

**Situating health impact assessment
within Indigenous policymaking: a
necessary tool for improving health and
well-being**



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Public Policy



- Paradigm shift \Rightarrow Holistic, interdisciplinary consideration of health
- Public policy i.e transport, housing, welfare \Rightarrow Most important determinant of health
(Scott Samuel, 2001)
- Need to routinely assess health impact





Health Impact Assessment



Definition:

A combination of procedures, methods and tools by which policy, program or project may be assessed and judged for its potential, and often unanticipated, effects on the health of the population and the distribution of those effects within the population

(modified Gothenburg definition, in Mahoney & Morgan, 2001)

- Policy-linked HIA \Rightarrow Add value to policy development process
- Health considerations NOT overlooked





Keys words give clues



- *Potential – prospective*
- *Often unanticipated – not picked up elsewhere*
- *Combination – no one approach*
- *Effects on health – as distinct from other effects*
- *Differential– equity dimension*
- *Assessed and judged – two steps*





Why HIA? Aims...



The aim is to improve public health by adding health awareness to policy making at every level and making concern for improved public health a norm in all policy making

(UK Cabinet Office, 1999)



The focus of policy-linked HIA is...



- Socio-environmental model of health
- Population/differential perspective
- Maximising health gains
- Policy driven
- Participatory
- Intersectoral/Multidisciplinary
- Use of qualitative and quantitative evidence
- Support and improve evidence based decision-making, contributing to improvements in health and reduction in health inequalities

HIA – Why is it necessary in Indigenous Policy-Making



- Legacy of poor policy making for Indigenous affairs

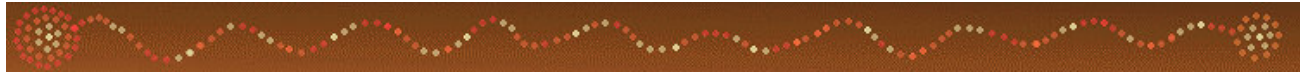


- Self-determination - key feature of Aboriginal life
- Indigenous definitions of health - holism

“Health does not just mean the physical well-being of the individual but refers to the social, emotional, spiritual and cultural well-being of the whole community.”

National Aboriginal Health Strategy (1990)

HIA within an Indigenous context – what does it have to offer?



“As Government policies appear to have so far been ineffective at changing socio-economic disparities and Indigenous rights remain vulnerable to legislative erosion or extinguishment, new and visionary approaches to Indigenous rights protection and self determination need to be considered.”

(Behrendt, 2000)

Added Value of HIA... (Kemmm, 2001)



- Clarifying the various ways in which health and wellbeing may be influenced by the proposed Strategy initiatives
- Explore the trade-offs inherent in reaching optimal policy decisions conducive to health and well-being
- Provide informed opportunities to reduce/avoid potential negative impacts and enhance positive factors in their recommendations
- Facilitate increased stakeholder participation, thereby increasing the transparency of the policy development process
- Ensure that health considerations are taken into account in a context where they otherwise would not be.



Case Study



Health Impact Assessment:
Development of a specific tool to
identify and analyse the health
impacts of a current Indigenous
family violence initiative



Indigenous Family Violence ...



■ Definition:

“...includes all forms of violence in intimate relationships (such as spousal abuse, child abuse and elder abuse) and covers a diverse range of reciprocal kinship ties of obligation and support.” (PADV, 2000a, pp. 25)

- Difficult to document the extent of family violence
- Disproportionately high
- “...up to 90 per cent of families.” (PADV, 2000b)

Significance

- Policy-linked HIA \Rightarrow Emerging field
- Impact of past Indigenous affairs policies
- Family violence \Rightarrow major social issue affecting Indigenous families

Project Aims

- Explore the feasibility of introducing the application of HIA within the policy and Indigenous context.
- Develop a prospective rapid HIA tool
 - Appropriate to policy context
 - Added value





Methodology Overview



- Partnerships with DHS
- Qualitative Research Design
- Exploratory Nature
- 14 In-depth interviews
- Interrogation of literature as data
- Purposive and Snowball Sampling Procedures
- Analysis





Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Strategy



- Joint strategy between DHS & AAV
- Partnership approach between Victorian Indigenous Communities and Government
- Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce
- Strategy development - three phased activity





Results – Project Findings



Two main findings:

- Structural/Process factors - Rapid HIA
- Contextual factors - Sensitivities as a non-Indigenous researcher

Other crucial findings:

- Family violence sensitivities and Indigenous Health and Wellbeing consistent with that in the literature





The Tool - RHWIA



- Gain consensus on an appropriate definition of health
- Identify barriers and conflicts
- Identify potential impacts
- Determine the extent and nature of the impacts
- Develop recommendations
- Report writing and dissemination





Lessons learnt ...



“Eggshells on Quicksand...”

- Non Indigenous Researcher
- Previous experience with researchers
- Indigenous ideologies Vs Western Paradigms
- Bi-cultural language
- Indigenous mentor to provide ‘right of passage’





Where to from here...



■ Positioning

- Strategic policy development
- Local/Community level

NZ AU

√ ?

√ ?

■ Partnerships

- Knowledge transfer → IIA
- Between NZ and Australia etc

■ Practice - Having a go...





HIA website:



<http://www.hbs.deakin.edu.au/HealthSci/Research/HIA>

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