

BOOK REVIEWS

Harvey, N (1998)

Environmental Impact Assessment: Procedures, Practice, and Prospects in Australia
Oxford University Press, Melbourne. ISBN 0-19-553809-9. 233pp. (Price not stated).

There has been a need for a standard text on EIA in Australia for some time, and Nick Harvey, Director of the Mawson Graduate School of Environmental Studies at the University of Adelaide, may be commended for this work. The little known and poorly updated *EIA in Australia* by Thomas (1996), and the more widely available *EIA: Cutting Edge for the 21st Century* by Gilpin (1995), (which relies heavily on Australian examples), fail to provide the level of detail required for today's student or practitioner.

The book begins with an overview of the evolution of EIA, together with methods and procedures, before setting out in Chapter 2 the legislative and administrative requirements of each of the states and territories. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 discuss these requirements with regard to the 'before, during and after' of EIA in Australia: screening, scoping and levels of assessment; EIS preparation and public participation; and assessment, decision-making, monitoring, auditing and appeal rights.

Chapter 6 considers EIA practice in Australia with reference to a number of case studies from the states and territories. It describes and analyses a varied selection of significant, controversial project EISs produced to date, including: Sydney Harbour Tunnel (NSW), Tindal Airbase (NT), Magnetic Quay (Qld), Hindmarsh Island (SA), Mt Lyell Mine (Tas), Mornington Marina (Vic), and Quicklime (WA). A number of conclusions are reached which highlight the inadequacies of current processes.

One of these is the difficulty that is caused by overlapping EIA regimes, particularly between the states, territories and the Commonwealth. The requirements of the latter are presently subject to substantial legislative overhaul, and new provisions will attempt to overcome this difficulty through accreditation. In Chapter 7, Harvey evaluates the existing legislative and administrative arrangements of the Commonwealth, again with reference to the 'before, during and after' of EIA. The example of the Sydney third runway is examined, before the EIA review process is briefly outlined.

The final chapter is entitled 'prospects for Australian EIA in the 21st century'. This includes a discussion of comparisons between the procedures and practice of EIA in each of the Australian jurisdictions, future changes to EIA legislation (as at November 1997), an examination of the policy context of EIA in Australia, reference to the International Study into the Effectiveness of EIA, and an analysis of SEA, which is particularly recommended.

The primary criticism of Harvey's book relates to structure. It would have been very helpful if the policy context and the requirements of the Australian Commonwealth had been introduced much earlier. References are often made in Chapters 3-5 to documents such as the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment, the National Strategy for ESD and the National Agreement on EIA, and an understanding of these together with a discussion of the Commonwealth EIA requirements from the outset would have given a useful framework to the need and scope for requirements elsewhere.

Nevertheless, the book is an extremely well written and welcome contribution to the literature on Australian EIA. Harvey draws heavily on recent EIA texts available elsewhere to draw comparisons and emphasise global trends. The need for a list approach to screening proposals, EIS auditing, system monitoring and strategic environmental assessment are all identified, and given the likely Commonwealth legislative changes, a number of these matters may be required in the near future. Hopefully when these take effect, Harvey's book will be appropriately updated to become the standard text on EIA in Australia that it deserves.

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