

ECA SURVEY OF MEMBERS 2009

Summary

56 members completed the survey with 65% listing mining companies and 47% listing Government as their primary or secondary clients. All considered ECA provided value for money, communicated well and over 80% were prepared to pay more for membership.

Over 75% of respondents considered the consultant register as the primary benefit of membership. Suggestions for improvement included member photographs, a section on sustainability, promotion to industry (mining magazines) and government, review of key words and advertising key word search pages to the various search engines.

Networking (57%) and training (43%) were considered the next most important benefits of membership.

45% of respondents were happy with the current ECA model while 23% favoured it becoming more broadly based and 21% more tightly focused on environmental impacts of development. There were suggestions that social issues need more attention especially impacts of human perceptions on our work.

Most respondents (52%) were happy with the existing format of a seminar followed by a social get together and 68% of respondents favoured the current arrangement of arranging a function only when a suitable presentation could be arranged. 23% preferred a regular get-together regardless of whether a speaker was arranged, although a few wanted just the seminar (16%). Holding functions on Wednesday at the Celtic Club from 5.30 – 7.30pm suited nearly 80% of respondents.

About 34% of respondents were happy with a broad range of topics for Wednesday evening functions. Nearly 40% selected innovation and research results as their first choice.

Suggested topics can be grouped into themes including:

- Government policy, legislation, approvals process and requirements;
- Rehabilitation methodology, environmental management and industry best practice;
- Survey methodology;
- Public perceptions and environmental thinking;
- Business management and economics;
- Applied research.
- Climate change and responses.

Suggestions for improvement included more active involvement in policy formulation, but others felt there should be more focus on practical approaches to achieving successful outcomes in work practice and that a less lofty series of seminars, speakers, topics would encourage more interaction and attendance.

Many topics suggested for ECA half-day seminars and for training courses were similar to those proposed for Wednesday evening seminars. Other popular topics included risk based approaches to EIA and proposals to streamline the EPA approvals process. Other topics included project management, data management, water management and water monitoring.

Suggested special events included an annual recognition/ awards night, young guns and old farts forum.

And finally a call for fun and fellowship amongst members.

Background:

ECA ran a web-based survey of members in early 2009 to 1) gauge satisfaction with current services, meeting format, presentation content and training and 2) seek suggestions for improvement and ideas for functions and training.

Input

Fifty six members (33% of total membership) completed the survey. Of these 65% listed mining companies as their primary or secondary client, and 47% listed Government as their primary or secondary client. Few respondents listed agribusiness and NRM/landcare as primary or secondary clients.

Table 1: Primary and secondary clients of respondents.

Clientele	Primary clients (%)	Secondary clients (%)
Agribusiness	0	0
Developers	14	9
Government	29	18
Mining	45	20
NRM/Landcare	0	5
Oil and Gas	5	5
Others	4	4

Responses

Benefits of ECA membership

Over three quarters of respondents considered the consultant register as the primary benefit of membership, otherwise networking (57%) and training (43%) were considered the next most important benefit.

All respondents (100%) considered the ECA provides value for money.

More than 80% of respondents were prepared to pay an extra \$50 or more per annum.

Table 2: Primary and secondary benefit of ECA membership

Benefit	Primary benefit (%)	Secondary benefit (%)
Consultant register	77	
Interaction with politicians and bureaucrats		4
Networking	11	46
Training opportunities	11	32
Other	2	4

ECA model

45% of respondents were happy with the current ECA model while 23% favoured it becoming more broadly based and 21% more tightly focused on environmental impacts of development.

Table 3: Changes to current ECA model.

ECA model	%
Remain as is	45
More broad-based	23
More tightly-focused	21
Other	5

Seminar timing and content

ECA currently runs Wednesday evening functions with presentations on an ad-hoc basis. These are sometimes poorly attended. We are seeking your opinions in order to improve these functions:

1) Function format

Most respondents (52%) were happy with the existing format of a seminar followed by a social get together, although some (25%) preferred just the social event and others just the seminar (16%).

Table 4: Preferred format for Wednesday functions.

Wednesday function format	%
A seminar/discussion forum	16
A seminar/discussion forum followed by a social setting	52
A social setting for networking and informal exchange of ideas and opportunities	25
Other	4

2) Preferred content of Wednesday function

About 34% of respondents were happy with a broad range of topics. Nearly 40% selected innovation and research results as their first choice but in most cases listed at least one other topic as a second choice.

Table 5: Preferred content for Wednesday functions

Function content	%
Case studies	14
Presents innovation and research results	38
Explores industry best practice	0
Provides a forum for Ministers/bureaucrats to present policy etc	9
Three or more of above	34
Other	2

3) Frequency of functions:

Most (68%) of respondents favoured the current arrangement of arranging a function only when a suitable presentation could be arranged, while 23% preferred a regular get-together regardless of whether a speaker was arranged.

Table 6: Frequency of functions

Function arrangement	%
An organised event only when a suitable presentation can be arranged (i.e. present arrangement)	68
A regular social get-together (e.g. last Wednesday evening of every month)	23
Other	2

4) The current standard arrangements are for the functions to be on a Wednesday at the Celtic Club in West Perth, 5.30 – 7.30pm.

These arrangements suited nearly 80% of members.

5) Please list areas of specific interest that you would like to be addressed at Wednesday evening functions.

Responses are grouped into several major themes with individual responses below. Most identified issues to do with government policy and approvals as a specific interest.

Government policy, legislation, approvals process and requirements.

- Flora and Fauna survey new guidance statements.
- Update on native vegetation clearing
- DEC/EPA clarification on accepted methodology for flora assessments on Swan Coastal Plain particularly with regard to TECs and floristic analysis which is lacking data.
- Different branches of the DEC about what they expect from flora and vegetation surveys.
- Feedback from bureaucrats on quality of documents produced by consultants (not targeted documents) and areas of improvement - both formal EIA and departmental specific
- Industry innovation and leading practice in Environmental Management,
- Environmental / Planning approvals - in light of the GFC and Govt attempts to stimulate business activity
- Measurement and reporting of emissions.
- DEC updates on conservation initiatives.
- Biodiversity Conservation Act - in prep?
- New regulations as they come in
- Approvals processes environmental legislation
- Policy and legislation developments.
- Changes in government policy
- DEC - policy speakers EPA
- Gov Policy development and change
- Updates on policy (eg if there was anything new impacting biodiversity assessment).
- Discussion of assessment process.
- EIA streamlining (EPA Chairman)

- EIA review
- Integrating EPA and DEC
- Review of EIA process by EPA Chairman
- Updates on policy (eg if there was anything new impacting biodiversity assessment)
- Application of state policy (e.g. guidance statement 29)
- Application of commonwealth policy (NODG)
- NGERs, NPI

Public perceptions and environmental thinking

- History of environmental legislation (J Bailey)
- Models of Public perception of the environment (P Dingle)
- Can Sustainability reform Global Financial Mgt (?Gallop)
- What the hell is sustainability all about and how is it applied - particularly to "unsustainable" projects such as resource depletion??
- Minerals export through ports.
- Uranium mining and nuclear waste storage.

Rehabilitation methodology, environmental management and industry best practice

- Mine closure case studies
- Advances in coastal stabilisation and estuarine rehabilitation techniques (or case studies).
- Innovative techniques and latest research into revegetation
- Revegetation of derelict lands
- Landscaping without water Provenance materials Biodiversity Eco sustainability
- Case studies of industry best practice
- More industry on what they are up to successes or lessons learnt in formal approvals
- Improving and benchmarking compliance
- Best Practice environmental management
- Environmental Monitoring and Social Interaction
- Results from consulting (with client approval).

Survey methodology

- Discussion of baseline survey methodologies relating to flora, fauna and other related assessments.
- Discussion of landforms and soils and how these can be incorporated into biological surveys
- Assessing Condition in Native Remnants - Bronwen Keighery, Judith Harvey
PEC TEC definitions and development of consistency in definition and criteria to assess community associations - Jill Pryde and Val English
- Groundwater dependent ecosystems and geo-heritage
- Marine ecology-marine surveying
- Offshore (deep water) marine ecology
- Hydrogeology, contaminated sites
- GIS

Business management and economics

- Business management for consultants - challenges facing business during the down turn.
- Environmental economics.

Expert witness

- Role of the expert witness...State Admin Tribunal said they'd host a talk on this...but no action from them yet!

Applied research

- Kings Park - research outcomes
- Speaker - Kingsley Dixon from Kings Park Botanic Gardens re update on Kings Park, fires, landscape.
- Visiting experts
- University/CSIRO/government relevant research.

Climate change and responses

- Climate change (particularly impacts on public policy rather than science of global warming).
- Climate change, greenhouse emission invent's etc which bolster broad environmental understanding; that may not necessarily be available via workplace training
- Carbon Sequestration,
- Biochar-Speaker Prof. Syd Shea
- Carbon Dating
- Carbon trading,.
- ETS, Agriculture and soil carbon sequestration
- Can policy move us on from a carbon culture (P Newman)

Meeting structure

- Suggest: have it like a Coordination meeting: e.g. minutes from last meeting news nomenclature changes opportunities, staff changes etc. survey of ECA affiliated companies to assess workloads
- A multi-disciplinary night would be really helpful for the members. I suggest 10-15 minutes each where we can tell everyone about our specific discipline.

6) Can you suggest areas of specific interest that you would like to be addressed at the ECA's annual half day seminar

Risk based approaches to EIA

- A studies and approvals checklist seminar might be a good idea. It would be useful to present a case study and discuss as many possible surveys/studies and associated approvals required.
- Risk management and risk based approaches to environmental management
- EIAs (strategic, cumulative and outcome focused examples - EPA is pushing for this in EIAs!)
- Is it truly the case that Approvals are not being provided in a timely fashion. If there are problems where are they ? and how to be fixed ! Are the present government going to protect the environment and administer the EP act or trash it?
- Risk assessment for EIA and acceptance by EPASU/DEC.

- Risk Based Assessments and how they apply to EIA. Ray Steedman or Charlie Welker would be best placed to explain (or Paul Vogel).
- I think Paul Vogel is an excellent speaker. I went to a conference recently and his talk was great in giving the 'big picture' of the EIA process and the review thats happening at the moment
- EIA in WA (case studies and alternative approaches)

Rehabilitation, compliance and monitoring

- Results of research in areas like impact monitoring, rehabilitation monitoring
- Improving and benchmarking compliance for existing operations (and planning in compliance during approvals). I will think up some speakers.
- Use of baseline studies to develop rehabilitation targets
- Development of Completion Criteria
- Discussion of rehabilitation assessment methodologies
- Review of database accessibility and support for identifications (in view of lack of taxonomists)
- Marine ecology Marine surveying

Climate change

- Science of climate change sounds like good one...
- The 'Our Final Century' Tour Party.
- NGERs and greenhouse reporting is a must for this year, but it will need to be based on experience from the first report in October as it is likely to be too late to organise anything before then.

Resource management

- Water management - WSUD innovations
- Eco sustainability
- Water Management
- Bushland, wetland, coastal management Practical / hands on focus as opposed to strategic or theoretical approaches
- The human element - does psychology / psychological research and/or practices offer any tools to resources sector environmental practitioners?
- Industry perspective eg Gorgon project Kimberley gas hub

Training courses

ECA (in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Authority Service Unit has successfully undertaken several training courses for environmental practitioners in Environmental Impact Assessment. The income from this training has helped support the administration of the organisation. Please list other training needs that could be considered by ECA:

Environmental assessment and monitoring

- Ecosystem function analysis training. Run by Dr David Tongway, on demand. Groups of up to 12.
- More training that I can send graduates to - there is no consultant specific training opportunities other than post-grad studies or in-house programs Environmental management and environmental management plans Flora and vegetation surveys
- The statistics specific PATN analysis or whatever it is that is required to analyse vegetation data for potential TECs

- "Information" training on a subject. eg noise monitoring. "Training" or information in what a noise officer should do. If interested the attendee could then do the course.
- Noise measurement, dust measurement, etc.
- Flora and vegetation related training (there is no training in WA - Universities dont train botanists)
- GIS
- University / govt agency run refresher courses on specific topics eg botanical survey methods; groundwater monitoring techniques
- Taxonomy
- Basic taxonomic skill development and attention to fate of WA Museum - due to shortage of support and staff
- Land Management working in remote area
- Geobacteria and subsurface ecosystems (Acid sulphate, bioremediation, phyto-remediation, Remediation Benefit/Cost Analysis. The cure can be worse than the pollution... Trees.
- Ecosystem (GDEs) identification, management and monitoring;
- Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems

Water management and monitoring

- Best Practice Water Management - Mine Pit Closure uses;
- Perhaps linking up with New Waterways to provide some joint training?
- Drawdown management and monitoring; etc.
- Groundwater quality monitoring techniques
- Dewatering and Borefield

Government legislation, regulation and process

- DEC Policy arrangements and their implications.
- Ways of improving the EIA process
- Ways of improving native vegetation clearing permit application process
- Part V
- EPBC Act Part V approvals
- Part V. EPBC requirements
- Working with regulators and stakeholders to improve and streamline operational compliance.
- DMPR procedures for NOI and other DEC - Biological surveys
- Would be interesting to get together govt and consultants in specific areas to share ideas on what they do!
- Processes such as DOW, DPI, DEC expectations and reporting requirements
- Auditing (maybe.. already pretty competitive though...)

Management training

- Management training for scientists who are promoted to management.
- Project management
- Data management
- Maybe something with Association of Manager/ Executives or Directors about the skills/expertise/advice that they expect from their environmental managers/practitioners/consultants.
- Approvals scheduling training- using MS Project

Consultants register

A core function of ECA is the Consultants Register. Please outline suggestions to improve the value/status/recognition of this register.

Several responses suggested the register was adequate, acceptable, great etc as is especially the on-line format. One respondent disagreed that it was a 'core' function since it never occurs to him/her to use it.

Suggestions for improvement included:

- ECA member photographs.
- Keywords reviewed and brought up to date.
- Website can be more elaborated with different section for different area of interest
- Advertising key word search pages to the various search engines so if some one types "Contaminated sites" "Environmental consultants" Western Australia - they get the search list URL.
- Maybe advertise in Mining mags or other trade mags.
- Promotion within industry bodies (e.g. APPEA, CME, CCI) - particularly links from their websites to ECA website?
- This need to be widely publicised to Govt and industry.
- More sponsorship, think of other avenues for it to be made available etc.
- Sponsor other environmental training courses
- Consultants register doesn't include a section on sustainability services, which is a growing industry. There is a multitude of aspects and sub groups to sustainability, some of which are environmental based and require our skill set.
- Govt agency processes that require / encourage proponents to utilise ECA member services.

Communication

All respondents were happy with communication through weekly email notice and web site.

Suggestions for improvement in communication

Publications and weekly email

- A publication should come out of seminars.
- A regular journal (eg quarterly) with articles relating to relevant ECA disciplines (or interesting projects, new policies etc) would be of interest.
- Happy with it, but the weekly email is a bit bland - it could be a bit more punchy and engaging.
- The weekly email could have more attachments on interesting topics. Members could send in relevant pdf word files they find on the internet to be sent out to members.
- The weekly email is fabulous, please keep it.
- I do read all the newsletters as they come in.

Publicity and promotion

- A great organisation. Would perhaps be strengthened by more awareness and membership amongst Corporations through Associate members. Many people I've come across in BHP, Rio Tinto, Portman etc, whilst employed by these companies work in a 'silo'.

- Someone who could keep every one informed on latest amendments to environmental legislations

Seminars and organised events

- ECA should impose a nominal charge for functions/speaker events. There is the old saying that people will pay to attend but are not interested if it is free.
- Environmental consulting is not just about servicing the EPA regulatory process. Id like to see a way that members can be informed, entertained and inspired by the range and diversity of interesting activities that its membership base addresses'
- I find so many of the topics of discussion are 'policy' related. For those of us on the ground, a less lofty series of seminars, speakers, topics would encourage more interaction and attendance.
- More active involvement in policy formulation and independent activism for the benefit of the consulting industry.
- More focus on practical approaches to achieving successful outcomes in work practice
- The half day seminar and dinner are a great event, as is the breakfast. Timing of breakfast is unfortunate as it coincided with the first day of school this year -affects people with school-age children!
- I realise the ECA is more focused on Consultants than the broader concerns met by the EIANZ, but I don't see the value in having two organisations.
- ECs (and other environmentalists generally) fail to recognise that environmental issues are perceptions and therefore fail to take the corollary that we need to study human perceptions in a critical way to advance our cause.
- An annual recognition/ awards night would be great, eg. Young Consultant of the Year, Most Contributing Consultant of the Year, Hall of Fame, Best Project with an environmental outcome etc.
- We have a young guns forum, perhaps an old farts forum would be a novel idea. This could be disguised a mentoring programme.

Fellowship

- Need to keep the fun and fellowship amongst members