

Social impact assessment (SIA)

Factsheet

What is SIA?

Social impact assessment (SIA) is a practice and methodology. It is a process for the identification, analysis, assessment, management and monitoring of the social impacts of a project, both positive and negative (Coordinator-General's SIA Guideline, 2018). The aim of a SIA is to reduce the potential negative social consequences of a project for potentially impacted communities, and to enhance the potential benefits and opportunities. The principles that inform the development of a SIA are detailed in Section 2.2 of the SIA Guideline. The SIA process is iterative and spans the life cycle of a project. The phased assessment process includes:

- assessment activities, including scoping, baseline analysis, impact assessment, impact mitigation or avoidance, benefit enhancement, and preparation / submission of the SIA report
- implementation activities, including implementation, monitoring, review and update of the social impact management plan (SIMP).

A flowchart of the SIA process is [here](#).

The SIA process should facilitate identification and assessment of social impacts via a pathway evident throughout the SIA process.

There are several international standards and guidance materials that support good industry SIA (see Attachment 1 'Standards and guidance for good industry practice').

What are social impacts?

Project activities may cause changes to the social environment, which in turn affect people and the communities in which they live. The effects of these social changes on people and communities are referred to as 'social impacts'. Social impacts can be positive or negative, direct or indirect, project-specific or cumulative, temporary or permanent, experienced or perceived (see [Table 1](#)).

Table 1 Characteristics of a social impact

Social impact	Description	Example
Positive	Impacts which are beneficial to a person, stakeholder group or community	Positive contribution to community cohesion through increased long-term mining employment and population increases
Negative	Impacts which are not beneficial to a person, stakeholder group or community, or which cause harm	Increased demand for Police, Ambulance and Fire and Rescue Services resulting from population increases, including increased numbers of non-

Social impact	Description	Example
		residential personnel
Direct	Caused by a project activity	Relocation of households because of property acquisition
Indirect	Secondary effects of a direct impact	Reduced community cohesion and neighbourliness as a result of out-migration of residents due to property acquisition
Cumulative	Caused by multiple projects or activities occurring at the same time and in the same local/regional area	Increased road traffic reducing perceptions of road safety
Temporary	Lasting for only a limited period of time	Increased noise due to blasting activities during construction
Permanent	Lasting indefinitely	Reduced visual amenity due to vegetation clearing
Experienced	Felt by the body as a physical reality	Increased access to employment opportunities
Perceived	Perceptual or emotional	Perception of reduced community safety because of in-migration of

Social impact	Description	Example
		non-resident workers

Figure 1, below, illustrates how project induced social changes may have varying effects on different people or groups within a community. For example, deployment of a construction workforce to a regional community (for a project activity) may increase demand for housing and lead to a social change. This may result in increased rental accommodation costs for existing tenants (a direct negative impact), but may also result in increased revenue for rental property owners (a direct positive impact). Increased rental costs may cause stress, anxiety and lifestyle impacts for existing tenants (an indirect negative impact), however increased rental revenue may provide increased business opportunities for local businesses (an indirect positive impact).

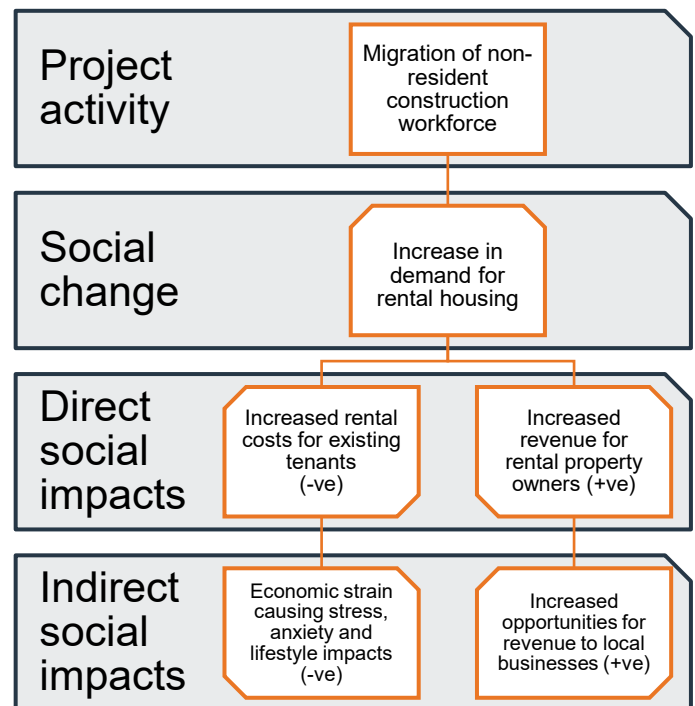


Figure 1 Example social impact pathway

Who should undertake the SIA study?

SIA is a specialised, yet transdisciplinary process, and practitioners may originate from a range of professional and academic backgrounds. Members of a SIA study team should have a demonstrated understanding of SIA practice, applicable social research methods, and associated community and stakeholder engagement approaches. Details of the SIA study team – including qualifications, experience, and respective roles in the study – should be provided in the SIA report.

Why is SIA required and who regulates social impacts?

The *Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities Act 2017* (SSRC Act) requires a social impact assessment (SIA) for all large resource projects subject to an environmental impact statement (EIS) under either the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971* (SDPWO Act) or the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*.

The SSRC Act and SIAs are regulated by the Coordinator-General.

The [SIA Guideline \(March 2018\)](#) was prepared by the Coordinator-General identifying the requirements for preparing an SIA. This guideline is a statutory instrument for resource projects and a non-statutory instrument for non-resource projects where they are subject to an EIS process under the SDPWO Act.

The Guideline highlights the importance of early engagement with stakeholders to establish

relationships and baseline data to inform project scope.

To support the preparation of SIAs, the Coordinator-General subsequently published '[Supplementary material for assessing and managing the social impacts of projects under the Coordinator-General's Social Impact Assessment Guideline](#)'. This supplementary material expands on the five key matters of the SIA Guideline and provides examples of suitable methods and approaches for proponent consideration throughout the SIA lifecycle.

Attachment 1: Standards and guidance for good industry practice

Guidance source	Description
International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA)	" <i>Social Impact Assessment: Guidance for assessing and managing the social impacts of projects</i> " www.iaia.org/uploads/pdf/SIA_Guidance_Document_IAIA.pdf
International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)	Relevant resources are available at: www.iap2.org.au/Resources/IAP2-Published-Resources
Australian Government Leading Practice for Sustainable Development (LPSD) Program for the Mining Industry	Resources available at: https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/leading-practice-handbooks-for-sustainable-mining
International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM)	Resources available at: www.icmm.com/en-gb/library#
International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA)	Resources available at: www.ipieca.org/resources/

Note: this list is not definitive, and proponents may identify additional sources of guidance which are applicable to individual projects.