

Southern Seawater Desalination Project SIA

Water Corporation has engaged consultants to undertake several studies to assist with the project design of the Southern Seawater Desalination Project. As part of these studies, Water Corporation has decided to undertake a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) to ensure that the project minimises negative social impacts and maximises positive social impacts.

What do we mean by SIA?

SIA is a “systematic analysis in advance of impacts on the day-to-day quality of life of persons and communities whose environment is affected by a proposed plan, program, project or policy change”¹ (Burdge, 2004: 2). It also identifies opportunities for mitigating these impacts to minimise negative outcomes.

Social Impacts refers to changes in the day-to-day life including such things as “the way people live, work, play, relate to one another, organise to meet their needs and generally cope as members of society”¹ (Burdge, 2004: 4).

What is the Purpose and Context?

The purpose of the SIA is threefold:

1. To identify and assess how the construction and operation of the desalination plant will change the lives of the community directly and indirectly affected by the Project;
2. To provide a list of likely social impacts and determine those that are significant; and
3. To identify mitigation, enhancement and monitoring measures to minimise the negative affects of the plant and maximise positive impacts.

What is the Scope?

The scope of the SIA will extend to all four of the project components: the ocean to desalination plant pipeline, the desalination plant, the desalination plant to tank pipeline and the tank. In addition, other impacts relating to supporting infrastructure, such as powerlines and workforce camps will be considered.

Project social impacts will be identified and assessed for SIA local and regional study areas and for the Project’s construction and operation.

It is expected that the SIA will be completed by December 2007.

What is the Approach?

The SIA approach will include community and key stakeholders input in identifying potential changes to the community. This involvement benefits the assessment in the following ways:

- Consideration of current and detailed information provided by stakeholders;
- A transparent and inclusive assessment of social impacts;
- Identification of mitigation and enhancement measures; and
- Proactive management of social impacts contributing to planning and project implementation as exemplified in Water Corporation’s sustainability principles.

¹ Burdge (2004) *A Community Guide to SIA*. 3rd Edition. Social Ecology Press.

The social impacts assessment process will involve the following six stages:

- Stage 1** The project – information about the project including its purpose, scope, history and construction and operation information.
- Stage 2** Community Profile – description of the potentially affected communities including demographics, its history and background, the community services and facilities available and the community values and use of the study area.
- Stage 3** SIA Stakeholder Input – contribution from key stakeholders in the process of identifying and ranking social impacts and identifying mitigation and enhancement measures.
- Stage 4** Identifying, assessment and ranking the SIA – analysis of the community profile and the project to identify social impacts, triangulation of findings from the various impact identification activities, analysis and ranking of social impacts.
- Stage 5** Mitigation, enhancement and monitoring measures – strategies for mitigating impacts to enhance positive consequences and minimise negative consequences of the Project.
- Stage 6** Production of SIA Report – production of draft SIA report.

The SIA will observe the impacts at two key stages in the project: construction and operation.

What is the Methodology?

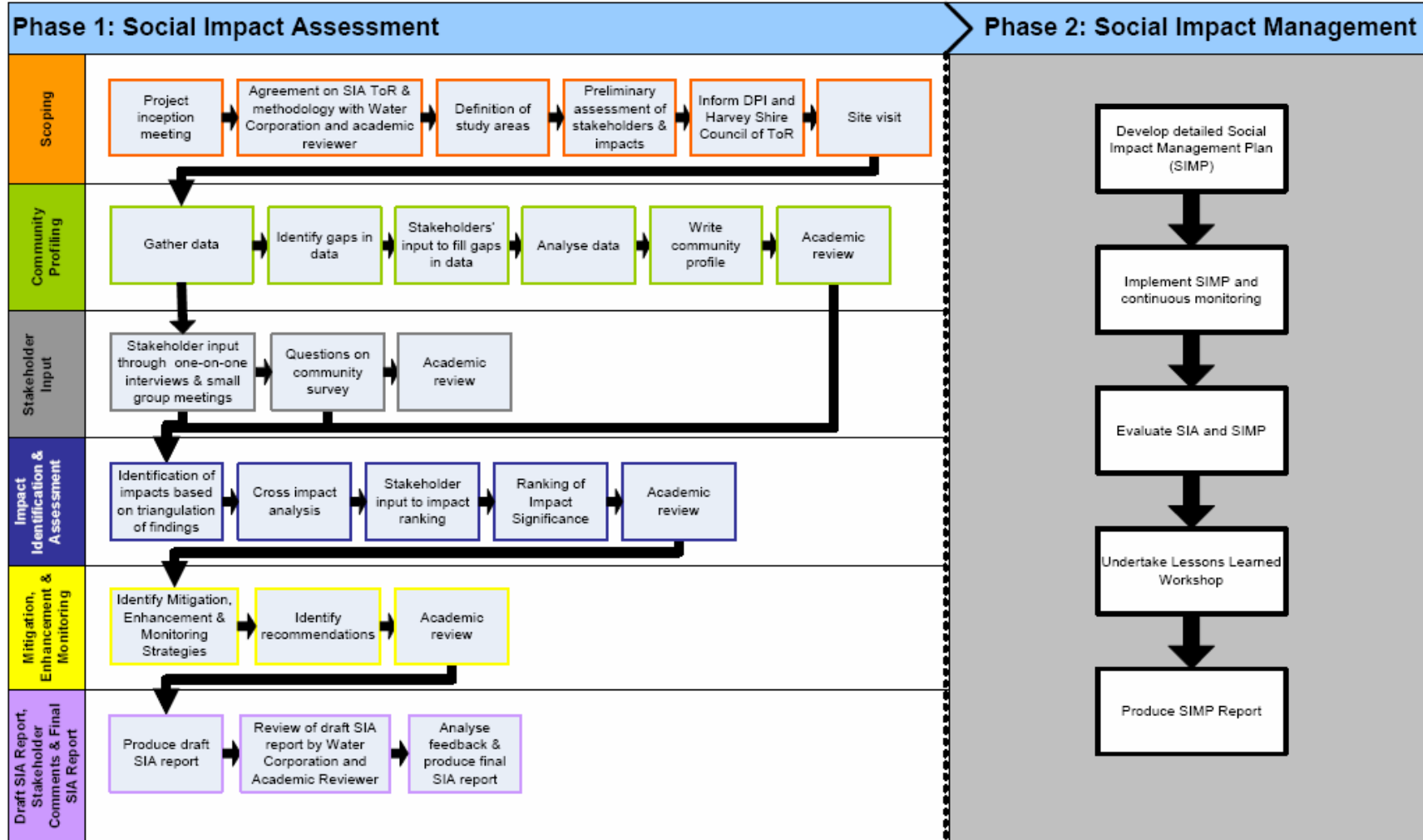
The proposed SIA methodology has been specifically designed for the Southern Seawater Desalination Plant after an initial scoping meeting for the Project.

Social impacts will be managed through a two-phased process as follows:

- Phase 1: conduct a SIA; and
- Phase 2: further develop and refine mitigation recommendations, manage implementation of mitigation measures and monitor and evaluate the social impacts up to the operation stage of the Project.

The proposed approach to the social impacts assessment is outlined at Figure 1.

Figure 1: SIA methodology flowchart



What social impacts are we looking at?

A variety of social impacts are explored based on stakeholder feedback, technical knowledge and past experience with similar projects. Some examples of the types of social effects that are explored in this SIA include the impact of the desalination project on: community services and facilities, crime and safety, land and housing, and tourism.

Additional Information

For additional information please contact Jo Madin from the Water Corporation on 94203913.