Social Impact Assessment Guidelines for Assessing Development Applications

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Introduction

Social impact considerations are an integral part of the development assessment process. These guidelines will assist:

- applicants
- the community, and
- Council,

in ensuring potential social impacts are identified and addressed.

What is social impact assessment?

Social impact assessment (SIA) is concerned with the human dimensions of environments. It balances social, economic and environmental objectives, and seeks to predict, anticipate and understand the potential impacts of development.

Definition & Principles

Social impacts are changes that occur in:

- 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); and
- Their community (its cohesion, stability, character, services and facilities).1

The following principles are important in assessing social impacts:

- Include minimum and pertinent information
- Recognise rights of all stakeholders
- Identify positive as well as negative impacts
- Enable participation of affected communities
- Be practical and action focused
- Address inter-generational equity
- Address social equity issues

Objectives

Key objectives of Randwick Local Environmental Plan1998 assist in explaining the need for the guidelines:

(j)   to enhance individual and community economic well-being and welfare and safeguard the welfare of future generations, and

(k)   to encourage consideration of social consequences when decisions are made in the implementation of Randwick LEP 1998.

Aims

These guidelines describe:

- two levels of social impact assessment,
- the type of information required,
- the land uses which require assessment, and
- how to prepare and assess social impact assessments. These guidelines aim to:

    i.   assist applicants and Council to identify and quantify social impacts, affected groups and individuals, and improvements and adverse impacts.

    ii.   give equitable emphasis to social, cultural, economic, ecological and environmental effects, recognising that social impacts often overlap.

    iii.   acknowledge the concept of intergenerational equity by assessing applications on sustainability principles.

Who will be involved in the SIA process?

Roles of main parties

Council

- Advise applicants as to whether an SIA required under these guidelines.
- Undertake SIA early in the development assessment process.
- Formulate conditions of development consent to alleviate any negative social impacts of a development.
- Carry out SIA for all strategic planning projects which will impact on the social profile of Randwick City including all rezoning proposals, development control plans, section 94 contributions plan and reviews of, and major studies/strategy documents which contain strategic planning actions. *

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- Monitor social impacts of approved developments.

  *Note: although these guidelines are designed for DAs, Council will also use them for its statutory planning obligations as described above.

Applicant

- Consult with Council early in the development concept stage on SIA requirements and issues.
- Consult with communities potentially affected by a development.
- Prepare SIA and adequately address any possible social impacts.
- Monitor social impacts.

Community

- Participate in the DA process during public consultation stage.
- Involvement through survey, community meetings or written submissions.
- Assist in monitoring social impacts.

Legislative context

Randwick City Council has a statutory obligation under Section 79C of the Environmental Planning and Assessment (EPA) Act, 1979, to consider the social impacts of a proposal, where relevant, in assessing development applications.

Note: these guidelines do not replace the statutory requirements for Class 1 and Class 2 SIAs for licensed premises under relevant NSW legislation.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Randwick Local Environmental Plan 1998, as amended;
- Draft Randwick City Plan;
- Randwick Section 94 Contributions Plan; and
- Other relevant statutory plans, Council reports and policies.

Date of approval and commencement

These guidelines come into effect on 30 June, 2006.

Land covered by these guidelines

These guidelines apply to all land within the Randwick Local Government Area.

Levels of Assessment

Two levels of assessment are required for developments depending upon the complexity and type of proposal:

1. Social impact comment (basic level of assessment); or

   For the majority of proposals, it is expected that any social impact comment can be adequately addressed by an appropriate comment(s) in the *statement of environmental effects* required to be lodged with all DAs. A social impact comment will not be required for minor DAs.

   See Randwick Development Application Guide for advice on a social impact comment.

2. Social Impact Assessment (more in depth assessment) where *significant* social impacts are anticipated or

For proposals which require an SIA, these guidelines should be used to assist in their preparation and assessment.

What types of development will require an SIA under these guidelines?

An SIA is *generally* required for **housing developments^ with more than 50 residential units, and other proposals in excess of 4,000 square metres site area** and the following land use types regardless of those size requirements:

- Backpacker accommodation
- Boarding houses
- Brothel
- Drug rehabilitation centre
- Entertainment complex (cinema, amusement centre)
- Industry (greater than10,000 square metres gross floor area)
- New licensed premises/significant expansion of existing licensed premises
- Public transport
- Restricted premises

^ Housing developments comprise multi-unit housing, serviced apartments and Seniors' Living.

The above list is indicative only. Council reserves the right to request a Social Impact Assessment when it determines it necessary, depending upon the scale and nature of the proposal.

When should a Social Impact Assessment be prepared?

If the answer to any of the following questions is YES or POSSIBLY, the issue needs to be appropriately addressed in a social impact assessment.

- Is the proposal likely to give rise to a significant increase or reduction in the number of persons living or working on or visiting the site?
- Is the proposal likely to disadvantage or benefit any particular social group?
- Is the proposal likely to give rise to an increase or decrease in employment opportunities in the locality?
- Is the proposal likely to have a significant impact on the existing housing stock in the locality, particularly low rental housing?
- Is the proposal likely to have an impact upon existing community meeting places or give rise to an increased demand for community facilities or services in the locality?
- Will on-site support services be required?
- Is the proposal likely to give rise to increased conflict in the community or adversely impact upon community identity?
- Is the proposal likely to enhance or detract from the cultural life of the community?
- Will the proposal create areas of risk for occupants or pedestrians within or adjacent to the development?
- Is the proposal likely to give rise to increased community concern regarding public safety?

Potential social impacts

The following is a list of potential broad social issues which may need to be addressed in a development:

- Access & mobility
- Accommodation & housing
- Community services and facilities
- Community identity & cohesion
- Public safety
- Impact on future generations
- Economic
- Cultural
- Community values
- Employment
- Health
- Demographics (population size and characteristics)
- Interaction between new development and existing community
- Needs of social groups (women, aged, persons with disability, children, youth, indigenous, and ethnic)
- Recreation facilities
- Social equity

Pre- DA process

Applicants are encouraged to meet with Council staff prior to lodging a development application. Council staff will advise whether an SIA is required. Council Strategic Planning staff will also assist with general relevant issues relating to the social assessment process and methodology.

Note: The SIA to which these guidelines refer does not infer a statutory requirement for an SIA under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979.

A statutory requirement for an EIS is set out in Part 5 of the Act. These guidelines are not to be used for proposals made in relation to that Part.

What should a SIA contain?

Generally, an SIA should contain the following information:

- Community/social profile;
- Identification of the scope of the assessment;
- Formulation and examination of social impacts including description of how any potential negative social impacts will be minimised or mitigated;
- Description of the overall net community benefit;
- Community involvement and consultation, and
- Any monitoring required.

Community/social profile

The extent and detail of data collection will depend upon the nature and scope of a development. As a minimum, the profile should describe the social characteristics of the affected community and preliminary investigation of possible issues. Appendix 1 contains a list of data sources.

The social profile should include relevant community consultation. The type of consultation used will depend upon the type of proposed development and its potential impacts. It can include personal contact, focus groups, surveys and presentation groups.

Appendix 2 contains examples of social indicators which may be examined in the development of a community and social profile.

Identify the scope of assessment

This should identify the breadth of the SIA including:
- The geographical boundaries of the study;
- Likely areas of impact including an examination of the surrounding land uses;
- Key issues of concern relating to the project; and
- Stakeholders including the developer, affected individuals, groups or communities and the way in which they are to be included in the assessment process.

Project and estimate the impacts

Address positive and adverse social impacts. To understand comparative impact, a proposal should be examined in relation to available alternatives. An assessment must examine and compare alternatives (including the 'no go' option) and their social impacts.

Identify proposed mitigation measures

Where an assessment identifies negative impacts, mitigation measures must be investigated. They should contain specific details of particular characteristics of the affected community. The measures should aim to minimise the impact of the proposal where possible so that impacts are acceptable within the context of the proposal. The proposal should demonstrate an overall net benefit to the community;

Community involvement

The level of consultation will vary according to the proposal. Applicants should discuss the proposed method of consultation with Council before preparing an SIA.

This stage of an assessment should:

- Identify potential public concerns and values;
- Gather information from the public;
- Undertake relevant public liaison/consultations about possible actions or alternatives and their potential consequences;
- Develop and maintain credibility; and
- Improve decision making.

How to assess a development application

Guidelines for Council & applicants

Overall factors to consider include:

1. Scoping and profiling

- Has the applicant considered all possible impacts?
- Has a balanced assessment of the project been provided?
- Is the data presented sufficient to demonstrate the benefits and justify the significance of the impacts?
- Is the data sufficient and reliable?

2. Formulating alternatives, impact management

- Is the proposal reasonable in the context of its overall net benefits?
- Can its impacts be adequately minimised or, a net benefit be demonstrated?
- Does it adequately address community concerns?

The checklist at Appendix 3 should be used by applicants in assessing social impacts and preparing an SIA.

Where any part of the checklist cannot be completed, additional information should be sourced.

More questions to ask

In addition to the checklist, consider:

- does the application adequately address the social impacts? or
- will it need ongoing monitoring and consent conditions to ensure it does?

How to monitor social impacts

An applicant should identify any impacts that need monitoring and how monitoring will be achieved. Council may also consider the following monitoring approaches, including:

Options for monitoring	Methods and important issues
Regular reports on specific impacts provided by owner/developer	Established in a condition of consent with periodic review with the onus on the developer to report on social impact issues as decided by Council consistent with its current reporting priorities and available resources.
Monitoring by the public	Important role in monitoring impacts of specific developments and categories of developments.
Committees set up under conditions of consent/Council monitoring	Council officers from various departments, residents, users and stakeholders subject to current reporting priorities and available resources.

Source: Cox & Miers.

How to get advice

Please contact Council for further assistance on when and how to prepare an SIA:

- Customer Service Centre on 9399 0885;
- Strategic Planning Division on 9399 0992.

Or, visit Council at its administrative building on Frances Street, Randwick NSW 2031 during business hours.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Sources of data

The following list is not exhaustive and applicants and Council may consult
other sources.

Randwick City Council	- Cultural plan - Draft City Plan - Demographic and suburb profiles - Community Services directory - Development approval data - Social/community profiles and indicators - State of the Environment Reports - Annual reports - Management Plan - Historical land use information - Rate information – number of dwellings, land - Internet access at library
Australian Bureau of Statistics	- Census data (demographic, economic/employment, housing) - Census computer data products: CDATA, - Manufacturing and retail censuses - Economic and employment/unemployment - Social trends data - Victims of crime survey for availability - Building and construction data - data - Disability data - Health data - Tourism data
NSW Government Agencies *Note all NSW government agency web sites can be accessed from the State Government homepage.*	
NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (Attorney General's Department)	- Crime statistics for NSW and LGAs - Specialist crime data and comparative trend analysis
Department of Community Services	- Supported accommodation information - Child abuse and domestic violence statistics
Department of Education and Training	- Enrolments in government and private schools - Enrolment of special groups (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders; Non-English Speaking Background students).
Department of Housing	Housing and Rental Bond Board data (rents, dwelling types) – quarterly *Rent and Sales Report*

Transport and Population Data Centre (Dept. of Planning)	▪ Passenger travel for all modes of transport
	▪ (by traffic zones and statistical local areas)
	▪ Journey to work data
	▪ Freight movement survey
	▪ Population projections (LGA and regions)
	▪ Demographic trend analyses
Department of Planning	▪ Employment Lands Development Program data
	▪ Regional housing statistics and market analysis
	▪ Metropolitan Urban Development Program
	data – new release areas
	▪ (MUDP) production data – established areas
NSW Health Department	▪ Health statistics
NSW Police	▪ Mapped crime data by local commands (available through local police stations)
	▪ Crime data
	▪ Annual customer satisfaction surveys (levels of reporting and police response)
Tourism NSW	▪ Visitor numbers (by country of origin)
	▪ Hotel/motel accommodation figures
	▪ Tourist expenditure data
NSW Valuer General	▪ Average house prices by type of dwelling and locality
Commonwealth Government Agencies	
Centrelink	▪ Number of persons on social security benefits (by postcode or region)
Department of Employment and Workplace Affairs	▪ Quarterly Statistics (unemployment rates, labour force data)

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Appendix 2: Examples of Social Indicators

GROUPINGS QUANTITATIVE	INDICATORS	QUALITATIVE INDICATORS
Social Profile	▪ Size of population and net migration ▪ Mobility data ▪ Age structure ▪ Single parent rate ▪ Divorce rate ▪ Age structure of labour ▪ Labour force participation ▪ Distribution of wealth ▪ Age left school ▪ Nature of dwelling occupancy ▪ Language spoken at home ▪ Country of birth ▪ Occupational mobility ▪ Educational attainment ▪ Motor vehicle ownership ▪ Median income	
Social Cohesion	▪ In/out migration ▪ Level of attendance at community events/festivals/markets etc. ▪ Presence of active social/professions/trade/ volunteer organisations.	▪ Density of acquaintance, family/friends networks ▪ Interrelationship between the groups & the associations in the area. ▪ Participation in recreational activities.
Social Resilience	▪ Presence of thriving voluntary sector. ▪ Presence of business incubators e.g. cooperatives. ▪ Level of community involvement in planning activities	▪ Assessment of spirit/energy in area e.g. new initiatives, community capacity to change. ▪ Vitality of Chamber of Commerce. ▪ Presence/absence of success stories in area i.e.: previous change experiences.

Source: Shellharbour City Council

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Appendix 3: Assessment checklist

SOCIAL IMPACT CHECKLIST			
Impact	Likely to result from the proposed development		Comments
	Yes	No	
Demographic change ▪ changing community needs & ▪ expectations ▪ significant population changes			
Accommodation & housing ▪ low income housing ▪ affordable housing ▪ housing for special needs groups ▪ housing for older people & those with a disability			
Needs of older people ▪ access issues ▪ availability of support services			
Needs of people with a disability ▪ access issues ▪ signs ▪ availability of support services			
Needs of younger people ▪ childcare issues ▪ children's needs ▪ youth			
Health impacts ▪ health effects of water and air quality ▪ toxic wastes & hazardous chemicals			
Cultural issues ▪ needs of people on non-English speaking backgrounds ▪ Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander issues ▪ religious needs ▪ other cultural issues			
Neighbourhood & community ▪ neighbourhood safety ▪ community identity ▪ community severance ▪ community cohesion			
Facility requirements ▪ need for community services & facilities ▪ recreation needs ▪ state government provided facilities ▪ (education & health) ▪ transport (public or private)			
Economic issues ▪ local employment generation ▪ unemployment ▪ business development			

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Cumulative impacts ▪ redundant facilities & possible re-use ▪ effects of similar types of developments in the locality			
Transport/access issues ▪ is access equitable for all, e.g. aged, disabled, youth? ▪ will public transport be required to provide access? ▪ what are the existing arrangements?			

Note: Where any part of the checklist cannot be competed, additional information and assessment may need to be undertaken prior to lodgement of a DA.

Acknowledgements/References

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