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## Strategic environmental assessment of urban plans in Australia: the case study of Melbourne Urban Extension Plan

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### ABSTRACT

This paper aims to understand the procedural effectiveness of strategic environmental assessment (SEA) of urban planning in Australia. The SEA has been practiced in Australia over the last two decades under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act of 1999. After the reform of EPBC Act in 2006, the application of SEA in urban sector has been widened. By evaluating the procedural practice of SEA of Melbourne Urban Extension Plan using a set of evaluation criteria, the study shows that most of the procedural requirements were confirmed by the SEA of the plan. There were some shortcomings including, among others, inadequate consideration of cumulative impacts, socio-economic impacts and the analysis of alternatives at different stages of SEA. The possible reasons behind these shortcomings were explained based on the context of SEA in Australia. Furthermore, this study explored some key features of SEA system in Australia those may influence the SEA practice. The findings of the study can be useful to the application of SEA of urban planning in addition to practitioners, academics and policy makers in Australia or elsewhere.