implemented can be assessed.

Stage 4: Risk Assessment

The risk assessment process determines the risks and benefits to the health and wellbeing of the community that may arise from the proposal. Predictions are made on the extent of the impacts based on evidence available through peer reviewed literature, established standards, expert opinion and may include stakeholder input.

Stage 5: Risk Management

Identified risks need to be prevented or reduced so that harm to the community is minimised or negated. Risk communication with stakeholders is an integral component of the risk management process and stakeholders should be informed and given opportunities for input during the process. There should be ongoing consultation throughout the process and agreement reached with stakeholders on the means by which positive and negative issues identified can be addressed. Any limitations should be identified and explained.

Stage 6: Implementation and Decision Making

The decisions on whether a proposal is to go ahead are usually made by a Minister of Government or Local Government Council. A range of issues are included in the deliberations.

Decisions will often include conditions that must be met by the proponent. Proponents will be required to demonstrate how they intend complying with these conditions and to provide the decision maker with details on ongoing monitoring and reporting programmes if required.

Stage 7: Evaluation

For any programme to be able to demonstrate success it is important that appropriate evaluation is carried out. Evaluation includes assessment of the process used to undertake the HIA, including the community engagement processes as well as consideration of the health outcomes and how well the process has achieved the aims of protecting public health.

Stakeholder Questions

3. Do we need different levels of assessments for different types of proposals or should a generic process be used which requires consideration of health during planning stages for any proposal?
4. If different levels are considered important, what should be the basis for distinguishing between these levels?
5. Which sectors within communities should be given higher priority than others and under what circumstances to ensure equity for all?
6. Should a list of risk criteria, including both positive and negative risks be prescribed for each proposal type?

Community Engagement

Democracy is a key value of HIA. Strong, democratic societies can be achieved through active public participation in transparent decision making processes. It is important that people have opportunities to participate in the development and implementation of policies, programmes or projects that may impact on their lives.

Over the past few years, individuals and communities in Western Australia have been increasingly interested in proposals that may have the potential to influence their lives. Consultation frequently raises issues related to health and wellbeing and people want to be assured that development will not cause illness. Addressing potential adverse effects, including the perception of potential concern, during consultation should provide greater community assurance.

Community engagement and participation are central to the Western Australian system of representative democracy and are very important components of the HIA process. Community engagement can be viewed as a set of methods and techniques that lie on a continuum, with increasing levels of engagement and influence¹¹.

Community Engagement Continuum¹²



When developing an HIA community engagement process, it is important to choose the level and method of engagement that suits the objectives of the project, programme or policy being considered.

Community engagement should be initiated as early as possible in the HIA process and continue as consultation and/or active participation throughout the developmental stages. Key community issues regarded by the community as having significant potential impact on the health and wellbeing of the community should be included in scoping processes.

Community engagement provides transparency and the methodology needs to demonstrate balance, rigour and reliability. It should include the level of community concern and the degree to which issues will impact on health. Methods should ensure disadvantaged and other key stakeholders have access to appropriate information as well as opportunities to provide pertinent information and participate in decision-making processes where appropriate. Methods should be developed to address potential conflicts and there should be appropriate means to communicate the outcomes of the HIA to the community.

Communities are known to be supportive of activities where it can be shown they will benefit from implementation of proposals and proponents can benefit from improved community interaction and recognition of their role as good corporate citizens.

Stakeholder Question

7. Do you think there should be specific times and processes determined for community consultation in HIAs?

When is an Health Impact Assessment required?

HIA is a formalised process that requires time, resources and expertise. It is important that the benefits and restrictions of this process for activities should be discussed.

DOH has agreed that HIAs in Western Australia should be integrated with existing decision-making processes. Some of the proposed strategies may require other decision makers to make changes to their procedures and activities. DOH has indicated that its strategies should not create major imposts for and restrictions to development and that the objectives of HIA are to try to ensure the best possible outcomes for the community by highlighting the benefits of the health findings that

emerge from the process. Should further processes develop in the future, DOH will work with other stakeholders to progress these collaboratively.

It will not be feasible or practicable to carry out HIAs on every proposal. Screening is used to determine if an HIA should be undertaken.

Other well established HIA processes^{13,14,15} have identified key issues which should be considered when deciding whether or not to undertake an HIA and the level of concern that may be associated with these issues. Questions that should be asked about the relevance of undertaking an HIA include:

- Are the key elements of a particular proposal (or activity) well understood?
- Can the potential for impact on the wider determinants of health and equity on the population be determined?
- Is there the potential for impact on differing population groups, particularly the extent to which any disadvantaged, vulnerable or marginalised groups might be affected?
- What existing evidence and data sources are available?
- Have similar types of HIA been undertaken that might inform or negate the need for a dedicated HIA in this case?
- Do other alternatives to undertaking an HIA exist which would ensure health and equity issues are effectively considered by decision makers?
- What capacity and resources are needed and exist?

Similarly, it is important to filter out proposals that are unlikely to benefit from HIA. The following are examples of situations where an HIA may not be appropriate:

- The proposal may be seen by health and other experts as having little potential impact on health and equity issues;
- Impacts may be likely but the evidence is already well documented and it may be possible to develop evidence-based recommendations without the need for a fuller HIA;
- Under certain circumstances, decision makers may not be receptive to considering any evidence-based recommendations¹⁶.

The Health Impact Assessment strategies for WA

The consideration of health and wellbeing in development proposals would be greatly improved by the use of a formal process based on the HIA framework outlined here.

The management of the key determinants of public health lie outside the traditional 'jurisdiction' of DOH. The protection and enhancement of the health and wellbeing of the population should be seen as the responsibility of all and processes to meet these objectives should be addressed by government as a whole. The best approach is to integrate HIA into current approvals procedures and not as a stand alone process implemented outside the approvals process.

It is proposed that the DOH becomes the lead agency responsible for ensuring that health and wellbeing considerations are incorporated into the assessment of new proposals. As such, the DOH should coordinate the development of the HIA framework and the associated guidelines for proponents and assessment of proposals.

There are four key strategies for HIA inclusion:

- within Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Assessments
- within State and Regional land use planning and development processes
- within Local Government land use planning and development processes
- within Sustainability considerations and Sustainability Assessments.

Descriptions of these strategies and consultation outcomes follow. These include the advantages and disadvantages of each proposed pathway, the strengths and weaknesses associated with integration of HIA into each approval process type and the mechanisms that could be used to overcome any difficulties.

The key perspectives of HIA for Western Australia

Whatever HIA framework is decided, the following eight principles must underpin any approach adopted within Western Australia.

1. Health and wellbeing are key components of sustainability principles.
2. Health equity and social justice are requirements for current and future generations.
3. The health and wellbeing of communities is connected to the quality of the environments in which these communities are found.
4. HIA takes a multidisciplinary, participatory approach and addressing health and wellbeing concerns should be undertaken through partnerships between stakeholders.
5. Government should facilitate the means by which stakeholders can address health and wellbeing concerns as well as ensure that HIA principles and values are adhered to.
6. New proposals in Western Australia should aim to control environmental health risks and prevent future problems.
7. Appropriate scientific rigour should be applied to gathering, interpretation and use of qualitative and quantitative evidence.
8. The Precautionary Principle:

The Wingspread Conference of 1998: Implementing the Precautionary Principle, designed a strategy to implement the Precautionary Principle in public health and environmental regulation. A consensus statement was developed:

“When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically. In this context the proponent of an activity, rather than the public, should bear the burden of proof. The process of applying the precautionary principle must be open, informed and democratic and must include potentially affected parties. It must also involve an examination of the full range of alternatives, including no action”.

Stakeholder Question

8. Is the Wingspread Statement appropriate for use as the basis for Principle Number 8 with respect to protection of public health?

Source: SEHN 2006¹⁷

Strategies for Health Impact Assessment Integration in WA

The following section outlines four strategies for integrating HIA into existing processes. The strategies are not presented in any particular order.

1. Environmental Impact Assessment and Health Impact Assessment

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process, established to protect the environment from developmental activities had the protection of public health as one of its original aims. Now however, health impacts addressed in EIA are limited to those linked to environmental impacts.

EIA is undertaken during the planning stages of proposed developments to determine potential environmental effects. EIA does not determine whether a development application will obtain approval, but improves the information available to all parties involved in a specific development decision.

In Western Australia, the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986 (EPA Act)* can require development proposals to undergo environmental impact assessment before they can be implemented¹⁸. Proposals referred to the EPA are those that may have the potential to significantly impact the environment or where there may be public concern about their likely effects. Proposals include many project types as well as new Town Planning Schemes or scheme amendments.

The EPA determines whether the proposal should be assessed and the level of assessment. The five levels for assessing proposals which set the general form, content, timing and procedures of the assessment are:

- a. Assessment on Referral Information
- b. Proposal Unlikely to be Environmentally Acceptable
- c. Environmental Protection Statement
- d. Public Environmental Review
- e. Environmental Review & Management Programme.

In 2001, a review of the project development approvals system¹⁹ was undertaken to assess the potential to streamline the major projects approvals process in WA. A whole of government Integrated Project Approvals System (IPAS) has been developed which provides processes for complex proposals where multiple approvals are required. DOH was invited to join the IPAS approvals processes.

Within IPAS environmental health risks are identified and advice provided to proponents during the planning stages of complex projects. Many community concerns are now being acknowledged early in the process. However, the IPAS process does not meet all the requirements for HIA and decision making based on health issues other than environmental risk has not yet been addressed.

For other projects, EIA is restricted to examining the potentially harmful effects of a development upon the immediate community. The EPA Act also provides for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)²⁰ of proposals which may be relatively conceptual or encompass a range of significant proposals to be progressed over time. These may be a plan, programme or policy. Requests for environmental health advice to the EIA and SEA processes are at the discretion of the EPA.

No formal agreement currently exists between the EPA and DOH. Linking HIA with EIA and SEA may provide opportunities to formalise current procedures and ensure a holistic assessment of health and well-being as part of the proponent’s development application. HIA can expand the knowledge within current EIA to consider the social, economic, lifestyle and behavioural costs and benefits to the immediate community as well as the ‘downstream’ direct and indirect impacts that can occur in other communities. The cumulative impacts from other neighbouring facilities can also be taken into account.

The key issues raised for integration of HIA with EIA are:

Strengths of HIA and EIA	Weaknesses of HIA and EIA	Opportunities for HIA with EIA	Threats from HIA with EIA
<p>EIA is an established process with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ existing governance mechanisms ■ allowance for integrated approaches ■ transparent community input. <p>Its preventative approach provides for inclusion of some health issues and the potential to include positive health issues.</p> <p>It provides great acceptance at all levels through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ commitment to EIA ■ well-established education capacity. <p>Its processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ increase the likelihood of community engagement ■ provide opportunities to build on existing professional capacities and processes. 	<p>DOH is not an official decision making authority (DMA) and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ its role is advisory only ■ no administrative arrangements exist within DOH to enable formal decision making. <p>EIA’s focus is narrow and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ deals only with large projects and addresses issues specific to each project ■ the scope for links with other activities in near proximity or implications for populations elsewhere is limited. <p>Equity and accountability may be constrained due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ decision-making being subject to political constraints that are not necessarily transparent ■ lack of community awareness of and engagement with EIA processes. <p>Resource limitations exist throughout the EIA process.</p> <p>EIA does not have the capacity to consider retrospective developments.</p>	<p>EIA process provides a strong basis.</p> <p>Mechanisms to identify and address health based community concerns during planning stages would be beneficial .</p> <p>There is the likelihood that community participation and engagement would be increased.</p> <p>Stakeholders would find this more acceptable than a stand alone health assessment process.</p> <p>Better information sharing amongst agencies.</p> <p>Greater emphasis on sustainability.</p>	<p>Perceived lack of resources, capacity and expertise.</p> <p>Need to ensure that appropriate frameworks, policies, guidelines and regulations are available for HIA.</p> <p>Proponents may see HIA as threat to development that may incur significant costs.</p> <p>Lack of transparency for decision-making.</p>

The **mechanisms for resolution** identified included:

- Appropriate legislative change to recognise DOH as a Decision Making Authority
- Appropriate Memoranda of Understanding between EPA and DOH
- Requirements for transparency in decision making at all levels of government
- Promotion of the sustainability advantages of HIA in EIA
- Agreements with the tertiary sector for HIA training
- Lead role of Centres such as the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre on Environmental Health Impact Assessment at Curtin University for independent endorsement and support
- DOH to provide relevant information, data and support and mechanisms to ensure certainty and consistency.

Consider this

Industrial activities such as the expansion of regional port facilities are essential for future development within Western Australia. Ports support local industries and, with the booming mining industry, partnerships with a range of industry players are often entered into to assist with expansion costs. These partnerships provide certainty for the industrial partners through guaranteed provision of export services through the expanded port facilities. However, the location of facilities such as these is a limiting factor and often other development may have encroached on land suited for these facilities. For example proposed expansions may locate port facilities closer to proposed residential areas. There is the potential for significant positive and negative health impacts from such developments. Processes to provide for health input in the early developmental stages of projects are not formally available.

Stakeholder Questions

9. Which mechanisms would be most appropriate for implementation of HIA in Environmental Impact Assessment?
10. How should these mechanisms be implemented?
11. Are there any health criteria that should or should not be included in the Environment Impact Assessment of projects?

2. State and Regional Land Use Planning and Development and Health Impact Assessment

The Western Australian State Planning Framework (SPF)²¹ unites State and regional land use and development policies, strategies and guidelines within a central framework which provides the context for decision-making on land use and development. Specific Statements of Planning Policy deal with key sectors of the framework and supplementary policies are subsets of each sector policy.

The State Planning Strategy (SPS) provides the means to help State and local governments and private industry to achieve a coordinated and integrated response to future growth and development.

The primary aim of planning is to ensure the fair, systematic, economic and sustainable use and development of land. Five principles present the concepts that underpin and influence good integrated decision-making in land use planning and development²² which are:

- a. Environment
- b. Community
- c. Economy
- d. Infrastructure
- e. Regional Development.

The Community principle²³ indicates that planning must anticipate and respond to the needs of existing and future communities through the provision of zoned and serviced land for housing, employment, recreation and open space, commercial and community facilities.

Planning decisions determine the physical and social characteristics of neighbourhoods, such as walkability, access to public transport, access to recreational facilities and ease of social contact. In adverse settings, these characteristics can reinforce unhealthy lifestyle habits and behaviours that lead to chronic disease and can contribute to the effects of social isolation and exclusion²⁴.

Urban development often has consequences that represent ‘clean-up costs’²⁵ and the social and public health costs can include increased obesity, lower levels of physical activity, increased social isolation, increased incidence of crime, and road accidents. These social costs of urban development are not borne by the planning sector but are downstream costs usually borne by health, law enforcement, and social service sectors.

Planning decisions determine the use of land within local government boundaries. The proximity of potentially antagonistic land uses to existing land uses such as the location of residential areas close to industrial facilities can result in adverse health outcomes. Many industries both light and heavy have the potential to adversely affect the health of the community or neighbouring industries and other facilities through emissions to surrounding regions. Similarly there are health implications arising from “change of use” especially where a change results in greater potential for adverse impacts on others.

The emissions from individual facilities may be relatively benign but when combined with others may produce levels that cumulatively have greater potential to result in adverse health impacts. Other considerations for land use planning for all types of development include noise, odour, the adequacy of buffers, mechanisms for waste collection, waste minimisation processes or low water use and storage of potentially recyclable materials. It is appropriate to consider the impacts on regions from all facilities rather than considering each facility in isolation.

The sanitation issues specified in the *Health Act 1911* such as drinking water and wastewater schemes require Local Government or DOH deliberations and advice. Otherwise, requests to DOH arise from WAPC deliberations whilst those from the DPI are invariably linked to public consultation strategies.

No formal agreement currently exists between DOH and the planning authorities. Health related community concerns arising from development planning are often those that could be relatively easily alleviated if addressed early in the developmental phases, such as within policies or strategic plans. The use of HIA as a tool to address health impacts of state and regional town planning would support planning agendas, could further enhance sustainability principles as well

as provide sound evidence to produce better health outcomes. It will also provide opportunities to formalise current procedures, address the current health consideration deficiencies of these proposals and ensure a holistic assessment of health and well-being.

The key issues raised for integration of HIA with SPF are:

Strengths of HIA and SPF	Weaknesses of HIA and SPF	Opportunities for HIA with SPF	Threats from HIA with SPF
<p>SPF has an established state-wide strategic approach with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ strategic focus and orientation ■ extensive resources and expertise ■ range of partners and processes <p>SPF can address existing issues as well as new proposals.</p> <p>Some research data already available .</p> <p>A current knowledge base exists.</p>	<p>Health has no champion in this sector.</p> <p>It will be difficult to evaluate cause and effect due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ long-term nature of benefits ■ complexities involved. <p>Limitations of current planning processes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ very little holistic health assessment in long-term planning ■ determinations based on current knowledge and is very theoretical ■ limited responsiveness to external factors ■ a very narrow focus on health issues ■ fragmented and uncoordinated links to other processes. <p>There is limited community involvement which is often driven by 'squeaky wheels'.</p> <p>Lack of resources, skills and consultation mechanisms.</p> <p>HIA processes and methodology require regulation, definition and the identification of priority risks.</p>	<p>Many opportunities for better health outcomes.</p> <p>Strengthening of the links between local government decision-making, EIA and SEA.</p> <p>Further transparency and clarity of process.</p> <p>Improved consultation, collaboration and cooperation.</p> <p>Provision of stronger partnerships between state and local governments as well as others within the community.</p> <p>Use of existing research available in health, in particular health economics.</p> <p>Provision for improved links to external resources.</p> <p>Build upon current community concerns regarding public health issues such as obesity and physical activity.</p>	<p>HIA for this sector is an uncertain process.</p> <p>Health outcomes might not necessarily be delivered or would be suboptimal.</p> <p>Difficulties for translation of planning policy into practice.</p> <p>Lack of integration across commonwealth, state and local programmes and processes.</p> <p>Non-land use planning such as financial processes could be prone to political inference.</p> <p>Current roles of health sector viewed by many especially the media and within political circles, as reactive to situations rather than in implementation of strategic processes.</p> <p>Consultation for planning processes usually not accessible to sub-populations as high level language is used.</p>

The **mechanisms for resolution** identified included:

- Strategic review of state and regional planning documents to include HIA and link HIA to the State Sustainability Strategy.
- State Government to strengthen the strategic role and direction of the WAPC/DPI to undertake HIA as part of state and regional planning.
- Include DOH or other health authority in membership of WAPC.
- Periodic review of the effectiveness of 'planning instruments' and update to include HIA.
- Creation of a HIA advisory body to develop HIA definition and processes, to assist implementation of HIA within specified timelines and ensure the periodic review of the effectiveness of HIA in the state and regional planning process.

- Introduction of innovative resourcing options such as:
 - Fee for service;
 - Contracting in;
 - Consultancies;
 - Accreditation.
- Creation of procedures and documents for the application of HIA (including health standards).
- Public relations, education and awareness raising of the benefits of HIA for decision-makers, community, proponents and politicians.
- Broaden the definition of planning to include health and wellbeing within the general principles and define a broad range of health outcomes, including positive health outcomes.
- Encourage public advocacy and partnerships (PHAA, AMA, Govt.) by quarantining a percentage of the state health budget.
- Develop relevant case studies to illustrate the use of data (cost-benefit analysis) to build the evidence base and feed into planning process.
- Mandate an HIA outcomes audit and review State of Environment and State of Health reporting to identify gaps in data.
- Demonstrate that community input is recognised through public reporting which provides submissions and responses.

Consider this

A strategy of the San Francisco Department of Public Health to generate public awareness and action on the relationships between the built environment and human health resulted in the initiation of the Eastern Neighbourhoods Community Health Impact Assessment (ENCHIA). This project is a deliberative, multi-stakeholder and consensus-based approach to analysing how zoning plans for three San Francisco neighbourhoods affect those attributes of social and physical environments most important to health. These attributes include: social and economic diversity; adequate, affordable housing; convenient access to public transit; accessible parks and public spaces; infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists; neighbourhood public schools; security; businesses providing living-wage jobs and serving local needs; unpolluted air, soil, and water; cooperation, trust, and civic participation.

(Source: San Francisco Department of Public Health <http://www.sfdph.org/phes/enchia.htm>)

Stakeholder Questions

12. Which mechanisms would be most appropriate for implementation of HIA in State and Regional Land Use Planning and Development?
13. How should these mechanisms be implemented?
14. Are there any health criteria which should or should not be included in the assessment of State and Regional Land Use Planning and Development?

3. Local Government Land Use Planning and Development Processes and Health Impact Assessment

Most Local Governments (LG) recognise that development proposals can have implications on the health and wellbeing of their communities. Nearly all proposals originate in or pass through LGs during the early stages of development. Most require LG approval and those referred to the EPA or WAPC usually require some degree of LG input. LGs also develop policies and undertake strategic planning for local communities. Whilst LGs are proactive in their approach to the wellbeing of their communities through community development and environmental health services initiatives, many do not require consideration of health issues in new land use and development proposals. The involvement of health experts, the consideration of health issues in the assessment of proposals, and the application of mitigating actions are inconsistently and infrequently applied.

The Model Scheme Text is used as the template for LG schemes and provides for certain matters to be considered by the decision-maker in determining a decision. However, health as a specific matter and the evidence to support matters that pertain to health are not included.

The *Town Planning Act* requires LGs to review their Schemes every five years. This presents an opportunity for LGs, in partnership with stakeholders and communities, to take a fresh look at the issues that are regulated and have a relationship to health and wellbeing. A scheme review requires the preparation of a Local Planning Strategy (LPS)²⁶.

The LPS becomes the central feature of a local scheme and sets out the LG's general aims and intentions for future long-term growth and change including the local context for matters of state and regional significance. It also provides a strategic framework and justification for zoning and associated development controls. The consideration of broader sustainable development approaches and greater community are key elements. The process for the development of Local Planning Strategies is not prescriptive; each LG can adopt an LPS which most suits its area and local issues.

DOH is not a specifically identified referral agency for the consideration of broad health matters within urban and regional planning. There is an extensive body of research and evidence on the health impacts of planning and the development of stronger partnerships between health sectors and LGs could enhance strategic land use planning and sustainable development within LGs and help to prevent and/or ameliorate the barriers to healthy physical and social neighbourhood development. The health sectors can assist LGs to incorporate health matters into the consideration of macro land use issues such as zoning, transport corridors, and recreational and open space reserves.

The Key issues raised for integration of HIA with LG Land Use Planning and Development Processes are:

Strengths of HIA in LG Planning	Weaknesses of HIA in LG Planning	Opportunities for HIA with LG Planning	Threats from HIA with LG Planning
<p>LG planning has well established processes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ consultation with stakeholders; ■ integrated planning across divisions. <p>As the managers of land use planning, LG have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ control of detailed land use planning and development assessment; ■ flexibility to implement best practice and innovative processes; ■ employment and training; ■ community service arms with intimate knowledge of local conditions and resident communities; <p>LG based HIA will support their focus on improved community wellbeing.</p>	<p>LGs operate with limited resources and competing priorities.</p> <p>No prescriptive guidelines are available to prioritise and direct scarce resources to HIA processes.</p> <p>No statutory authority/ mandate currently for an equitable, holistic approach to HIA.</p> <p>Assessment approaches across regions by smaller LGs are inconsistent.</p> <p>Resistance to change could challenge staff and Councillors.</p> <p>Competing political priorities could compete to weaken the role of HIA.</p> <p>Relationship of HIA to 'sustainability' and wellbeing is currently unclear.</p> <p>The quantification of assessment outcomes may be difficult.</p> <p>HIA could be at risk of pigeon-holing within particular areas/ departments.</p>	<p>Long-term strategic benefits such as the development of more focused and integrated outcomes.</p> <p>Improved management procedures.</p> <p>Potential for improved formal and effective interagency partnerships and processes.</p> <p>More comprehensive community involvement.</p> <p>Opportunity for developers to contribute to community wellbeing.</p> <p>Opportunity for LGs to redefine their role and assume a leadership role in best practice for and education of communities with respect to the social determinants of health.</p>	<p>Current lack of an integrated legislative framework providing common rules and processes for assessments.</p> <p>Limited knowledge, skills and understanding of HIA.</p> <p>Resourcing issues could result in initial LG, industry and community resistance.</p> <p>Expectations may be raised too high for delivery of outcomes.</p> <p>May be difficult to administer especially related to enforceability and accountability.</p> <p>Systems for communication and interface with community need clarification.</p> <p>Potential for consultation fatigue.</p>

The mechanisms for resolution identified included:

- Development of appropriate communication plans with the general community, business, councillors and staff to build awareness and understanding. This should also include the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) and other associated state government agencies.
- Statutory amendment of legislation to enable integrated consideration of HIA in developmental approval processes and the Local Planning Policy Framework (LPPF).
- Non-statutory formalising of HIA key performance indicators into corporate strategic planning and business planning which is based on Code of Practice for the State Sustainability Strategy.
- Development of a model business case for the true cost of HIA implementation at LG level.
- Explore legislative requirement to make contribution to health benefits by developer (Local Developer Contribution Plans).

- Articulating the goals and objectives for a redefined role of LGs planning and management of communities that would be included in corporate strategic planning/ business planning. Proposal of new models for funding the cost shift.
- Establish an LG/State HIA Reference Group to oversee HIA.
- MOU between state and LGs on HIA implementation and inclusion of HIA into State and Local Government Sustainability Partnership.
- Undertake pilot program to demonstrate the effectiveness of HIA in LG planning and identify community needs.
- Implement reward and recognition program for positive HIA implementation which is integrated with local government pilot program.
- Develop appropriate university degree or graduate programme.
- DOH to provide centralised information and guidance.

Consider this

The current trend for land developers to provide attractive grassed open spaces often with water features, may not consider the long term implications of use and maintenance of these areas. Issues such as location, provision of shade, mosquito breeding sites, long term water quality, safe play areas for any age group or access for all among others may not have been considered with respect to the health and wellbeing of the future community. Early input of health considerations could result in better long term outcomes.

Stakeholder Questions:

15. Which mechanisms would be most appropriate for implementation of HIA in Local Government Scheme Reviews and Amendments and the development of Local Planning Strategies?
16. How should these mechanisms be implemented?
17. Are there any health criteria that should or should not be included in the assessment of Local Government Scheme Reviews and Amendments and the development of Local Planning Strategies?

4. Sustainability and Health Impact Assessment

“Sustainability assessment is a policy tool that can be used to provide information on the sustainability of an existing activity or new proposal or to promote the incorporation of sustainability principles into the development of new proposals. Sustainability assessment calls for consideration of the broad implications of a proposal or action, environmentally, socially, and economically, here and now, and further a field both spatially and temporally”. (Sustainability Background Paper, Government of Western Australia, 2004)

In 2003, the Gallop Government released “Hope for the future: the Western Australian state sustainability strategy” (the SSS)²⁸ followed by the “Sustainability code of practice for government agencies and resource guide for implementation”²⁹ in 2004. These demonstrated a commitment by Government to the sustainability assessment of complex and strategic projects as well as policies, plans programmes, projects, agreements, legislative proposals and Cabinet submissions within Government.

The purposes of the Sustainability Code of Practice³⁰ are *to ensure agencies understand sustainability and are aware of their obligations in relation to the code's goals, which are:*

- 1. Planning, reporting and decision making are conducted in accordance with sustainability principles.*
- 2. Agency operations support sustainability.*
- 3. Public sector employees are encouraged and empowered to support sustainability.*

Government agencies are required to (where appropriate) utilise sustainability assessment in planning and decision making, incorporate sustainability principles and practices into legislation and actively engage stakeholders and the public in transparent policy development and decision-making processes.

Sustainability Assessments (SA) provide integrated advice on proposals through a simultaneous consideration of environmental, social and economic impacts to meet the needs of both current and future generations. Health and wellbeing are associated with each of the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability.

To date the inclusion of health in SA has invariably focused on the provision of health services. However, engagement with health experts through the development of new policy and other activities within agencies which may have the potential to impact on the health and wellbeing of communities provides potential to improve the outcome of these proposals for communities.

The fine detail of SA is yet to be developed and this may be causing fear of what will be required of proponents to meet objectives. Responses to this paper should not be a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of SA but whether HIA could be used as a strategic tool to assist with the assessment of long term health and wellbeing outcomes of communities associated with development. Should support for HIA under these circumstances be demonstrated, the impetus for SA may be strengthened and clarity provided for directions to be taken.

Strengths of SA and HIA	Weaknesses of SA and HIA	Opportunities for SA with HIA	Threats from SA with HIA
<p>SA's ecological approach provides for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ universal features which can include social determinants of health ■ greater recognition and acceptance of health in sustainability ■ meeting current and future health requirements. <p>Its strategic, integrated approach enables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ interdepartmental coordination ■ amalgamation of multiple policy areas ■ integration of qualitative assessments. 	<p>Issues re sustainability assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ lack of understanding of the concept ■ very broad interpretation ■ not consistently applied across government ■ poorly promoted ■ requires concerted effort to build capacity across sectors. <p>Perceived lack of a uniform approach.</p> <p>Potential for the process to be over-governed.</p> <p>Lack of industry endorsement through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ agreed intent of SA, but no agreed application. <p>Lack of data support.</p> <p>Lack of research support for monitoring communities.</p>	<p>Great potential for this process (SA) to be used strategically through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ an overarching policy framework to focus on the larger picture of development rather than individual projects ■ consideration of cumulative health and wellbeing impacts. <p>Reduction of some of the controversy associated with current development processes.</p> <p>Community inclusiveness and opportunities for stakeholder and community input during the early stages.</p> <p>Partnerships across government and other sectors can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ enhance outcomes ■ provide transparency in decision making ■ ensure monitoring of outcomes provides feedback for improvements. 	<p>Lack potential impacts for industry.</p> <p>May increase bureaucratic requirements.</p> <p>An absence of any one agency having responsibility for SA resourcing and implementation.</p> <p>Potential to trade off the environmental and social components against the economic returns.</p>

The **mechanisms for resolution** identified included:

- Developing appropriate legislation.
- Ensuring key industry players champion SA and enter into partnerships with government.
- Use of established frameworks of wellbeing to provide appropriate indicators for SA.
- Development of appropriate sustainability criteria for strategic plans and projects assessments.
- Development of appropriate guidance documentation for proponents.
- Development of simple integrated assessment processes.

Consider this

Currently in Western Australia we have planning policy that allows childcare facilities to be located on major thoroughfares in areas zoned for commercial uses. International evidence has clearly demonstrated the potential adverse health effects upon children of prolonged exposure to vehicular fumes and the risks to children's safety and health associated with heavy commercial traffic, including exposure to constantly high noise levels. This issue has raised considerable concern within our communities. The DPI has developed new policy in the form of a Bulletin that aims to improve the safety of children in childcare facilities by improving the location and development of childcare centres. This effort by a non-health agency to protect the health of children is notable. However, no provision currently exists for the DOH, or any other agency concerned with child health, development and wellbeing to formally engage with the DPI early in the development of such policy: which clearly has health as a main agenda. A process that enables early engagement and participation by the key stakeholders would ensure the provision of sound scientific evidence to support policies such as this in the developmental stage.

Stakeholder Questions

18. Which mechanisms would be most appropriate for implementation of HIA in Sustainability Assessment?
19. How should these mechanisms be implemented?
20. What vehicle should be used to ensure inclusion of health considerations in government activities including policy and strategic planning?
21. Are there any health criteria that should or should not be included in the assessment of government and other stakeholder policies and strategic planning?

Other Issues Relating to the Implementation of Health Impact Assessment

Our investigations have shown that the consideration of health issues in new development in Western Australia should not be limited by approvals processes that focus on one sector. The development of major policies that are potentially applied to all areas of the State should have an assessment of the health and wellbeing implications included in the decision making discussions. Similarly, localised proposals that individually may only affect a small proportion of the community but when combined with others in a region could result in significant health outcomes need mechanisms to provide for assessments of cumulative impacts.

HIA should be applied to all types of proposals; that is, policies, programmes, plans and projects, to provide the greatest benefits to the people of Western Australia. Its objectives would be severely limited if it were restricted to the activities of any one decision making process.

Authority to require HIAs

The Discussion Paper for the new Public Health Act discussed the links between the environment, land use planning and health and indicated that the new act could support the requirements for HIA. This could be implemented through an inquiry power that could allow all issues of public health concern to be investigated and reported on in a public and transparent way.

The mechanisms for this to occur are to be developed based on the outcomes of these discussion processes.

Stakeholder Questions

22. Under what circumstances should HIA be legislatively required to ensure decision-making includes the consideration of health and wellbeing impacts?
23. What regulatory requirements should be applied to DOH for any or all types and components of HIA?

Links with other agencies/decision makers

Most decision making for new development for all proposal types currently occurs without formalised input from the health sector. Usually, the consideration of health issues focuses on requirements established under current legislation and requests from Decision Making Authorities for advice from specific sectors within DOH. Decisions and associated conditions are established by the Minister for the specific department.

Stakeholder Question

24. Should current decision-making process be changed to provide for decision-making and conditions on health impacts for all proposal types?
25. How should these proceed?
26. Should the Minister for Health have a role in decision making processes?

Other sector links

Many others could contribute to the HIA process as the protection and enhancement of health and wellbeing is of relevance to all. These include agencies which are involved in social and environmental wellbeing such as housing, education, sport and recreation, community development, the arts, disability services, conservation, agriculture and so on. Non-government organisations from the health, environment and planning sectors and others have much to offer as do the associations that support industry and other developers.

Stakeholder Questions

27. What other sectors could be involved in HIA processes?
28. How could their involvement be maximised to provide the greatest benefits?

The HIA framework and supporting documentation

A generic HIA framework has been presented in this paper and it is not anticipated that the WA framework would change much. Given a legislative requirement for HIA, the development of appropriate regulations and guidance materials becomes of great importance. It has been recognised that there is limited expertise in HIA within WA but the expertise associated with particular health issues that could be included is extensive. Being able to take advantage of this expertise is important for appropriate development of HIA into the future.

Stakeholder Questions

29. What mechanisms should be established to provide for expert input (both within DOH and externally) into the development of HIA regulations and other documentation?
30. How can these mechanisms be supported?

Monitoring and auditing

The EIA process establishes conditions for proponents which must be adhered to and compliance is audited through licensing systems. Proponents must establish appropriate monitoring regimes and report regularly to environmental regulators; these reports are available to the community. Concerns about specific activities can be raised through an appeals system and investigated and, when necessary conditions can be modified.

Where conditions have been placed on proposals that have a health basis, such as emissions or noise levels, no mechanisms currently exist for health assessment of the outcomes of the monitoring programmes unless so requested by the environmental regulator.

Under land use planning regimes, less monitoring and auditing occurs. Developers are required to meet planning and development requirements during construction phases and on completion and where environmental assessments have been undertaken, to demonstrate compliance with conditions. LG and other authorities undertake compliance auditing during and on completion of developments. The mechanisms to assess the long-term effectiveness of social and environmental objectives are limited to consideration of individual and community satisfaction. One of the few means of determining effectiveness (or not) is complaint levels to Ministers, LG or agencies.

The effectiveness of any programme should be determined through appropriate evaluation. The general framework for HIA includes evaluation of the process to consider health impacts and the outcomes of decision-making as well as an evaluation of the effectiveness of health outcomes as a result of the HIA. It is appropriate that the health of the community is monitored through the current DOH health survey processes but these will require expansion to include issues currently not considered.

Stakeholder Questions

31. Should proponents be required to report on the long term health and wellbeing outcomes of their proposals? Explain.
32. Should proponents be required to address from a health perspective the issues currently reported upon such as air emissions, noise or water quality?
33. If health reporting should be required:
 - a. which proposals should be monitored,
 - b. what compliance reporting should be required,
 - c. to whom should reporting outcomes be directed, and
 - d. what role should the community take in the process?
34. Should there be penalties for non-compliance with reporting and what form should these take?

Liability

It is important that potentially adverse health impacts are mitigated before the proposal is commenced and that appropriate steps have been taken to minimise potential cumulative impacts. It is difficult to show causal links between specific activities and health outcomes as there are many other factors that must be taken into account including individual life choices and other activities in the area. However, occasionally people believe their health has been affected by others' activities and wish to seek compensation.

Proposals referred to the EPA are usually managed by the proponent on construction and therefore liability for health impacts to the community, if established can be directed appropriately.

The responsibilities of town and regional developers often end with completion of developments when titles are transferred to others. Common law applies to these titles and developers are subject to normal contractual agreements after transfer. However, the establishment of and the responsibility for common facilities within developments may not be as clearly defined and the onus for resolution should health issues arise may be difficult to resolve. Responsibility is often transferred to LG.

Stakeholder Questions

35. Who should be responsible for health issues arising from the implementation of proposals that have been assessed through HIA, and under what circumstances?
36. What should be required for resolution?

Building capacity for Health Impact Assessment

Although expertise in HIA in WA is limited, programmes need to be established to increase awareness of and appropriate training for decision makers, government agencies, local government, consultants and the community.

Community training packages

DOH is working with the tertiary sector to assist with development of new courses that will ensure long-term capacity in HIA. These include courses at Curtin and Murdoch Universities and TAFEs. Other programmes throughout the tertiary education sector in WA provide specialist training for newcomers to areas of health which can contribute to the knowledge base.

Stakeholder Questions

37. Are other community training programmes required, and if so what programmes should be available?
38. What other roles could the tertiary education sector provide?
39. Should an accreditation process for HIA practitioners be developed?

Training for the approvals sector

DOH will develop an information programme for the various sectors within the approvals process including public health practitioners, proponents, consultants, approvals agencies, local government and the community. A training package for practitioners will also be developed.

Stakeholder Question

40. What specific knowledge and skills training should be included in programmes for HIA practitioners involved in the approvals process (within DOH and externally)?

Regulations and Guidance documentation

Regulations for HIA will arise from inclusion of HIA in the new public health legislation. Guidance documentation and specific minimum criteria for specific components of the process will be developed and published on the DOH website.

Similarly, a bank of information for use by proponents and the community could be developed to assist with the process. This could include case studies of HIAs already undertaken, appropriate databases of information for specific sectors or fields and reporting outcomes.

Stakeholder Question

41. What specific documentation should be provided by DOH and what priority for development given to each?

Resourcing

All activities for HIA will require resourcing both in terms of expertise and funding to carry out specific activities. This applies to other sectors as well as DOH. The ability to generate revenue for approvals processes is limited especially since proponents are required to finance the assessment components of approvals applications.

Stakeholder Questions

42. What role should the Department of Health take with respect to management of positive and negative impacts from activities?
43. Which sectors within the Department of Health should be involved?
44. What resources within the Department of Health are required to implement HIA?
45. What external resources are required for HIA's implementation?

Where To From Here?

This Discussion Paper has provided an overview of the HIA process and an explanation of the four approvals processes currently being considered for the inclusion of health and wellbeing issues in environmental, statutory and strategic land use planning and development processes in Western Australia.

Your input to the issues and questions raised in this paper will be compiled and presented to Government for decisions on the future directions of Health Impact Assessment.

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