

GREAT AUSTRALIAN BIGHT RESEARCH PROGRAM

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Project 6.1 Social profile of the Eyre and Western region:
literature review and community analysis



Project objectives

- Describe the region's social structure and processes driving change;
- Identify community perceptions of BP's activities in the region, including potential onshore development; and
- Develop an understanding of community capacity and capabilities



How does it fit in to the broader theme?



Oil and gas exploration activity could change the structure of at least some regional communities

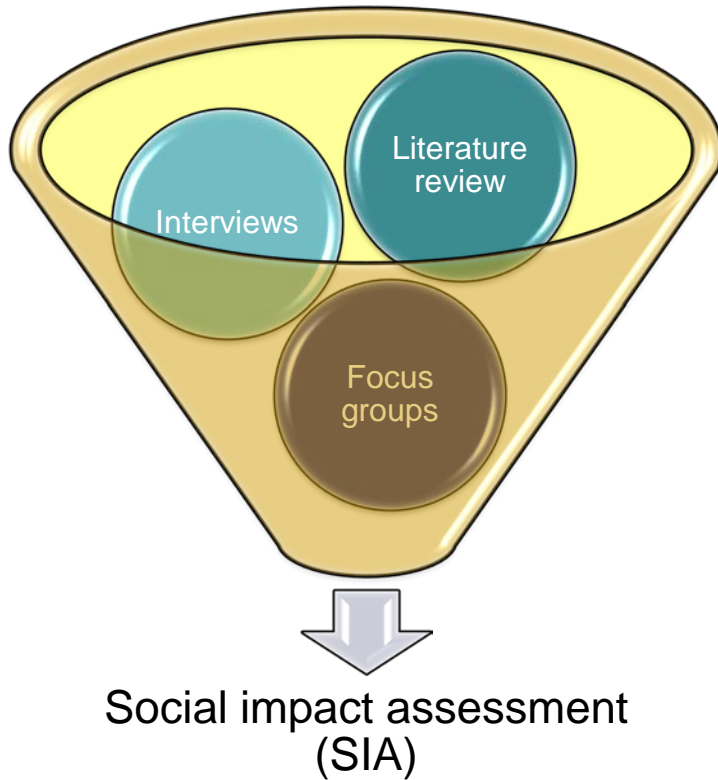


Significant changes can be expected if the results of exploration lead to development of a resource



Necessary to understand the current structure of communities (6.1), the regional economy and its labour market (6.2), with a focus on the region's fishing industries (6.3)

Approaches



Social Impact Assessment (SIA)

A technique developed by a number of disciplines in the social sciences

- focussed on anticipating change and measuring – or assessing – the likely impacts before they arise

SIA differs from other forms of evaluation – such as assessments or resource assessments, in that it:

- focusses on the ways in which people live their lives;
- considers cultural issues; and
- affords a central role to the community and the institutions that support it.

Literature Review

Found that EP&WC was/had

- A region strong in environmental capital
- Well developed social capital
- Significant social and economic gap between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal populations
- Population loss in inland areas
- Growth in coastal areas
- Strong export oriented primary production
- Strong regional identity
- Desire for jobs
- Impact of disparate project



Focus Groups and Key Stakeholder Interviews

- MPs
- State officials
- Local government councillors
- Local government officers
- Mayors

**Government
(State and
local)**



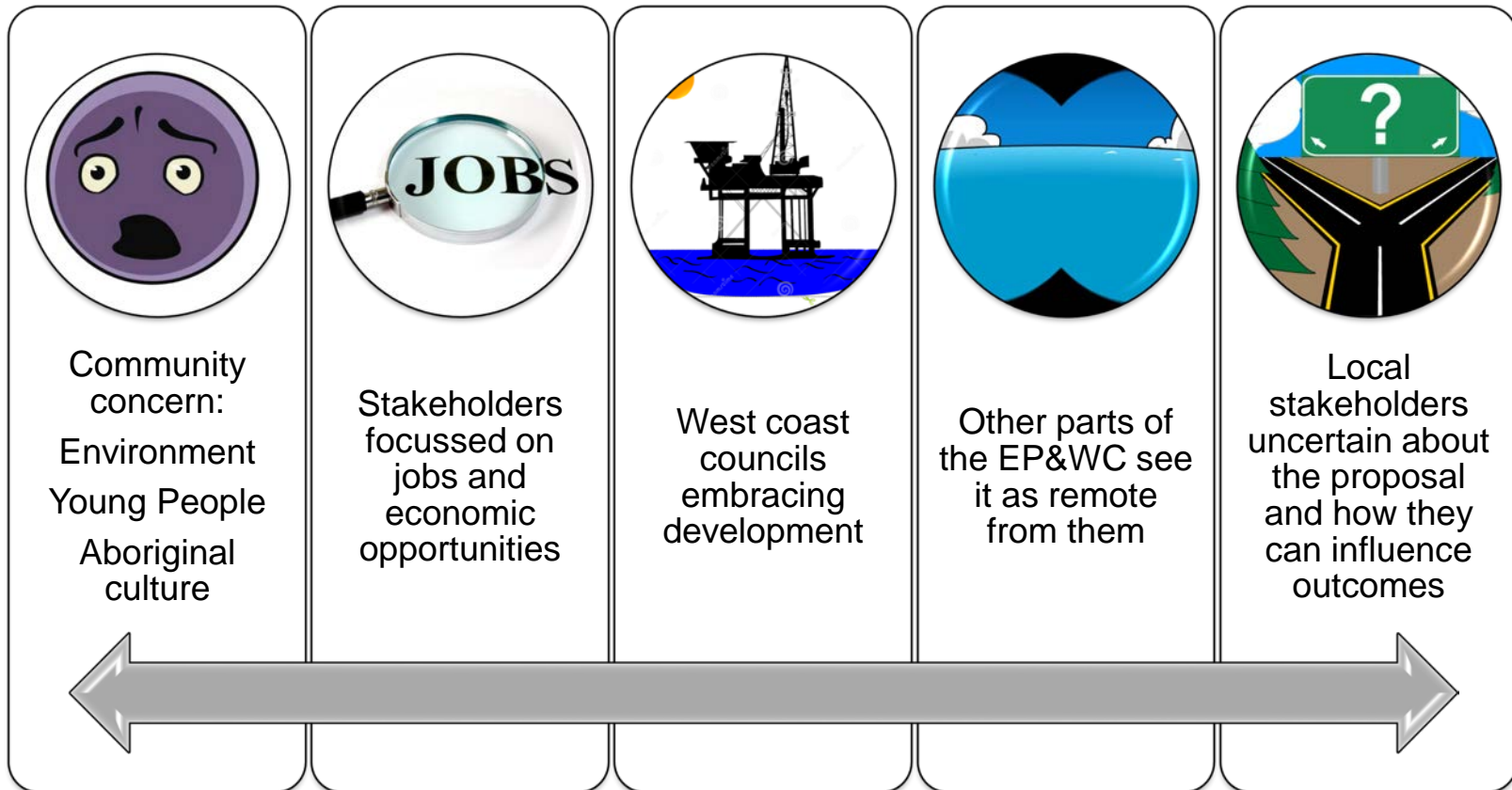
- NGOs
- Aboriginal organisations
- Industry groups
- Environmental groups

**Other
stakeholders**



Approximately 40 1:1 interviews; 12 focus groups

Key insights from interviews and focus groups



Conclusions: Uncertainty about the future

- Little is known about how commercial development would progress
 - Without this knowledge, many aspects of the SIA cannot be completed or cannot be completed adequately;
- Because of the nature of the proposed development there are few direct comparators to draw upon when examining the possibility of development;
 - Conventional offshore drilling is not seen to be a direct comparison;
 - Gulf of Mexico may provide a direct comparison, but it is likely that processes and technologies have progressed since then, and will have progressed much further by the time any development would take place in the GAB.

Conclusions: Community attitudes

- Communities of the Eyre Peninsula and the West Coast place great value on their pristine marine and terrestrial environments;
- Many in the general community are open to the possibility of development, but seek further information about proposals;
- Opposition to development is already well organised and will become more acute over time;
- The level of risk – to iconic species, the environment generally and humans – is a major concern across the community.

Overall conclusions

- The literature shows events such as Deepwater Horizon have a significant impact on mental and physical health in the community as well as the environment.
- In all probability, any impacts associated with exploration – sonar surveys and drilling – are likely to be short term and able to be mitigated. It is unclear if that is the case for commercial development.
 - Inform and engage with the affected communities, so they can understand both the level of risk and the measures being undertaken to manage that risk.
- Previous studies have found that there is a tendency for communities to overestimate the risks associated with a proposal, and underestimate the prospects for mitigation.
 - This is likely to be the case for the GAB, but in the absence of reliable information communities struggle to develop informed assessments.

Science impact

- Documenting the baseline social conditions is important in the event that any problems do eventuate
- The social impact assessment identified the key areas of concern of the local residents, as well as their expectations about the possible benefits and risks of the project
- This information will help developers and regional planners in their future planning for the region

