

The Hong Kong Institute of Environmental Impact Assessment (HKIEIA) is concerned with the advancement of the knowledge and management of EIAs as well as the continuing professional development for individuals involved in undertaking EIAs under the Ordinance. We are the only Institute that specifically addresses the challenges of undertaking and improving EIAs.

The Institute was founded in May 1996 and has been registered as a Society since October 1997. We have 194 Corporate, Fellows and Associated members in the public, private and academic sectors.

The HKIEIA believes the EIA Ordinance is the appropriate framework to undertake and implement EIAs in Hong Kong, and it works well. Of particular note is the Technical Memorandum, which gives clear guidance on the assessment criteria.

We believe that much of the criticism of the EIAO is due to the manner in which project proponents and their consultants undertake EIAs and relegate the risk to their contractors.

We can for example point to the following challenges outside the scope of the Ordinance.

- The EIA is frequently undertaken as part of an overall engineering design consultancy in which the assessment lacks independence and is given a low priority;
- EIAs are awarded to the lowest bidder, which may not have adequately appreciated the difficulties involved in the undertaking of the assessment. If a low price does not imply low quality, it certainly means employing less experienced staff undertaking the assessment with minimal senior input and supervision;
- Project proponents do not manage their consultants well and appear not to be knowledgeable on the content or implications of the EIAs. At times impossible conditions or requirements can be written into an EIA by a consultant to achieve approval. These conditions become part of the Environmental Permit. It is these conditions that the contractor cannot undertake and complaints are generated.
- Lastly, the Institute believes that there is a general lack of understanding as to how the EIAO works in practice and little appreciation of the spirit of partnership.

To meet these challenges, the HKIEIA plays an active role in competence building for professionals involved in EIAs.

We have established the Associated Monitoring Professional accreditation. This accreditation signifies that an individual has proven professional expertise in undertaking and management of monitoring programmes. These individuals should be the Independent Environmental Checkers needed to certify Environmental Monitoring and Audit reports under the Ordinance. The use of this accreditation is currently not specified.

In addition we have recently established an EIA practitioners list identifying those professionals who in our opinion have demonstrated satisfactory achievement in undertaking EIAs.

In conclusion, if this panel is interested in improving the performance of the EIA process, the HKIEIA believes that focus should be given primarily to quality and qualifications of the individuals and the submissions involved.

The Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance is appropriate.

Dr. Glenn Frommer
Honourable Secretary
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