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The efficacy of environmental impact assessment on development proposals with respect to cost and time in South Africa: A three case study review

Montgomery, Devin Sean

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ABSTRACT

This research report reviews the efficacy of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) from the perspective of a developer. Three development proposals from South Africa were reviewed and are presented as case studies. The case studies were the Pelican Park Low Cost Housing Project, the Kommetjie Mixed-Use Development, and the Wild Cost Sun Water Park. Efficacy in the broader sense is used to describe the combination of efficiency, or how well something is done, and how useful. In this study, the definition of efficacy was limited specifically to the cost and time implications of conducting an EIA on development proposals for developers.

Information was reviewed from the following sources: Development Project Proposals, Reports, Project Plans and Budgets.

In the three case studies, it was largely evident that the conducting of an EIA had similar cost implications for the developer as has been reported in the literature, but some indications are emerging that the costs may be increasing. In terms of time implications, it became apparent from this research that continuous changes to legislation over the last few years has had a dramatic effect on the completion of projects. When modelling the case studies under current legislation the negative impact in comparison is evident and substantial.

Recommendations for the major findings are suggested. These are that interim legislative protocols be considered to prevent developers finding themselves between two sets of legislative requirements, and that property developers consider incorporating formalised methods of risk management that speak directly to environmental risks in their plans.

The research further found an overwhelming positive sentiment exists among developers towards the spirit of the EIA legislation and towards environmental sustainability principles and ideals that are aimed at protecting the South African environment.

Key words: Developers, Environmental Impact Assessment, Efficacy, Cost, Time.