Australian Government

Productivity Commission

Better Indigenous Policies:
The Role of Evaluation

Roundtable Proceedings

Canberra, 22–23 October 2012

The Productivity Commission

The Productivity Commission is the Australian Government's independent research and advisory body on a range of economic, social and environmental issues affecting the welfare of Australians. Its role, expressed most simply, is to help governments make better policies, in the long term interest of the Australian community.

The Commission's independence is underpinned by an Act of Parliament. Its processes and outputs are open to public scrutiny and are driven by concern for the wellbeing of the community as a whole.

Further information on the Productivity Commission can be obtained from the Commission's website (www.pc.gov.au) or by contacting Media and Publications on (03) 9653 2244 or email: maps@pc.gov.au

Foreword

The Productivity Commission's 2012 policy roundtable, held at Old Parliament House in Canberra on 22–23 October, examined the topic 'Better Indigenous policies: the role of evaluation'. Participants included representatives of Indigenous and non-government organisations, government officials, academics and consultants.

As secretariat for the Review of Government Services, under the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), the Productivity Commission is responsible for the development and publication of the regular *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* report. The report has demonstrated that, despite several decades of good policy intentions and effort, there remain unacceptable disparities between outcomes for Indigenous and other Australians.

As noted at the roundtable by Gary Banks, then chairman of the Productivity Commission, 'it is said that the greatest tragedy of failure is failing to learn from it. But that seems to be the predominant history of Indigenous policies and programs'. Yet the situation is not hopeless; the roundtable discussed several examples of good practice in evaluation of Indigenous programs, from both Australia and overseas.

Our aspiration for this roundtable was to identify principles and practices to guide the better use of evaluation in Indigenous policy in the future — so that more high-quality evaluations will be undertaken and the evidence gained from them will drive policy improvements that benefit Indigenous people and the wider community. While we found genuine, broadly based support for better processes and outcomes, and confidence that we do know at least some of the key problems and potential responses, there was general agreement that an overarching policy review was required to address fundamental issues of 'government governance': the way governments work with, and in, Indigenous communities.

Mike Woods
Deputy Chairman

April 2013

Contents

Session 4   International experience

Session 5   Evaluation and policy

Summary of roundtable discussions

'We will be equally harshly judged in the future if we don't act to drive change.'

On 22–23 October 2012, the Productivity Commission held a policy roundtable on the role of evaluation in improving outcomes for Australia's Indigenous peoples. It brought together key thinkers in Indigenous policy to discuss the particular challenges in Indigenous policy evaluation and the actions needed to ensure that evidence gained from evaluations is used in policy-making and program implementation.

At five sessions of the roundtable, the formal presentation of papers was followed by wide-ranging discussion. This summary of the discussions is structured to address the themes of:

- the mechanics of Indigenous evaluation

- institutionalising better evaluation practices and use of evidence

- international experiences

- evaluation and broader Indigenous policy

- where to from here?

While the summary refers to the presentations relevant to each theme, it does not identify the sources of comments made during discussions, as the roundtable was conducted under the Chatham House rule.

The mechanics of Indigenous evaluation

'Incomplete, non-systematic reporting of results undermines reliability.'

Relevant chapters

- **Les Malezer** (Chapter 4) argued that conventional evaluation methodologies used by government fail to include Indigenous people's expectations, perspectives and participation in the delivery of services. Any evaluation of Indigenous social policy should recognise the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to self-determination and empowerment (including the

provision of necessary technical and financial resources to assist their development).

- **Deborah Cobb-Clark** (Chapter 5) addressed the particular challenges associated with impact evaluation of Indigenous policy, including data limitations, lack of appetite for randomised control trials, difficulty establishing causation among multiple programs, and limitations imposed by time, budget and 'political' constraints.

- **Matthew James** (Chapter 7) provided some practical lessons for those undertaking Indigenous evaluations. He drew on work of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, including the evaluation of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) and the evaluation of Cape York Welfare Reform.

- **John Taylor** (Chapter 8) noted that the range and volume of data comparing Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians have grown substantially and can inform the high-level evaluation of the Closing the Gap agenda. However, he argued that the available statistics do not meet the needs of Indigenous people, who are increasingly seeking community-level information to inform local decision-making. He also argued that Indigenous groups need support to build capacity to compile and use customised data to meet their needs.

- **David Kalisch** (Chapter 9) noted that, where there are gaps in available information, the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse is considering using 'realist synthesis', which involves assessing types of evidence that may otherwise be discarded as they do not meet medical research standards, including observational studies, case studies, field visits, expert advice, lay knowledge and reports on interventions.

- **Michael Dillon** (Chapter 12) (paper presented by Matthew James) highlighted the importance of developing the evidence base through the use of administrative data sets, robust survey tools and community consultation. He noted that, as it can take a long time to build evidence, the program logic should be clear during policy development and open to change as monitoring and evaluation inform continual learning.

Discussion

Participants noted that the term 'evaluation' can have different meanings in different contexts, ranging from mechanisms designed to provide accountability (for example, for spending government money), through measures encompassing process evaluation and/or impact evaluation of either single programs or groups of programs, to broad reviews of system architecture. However, participants generally

agreed that evaluation is more than just providing accountability in the narrowest financial sense or checking boxes to ensure that prescribed processes have been followed, and that it should have a role in holding governments to account for outcomes.

Some participants argued that evaluation should identify whether programs make a difference — what works, and why — and contended that, if outcomes cannot be conclusively demonstrated, the value of continuing a program must be questioned. Other participants argued that problems in the underlying system architecture that make it difficult to isolate a program's outcomes do not mean that a program is not worthwhile.

There was general agreement that a lot of data are being produced about Indigenous Australians. However, there is a tension between the political imperative to develop and report data to measure achievement of the COAG targets (which focus on a limited range of social indicators) and the broader need to inform policy and program evaluations.

Several participants noted the difficulty of accessing data at the program or community level. Much of the available data is at a high level of aggregation, which makes it less useful for program evaluations, and of little use to Indigenous people themselves. Moreover, many administrative collections still lack appropriate geo-coding to produce meaningful local level data. It was acknowledged that the Australian Bureau of Statistics' new 'mesh block' methodology might allow greater disaggregation of some statistics (such as statistics from the Census of Population and Housing).

Other participants argued that it is possible to do meaningful evaluations, but that it takes time to build relationships and trust in order to access relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Some participants argued that there is an over-emphasis on quantitative data in evaluations, particularly given the problems with availability of data at the community or program level. Other participants argued that the way in which qualitative information is used is often methodologically unsound, noting that 'data is not the plural of anecdotes'. However, it was agreed that well-designed evaluations can generate useful qualitative information — for example, surveys that code open-ended responses to a framework can transform qualitative information into quantitative data.

Many participants emphasised the importance of incorporating Indigenous perspectives into evaluation frameworks, with Indigenous people assessing the usefulness of the evaluation for their own communities. Some participants

advocated a community development or capacity-building model, where Indigenous people are directly involved in research and evaluation processes.

Participants acknowledged that evaluating the impact of specific Indigenous policies and programs can be challenging, because it is difficult to isolate the impact of a particular policy change from the effects of multiple, sometimes competing, social programs. In remote Indigenous communities, tens of programs may be operating, across three levels of government and across multiple sectors such health, education and employment.

Some participants argued that, as it is only possible to measure community level outcomes, it is only possible to assess the suite of programs operating in a particular community as a whole. Other participants argued for iterative evaluations (both summative and formative) during the life cycle of a specific program or policy, with opportunities to amend or change aspects of the program or policy being investigated. (Summative or 'impact' evaluations are usually undertaken after completion or during the later stages of a program, while formative or 'process' evaluations are usually conducted during the implementation stage.) Several participants argued that, although technical challenges can generally be overcome with sufficient planning and resources, program evaluation alone cannot resolve broader system issues (see the section below on 'Evaluation and broader Indigenous policy').

Some participants noted that, although much Indigenous policy focuses on people living in remote areas, there are also genuine issues for Indigenous people living in urban areas, which may require a different approach to evaluation. Similarly, evaluation often focuses on Indigenous-specific programs, ignoring the significance of mainstream services provided to Indigenous Australians.

Institutionalising better evaluation practices and use of evidence

'A litany of poor policies being recycled.'

Relevant chapters

- **Deborah Cobb-Clark** (Chapter 5) noted the need to include evaluation plans and funding for evaluation in the design of programs, a practice that should be regarded as 'a serious part of the policy process'. She also commented on the desirability of involving academics and academic publications to improve rigour, as the peer review and independent publication process acts as critical quality assurance. She argued strongly that evaluations of public policy should be made public, pointing to the value of clinical trials registries in medical research.

- **Jody Broun** (Chapter 6) discussed the role of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples as an important mechanism for holding governments to account for the delivery of services to individuals and communities, including by ensuring that adequate monitoring and evaluation processes are in place.

- **Matthew James** (Chapter 7) noted that within the public policy sphere there is often a desire to 'just get on with it', but argued that this was counterproductive — programs and policies are developed and implemented not for their own sake, but to improve outcomes. Evaluation is the key to understanding whether outcomes are being achieved and to improving policies and programs over time.

- **David Kalisch** (Chapter 9) discussed the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's work on Indigenous health and welfare information, and the institute's role in the work of the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse. He acknowledged the lack of evaluations in many areas, noting that the cost of evaluations is often not built into program budgets and timetables, with the result that many programs or interventions have low-cost, partial or no evaluations. He also noted that gaining access to evaluations can be challenging; only 30 per cent of the evaluations listed on the Clearinghouse register of government-commissioned research are released publicly. This potentially creates a publication bias, if only studies that have positive findings or accord with the funder's views are released.

- **Helen Moewaka Barnes** (Chapter 10) discussed Maori evaluation approaches developed in parallel with Maori models of wellbeing. She noted that the effective application of a range of Maori theory and practice frameworks contributed to Maori engagement with and acceptance and use of evaluation.

- **Frances Abele** (Chapter 11) noted that, in Canada, program evaluation is an integral, mandatory function in all departments of the federal government, and established, extensive and comprehensive evaluation systems and policies are in operation. In addition, the Canadian Office of the Auditor-General can analyse public expenditure and provide commentary on policy implementation (although usually on a thematic basis, rather than program by program). Royal commissions have also played a role in large-scale policy evaluations.

- **Brian Gleeson** (Chapter 13) discussed how evaluation findings and evidence were (or were not) embedded in the approach of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery. He noted that previous interventions and experiences of place-based and community-strengthening approaches for remote communities had provided evidence of 'what works'. However, while some lessons have been firmly embraced, others have been left to languish. He also emphasised that institutionalising better evaluation practices necessarily means providing meaningful feedback on evaluation findings to Indigenous communities.

Discussion

Participants agreed that, as in social policy more generally, there is a lack of rigorous impact evaluation of Australian Indigenous policies and programs. Significant gaps exist in the Australian evidence base, due to lack of mandated evaluations. Evaluation of social policies and programs is more common in the United States, where rigorous evaluation has been incorporated in legislation as a condition of federal funding to the states.

Several participants noted a lack of basic information about how many local, state and territory, and federal programs are operating in communities. It was therefore not surprising that there was also a lack of evaluation of the impact of these programs. It was suggested that a good starting point would be a complete register of programs, to provide a holistic picture of what is going on in a community.

Several participants argued that, in at least some situations, we know 'what needs to be done' but there is no mechanism to ensure that policies and programs reflect that knowledge. Relevant available research included the NTER evaluations (2008–12); reports from the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services (2009–12); work by the COAG Closing the Gap Clearinghouse (2009–present); reviews of the COAG trials and Shared Responsibility Agreements (2002–07); Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage 'things that work' (2005–11); and the COAG service delivery principles (2004) that were incorporated into the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (2008).

Participants discussed the difficulty of ensuring that good program evaluations are embedded in the systems that govern the review and design of Indigenous programs and policies. Participants considered that implementation of evaluation recommendations is usually opportunistic. Practical issues such as the timing of evaluations affect their degree of influence — evaluations should be done while there is an opportunity to change a program or policy, not after a program or policy has ended and a new one has begun. Participants acknowledged that evaluations are often 'backward looking' and that, by their very nature, good evaluations take time. Matching evaluations to political–government schedules is complex and must be handled strategically.

Participants also noted that even the best evaluations can have limited influence if recommended reforms must overcome structural impediments. Evidence alone is not as powerful as people think it is. Genuine change takes effort and risk, and needs champions willing to upset the status quo.

International experiences

'Some good and bad examples ... in historical context and in light of specific political, economic and social circumstances.'

Relevant chapters

- **Les Malezer** (Chapter 4) argued that the starting point for an effective evaluation regime should be self-determination, as explained in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

- **Matthew James** (Chapter 7) and **David Kalisch** (Chapter 9) noted that Australia frequently relies on overseas studies, in the absence of quality evaluations of Australian Indigenous social programs.

- **Helen Moewaka Barnes** (Chapter 10) discussed an Aotearoa New Zealand perspective on the role of evaluation, premised on the right and need for Maori to be involved through collaborative and consultative processes at all stages: from policy design, through implementation, to evaluation.

- **Frances Abele** (Chapter 11) reflected on the Canadian experience of evaluation as a tool for social justice, reconciliation and control.

Discussion

The presenters from Canada and New Zealand identified strong evaluation cultures in their respective countries, which had led to the development of significant bodies of evidence on Indigenous policy and program effectiveness. Their presentations highlighted the different roles that evaluation can play in Indigenous social policy. Evaluation has been used not only to improve service delivery for Indigenous people, but also to influence relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. In particular, the Canadian Royal Commission on Indigenous Peoples (1992–96) had a long-lasting impact on the broad approach to Indigenous policy, recommending four fundamental principles: mutual recognition, mutual respect, sharing, and mutual responsibility.

Participants noted a tension between the accountability function of evaluations (especially from the perspective of federal or central governments) and Indigenous people's desire to use evaluation as a tool for community development. There was general agreement that evaluations in Australia tend to focus on program accountability, and that all levels of government and Indigenous people could learn from the distinctly Maori approaches to evaluation in New Zealand.

A number of participants argued that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should be the foundation on which an evaluation regime is built.

Several participants noted that gaps in Australian evaluations mean that policy and program developers frequently have to rely on overseas evaluations. It was generally agreed that the use of overseas studies requires careful consideration of the different political, economic and social circumstances of Indigenous people in different countries.

Evaluation and broader Indigenous policy

'Evaluation can be deeply political and dependent on context.'

Relevant chapters

- **Fred Chaney** (Chapter 3) contended that there are fundamental problems in the architecture of government approaches to Indigenous issues, which cannot be easily solved through piecemeal evaluations of individual programs. He argued that a broader approach must be taken to address systemic failure. He called for 'good governance at organisation, community and government levels', including greater devolution of decision-making to Indigenous communities, and alternative accountability mechanisms outside traditional agency silos.

- **Les Malezer** (Chapter 4) argued that the traditional evaluations that focus on disadvantage arising from historical dispossession and displacement fail to address Indigenous rights and perspectives. He argued that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, developed to re-position Indigenous peoples in their own territories, should be the starting point for effective evaluation.

- **Jody Broun** (Chapter 6) argued that non-government and independent organisations have a valid and important role in evaluating government policy objectives, delivering programs, and holding government to account for outcomes.

- **Matthew James** (Chapter 7) explicitly linked evaluation to policy, and argued that evaluation should not be perceived as a separate activity conducted in isolation — if evidence is to inform policy, evaluation and monitoring need to be incorporated into policy processes.

- **Helen Moewaka Barnes** (Chapter 10) noted that, in New Zealand, evaluation historically was applied selectively to scrutinise Maori providers. However, this created an opportunity for the development of 'by Maori, for Maori' evaluation.

- **Frances Abele** (Chapter 11) noted that, in Canada, royal commissions are often used to resolve knotty and persistent problems of public policy. Virtually the full range of federal policies affecting Indigenous peoples were examined in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1992–96).

- **Michael Dillon** (Chapter 12) (paper presented by Matthew James) noted that government agencies are increasingly involving local communities in the research and evaluation process (for example, under the community local research projects that are part of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery).

Discussion

Participants discussed the potential for evaluation (especially high-level reviews) to help frame relationships between Indigenous people and the state, even though evaluation outcomes may not be binding and their influence can fade over time. Participants considered that it is difficult for piecemeal evaluations of individual programs to have broad influence, although an accumulation of knowledge over time can be more influential than one-off program evaluations.

Several participants argued that, too often, evaluation is 'something that is done to Indigenous people'. Rather than gaining knowledge through effective evaluation of service delivery efforts, government programs seek political solutions without expert information. Indigenous engagement in research and evaluation can contribute to both improved program effectiveness and greater 'legitimacy' of policies and programs. Participants noted that:

- Indigenous collectivist identity means a different set of aspirations — joint as well as individual. It is also important to recognise Indigenous peoples' histories.

- All evaluations are implicitly or explicitly ideological. Using terms such as 'rights' and 'special needs' when referring to Indigenous evaluations overlooks the invisible rights and privileges involved in non-Indigenous programs and evaluations. Government-commissioned evaluations automatically cater to the mainstream but do not look at things that are important to Indigenous people.

- The priorities and aspirations of Indigenous people may have different to those of governments but, if Indigenous people have sufficient control over decision-making (with appropriate governance, based on the community's preferred governance model), this need not prevent Indigenous people and the state from coming together.

- Evaluations by Indigenous people tend to place greater emphasis on relationships with the community, especially established accountabilities to elders and local leaders.

Participants discussed Indigenous people's views of current evaluation approaches. Most participants agreed that there was 'enormous cynicism' among Indigenous people, citing issues such as:

- a focus on the closing the gaps agenda means that programs (and therefore evaluations) do not necessarily reflect Indigenous people's objectives and priorities, particularly in relation to community development and governance issues

- when Indigenous people are consulted in evaluations, their views are not always reflected accurately

- there has been a widespread failure to implement even straight-forward recommendations flowing from evaluations

- there has been a failure to communicate the results of evaluations and subsequent actions to Indigenous people

- evaluation reports are used to justify actions that do not reflect the report recommendations.

Participants noted that evaluations can also help to build trust, if they are used to inform 'learning by doing', and if government and local people work together to meet agreed outcomes. Governments can build trust by living up to their commitments.

Participants noted that there are some examples of evaluations involving Indigenous people (for example, community researchers under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery, primarily undertaking process evaluation work), but observed that few evaluations are driven by Indigenous people themselves. Several participants asked what was preventing Indigenous people from conducting more 'bottom up' evaluations of access to services or government implementation of agreed best-practice principles. There was a call for more empowerment or participatory evaluations (action research), particularly for community programs. Those types of evaluations focus not only on improving programs but also on working to build research or evaluation capacity within communities. This approach has proven to be fruitful in the New Zealand context.

Several participants argued that evaluation of Indigenous programs did not focus enough on 'government governance', noting that Indigenous policies and programs are affected by government silos, program duplication, compliance red tape, lack of

government staff competencies, piecemeal and short-term funding, and lack of flexibility. It was strongly argued that the current broader system was not 'fit for purpose'. There was general agreement that a high-level review of the way in which Australian governments interact with Indigenous people is required.

Where to from here?

'Do people feel like their lives are getting better?'

Relevant chapters

- **Fred Chaney** (Chapter 3) strongly suggested that governments could learn from private sector project managers with 'their feet in the clay'. Characteristics of effective social programs managed by corporations include program lifecycles of 10 or 20 years, the ability (and flexibility) of managers to deal with complexities as they arise, and 'learning by doing'.

- **Deborah Cobb-Clarke** (Chapter 5) suggested that social policy could be improved by making evaluations (and associated unit record data) public — potentially with an independent agency to commission all policy evaluations on behalf of the Australian Government.

- **Matthew James** (Chapter 7) emphasised that 'lack of knowledge should not be used as an excuse for inaction'. Evaluations and monitoring should be built into the policy design and be adequately resourced (including access to key data at policy commencement and conclusion) to properly assess whether there is a logical link between the policy action and the outcome.

- **Helen Moewaka Barnes** (Chapter 10) and **Frances Abele** (Chapter 11) provided some lessons from Indigenous evaluation in New Zealand and Canada respectively.

Discussion

Participants identified a number of fundamental system design issues that need sustained political leadership to drive change. There was a general call for a high-level review of the way in which Australian governments interact with Indigenous people, to address issues such as:

- the lack of basic information about existing programs, including their objectives and associated 'program logic', at the local, state and territory, and federal levels

- the lack of a coherent framework for the evaluation of Indigenous policies and programs, and a need to embed (and fund) evaluation plans in the design of programs
- the need for genuine partnership, between governments and Indigenous communities and organisations, in the development and evaluation of programs and policies
- the influence on Indigenous policies and programs of various aspects of 'government governance', such as government silos, program duplication, red tape, lack of government staff competencies, piecemeal and short-term funding, and lack of flexibility
- a failure to adopt known success factors and follow lessons painfully learned over many years of policy experimentation.

Basic information

Participants argued that a lack of basic information about current programs at the local, state and territory, and federal levels makes it impossible to establish what programs are operating at the community level, or to evaluate them individually or collectively. It was suggested that it would be useful to have a complete register of programs to provide a holistic picture of what is going on in a community.

Coherent framework

Participants argued that it was necessary to have a coherent framework for evaluating Indigenous policies and programs. The Closing the Gap framework is not enough on its own, as the COAG targets mean that most programs address symptoms and, consequently, most program evaluations assess whether symptoms have been reduced, rather than addressing deeper causal issues. Evaluations could look more broadly and deeply, and consider other factors that are important to Indigenous people and are likely to influence the underlying drivers of disadvantage.

There was general agreement that evaluation plans should be embedded (and funded) in the design of programs, a practice that should be regarded as 'a serious part of the policy process' but is more common in other countries than in Australia. The lack of assessment or evaluation has not only resulted in significant gaps in the Australian evidence base, but has also contributed to 'a litany of poor policies being recycled'.

Participants also noted the importance of truly independent evaluations, conducted at arms-length from government. It was suggested that social policy could be improved by making all evaluations (and associated unit record data) public — potentially with an independent agency to commission all policy evaluations on behalf of the Australian Government. Although these principles were strongly supported, participants struggled to identify a mechanism to encourage compliance. COAG agreement to list all evaluations of Indigenous programs on the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse's Research and Evaluation Register could be a good start.

Genuine partnership

Participants noted that many publicly funded evaluations of Indigenous programs (especially service delivery programs) are accountability-oriented 'audit and punish' exercises, and that the goals implicit in evaluations do not match the interests of Indigenous people. Participants argued that rather than the auditor–punisher model there are other models that enable government to work with service providers as a partner. The Productivity Commission report on the contribution of the not-for-profit sector set out a continuum of ways in which government could engage with the sector for different purposes, and noted that *how* a thing is done can sometimes be as important as *what* is done (PC 2010).

Participants agreed that it is crucial that governments work in partnership with Indigenous communities and organisations to ensure that the goals implicit in evaluations match the interests of Indigenous people. Governments need to move beyond the rhetoric of 'consultation' to grapple with genuine partnership that involves shared accountabilities and sustained involvement.

Government governance

Many participants argued that piecemeal evaluations of specific policies and programs will not address the broader influence of 'government governance': the way governments interact with Indigenous people and organisations.

It was suggested that COAG should rationalise the large number of Indigenous programs and their associated funding arrangements, reduce the disproportionate amount of red tape attached to Indigenous programs, and improve the capacities of public servants working with Indigenous people as well as the capacities of Indigenous organisations. It was also suggested that governments reassess data collection policies to ensure that data about Indigenous people are of use to Indigenous people themselves.

Known success factors

Despite general agreement that a more systematic approach to evaluation was needed, several participants suggested that many of the factors for success are already known and agreed. These include lessons from evaluations of the COAG Trials and Shared Responsibility Agreements, the work of the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse and the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage 'things that work'. Evaluations should consider whether these factors have been applied and, if they have not, identify the barriers to their implementation.

Conclusion

In his final summary, Chairman Gary Banks noted that social policy is notoriously difficult to design and evaluate, and that Indigenous policy involves unique challenges. However, he emphasised the importance of conducting quality evaluations, and using the evidence gained from them to drive policy improvements that benefit Indigenous people and the wider community.

The Chairman thanked roundtable participants, particularly those from overseas, for their contributions to identifying ways to guide better use of evaluation in Indigenous policy in the future. He noted suggestions for improving the way evaluations are conducted, and for ensuring that the outcomes of evaluations are conveyed to both policymakers and 'those on the ground'.

However, he also highlighted participants' concern that piecemeal evaluations cannot address systemic issues. Political commitment to a broad policy review is required to address fundamental issues with 'government governance': the way governments work with, and in, Indigenous communities.

INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction— why this roundtable?

Gary Banks[1]

The Productivity Commission was created to help governments deal with the 'hard' policy issues — those that are complex or contentious or (frequently) both. It does this by conducting detailed research and encouraging debate and greater public awareness about the causes of policy problems and the tradeoffs in different policy options. This work is directly connected to, but operates at arm's length from, government. And it is motivated, under the Commission's statute, by what is in the best interests of the community as a whole.

As many of you will appreciate, the Commission's remit has expanded greatly over the years, from a primary concern with assistance to industry, to issues with wider economic, social or environmental dimensions. On the social policy front, major studies have been conducted recently in relation to gambling, paid parental leave, aged care, disability support and the not-for-profit sector. All of these produced recommendations that the Commission judged would enhance the wellbeing of those directly affected as well as the wider community.

A key strand of the Commission's work is the secretariat support it provides for the Review of Government Services under COAG. This has involved performance monitoring rather than policy evaluation and advice. But it has brought to light considerable variations in policy performance across our federation, in relation to the efficiency and effectiveness, including equity, of government programs of human services. It is thus an important tool for identifying potential for policy improvements.

Perhaps the biggest eye-opener for us has come through our secretariat work for COAG developing and populating a framework of outcome indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. As my colleague Robert Fitzgerald will shortly explain, this body of work indicates that despite several decades of good policy intentions and effort, there remain considerable disparities between outcomes for Indigenous and other Australians — in areas where this is simply unacceptable, particularly for the twelfth largest economy in the world.

---

[1] Chairman, Productivity Commission (1998–2012).

Heeding lessons from New Zealand, where a similar 'Closing the Gap' report acquired the reputation of being little more than a 'misery index', the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report has sought, within a strategic framework, to highlight progress in outcomes as well as 'things that work' among existing policy initiatives and programs. The latter has proven challenging, to say the least; not necessarily because there are few things that *are* 'working', but because in most cases the information available to substantiate their effects is lacking.

This reflects policy development failings broader than the Indigenous area, as Deborah Cobb-Clark and Les Malezer will make clear later today, and to some extent the deficiencies are understandable. Social policy is notoriously difficult to design and evaluate, and Indigenous policy is as difficult as any. But that should be a reason for making more effort, not less. And if there is inherently greater uncertainty 'up front' about whether a policy's outcomes will accord with its objectives, this places even greater importance on ensuring that arrangements are in place for their monitoring and evaluation.

Until recently, however, evidence and evaluation have played only limited roles in Indigenous policy in Australia. The focus has tended to be on intuitive notions of doing good or avoiding harms — on the ends, rather than detailed analysis and review of alternative means. And while there have been some successes, there is general agreement that, on the whole, government policies have fallen short. Indeed, in some cases they have made matters considerably worse, as Fred Chaney, who has a long personal history in Indigenous affairs, will relate.

It is said that 'the greatest tragedy of failure is failing to learn from it'. But that seems to be the predominant history of Indigenous policies and programs. The recent review of Commonwealth Indigenous programs by the Department of Finance and Deregulation found a lack of robust evidence on the performance and effectiveness of most of them.

There is now broad acceptance of the idea that evaluation can and should inform the development of policies, and the design and implementation of programs. As Jody Broun, Co-chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, will discuss at dinner tonight, evaluation also plays a crucial role in holding governments to account.

There is some progress on the evaluation front. This roundtable includes presentations on several positive developments. For example:

- David Kalisch will talk about the COAG-commissioned Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, which aims to assemble and communicate the lessons from evaluations.

- John Taylor in the same session will talk about the challenges associated with the renewed focus on collecting useful and valid data to inform evaluations.

- Matthew James will discuss aspects of the design of evaluation strategies.

There is also the opportunity to learn from international experiences. Helen Moewaka Barnes (New Zealand) and Frances Abele (Canada) will discuss approaches to evaluation of Indigenous policies and programs in their countries, where there are some features in common with Australia.

There is of course more to good policy than good evaluations. How can evaluations not only be more systematically employed, but also be made more visible and influential? Two people with long experience in policy design and implementation — Michael Dillon (whose paper will be presented by Matthew James) and Brian Gleeson — will draw on the recent experience in the Northern Territory to discuss strategies for embedding evaluations into Indigenous policy development, with contributions from a panel drawn from the other speakers.

Our aspiration for this roundtable is that, drawing on the presentations from speakers and discussions around the table (for which we have assigned ample time), we can identify principles and practices to guide the better use of evaluation in Indigenous policy in the future — so that more quality evaluations will be undertaken, and the evidence gained from them will drive policy improvements that benefit Indigenous people and the wider community.

2 Outcomes for Indigenous Australians — the current situation

Robert Fitzgerald[1]

Abstract

While the majority of Indigenous Australians lead productive, successful and rewarding lives, on average, Indigenous Australians remain significantly disadvantaged compared with other Australians across a wide range of socio-economic indicators. Some outcomes for Indigenous Australians are improving, particularly in education and economic participation, but other outcomes are stagnating or even deteriorating.

Governments in Australia spend $25 billion annually on services for Indigenous Australians. While much of this expenditure is on mainstream services used by all Australians, some specifically addresses Indigenous disadvantage. Ensuring that expenditure aimed at 'closing the gap' for Indigenous Australians is effective and efficient requires good evaluation. There are lessons to be learnt about the success factors that underpin effective programs from the 'things that work' case studies identified in the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage reports, but the value of these is often limited by a lack of rigorous evaluation.

2.1 Introduction

This paper draws on results from four streams of performance reporting work by the Productivity Commission, in its role as secretariat to the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision:

- Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators (OID report) (SCRGSP 2011b)

- Indigenous Expenditure Report (SCRGSP 2012a)

- Report on Government Services: Indigenous Compendium (SCRGSP 2012b)

---

[1] Commissioner, Productivity Commission and Convenor, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Working Group and Indigenous Expenditure Report Working Group, Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision.

- National Indigenous Reform Agreement: Performance Information reports (SCRGSP 2011a).

This paper provides background information on the Indigenous population in Australia, describes the OID report's background and strategic framework of outcome indicators, and presents data on outcomes for Indigenous people across several key themes:

- remoteness
- economic outcomes
- health
- education
- safe and supportive communities
- service delivery and governance.

2.2   The Indigenous population in Australia

In this paper, the term 'Indigenous Australians' is used to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. In 2006,[2] 90 per cent of the estimated Indigenous population were of Aboriginal origin only, 6 per cent were of Torres Strait Islander origin only and 4 per cent were of both origins.

Box 2.1 summarises some information about Australia's Indigenous population. On average, Indigenous Australians are younger than other Australians, and a higher proportion of Indigenous Australians live in remote and very remote areas.

---

[2] Separate population estimates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for 2011 have not yet been published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Box 2.1   How many people?

In 2011, the estimated resident Indigenous population of Australia was 670 000 people, out of a total population of 22.3 million people (3 per cent of the Australian population). The Indigenous population has a young age profile — in 2011, 36 per cent of Indigenous Australians were aged 14 years or under, compared with 18 per cent of the non-Indigenous population.

Using 2011 census data, a higher proportion of both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations lived in New South Wales than other States and Territories (31 per cent and 32 per cent respectively). In contrast, 10 per cent of the national Indigenous population lived in the Northern Territory, but less than 1 per cent of the non-Indigenous population lived there.

Proportion of the Australian population, by State and Territory, 2011

Indigenous   **Non-Indigenous**

Indigenous: NT 10%, Tas 4%, NSW 31%, SA 6%, WA 13%, ACT 1%, Qld 28%, Vic 7%

Non-Indigenous: SA 7%, NT 1%, Tas 2%, WA 10%, ACT 2%, NSW 32%, Qld 20%, Vic 25%

Seventy-five per cent of Indigenous Australians lived in major cities or regional areas in 2006[3] (32 per cent in major cities, 21 per cent in inner regional areas and 22 per cent in outer regional areas). Nine per cent lived in remote areas and 15 per cent lived in very remote areas.

Proportion of the Australian population by remoteness area, 2006

Indigenous   **Non-Indigenous**

Indigenous: Very remote 15%, Remote 9%, Major cities 32%, Outer regional 22%, Inner regional 21%

Non-Indigenous: Remote 1%, Outer regional 9%, Very remote <1%, Inner regional 20%, Major cities 69%
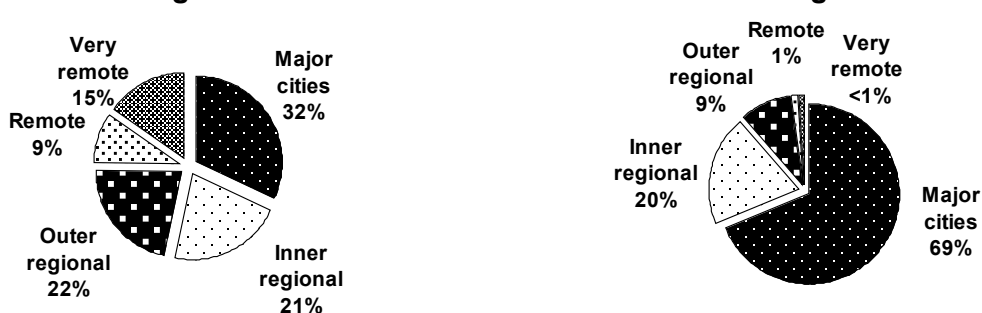
Data sources: ABS (2008); ABS (2012a).

While a number of dimensions of disadvantage increase with geographic remoteness, many Indigenous Australians in urban settings also face significant disadvantage, when compared with other Australians living in the same areas.

---

3 Population data by remoteness areas for 2011 are yet to be published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

2.3 The Steering Committee's role in Indigenous reporting

Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage report

In April 2002, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) commissioned the Steering Committee to produce a regular report against key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage. The OID report has an important long-term objective — to inform Australian governments and Indigenous people about whether policy programs and interventions are collectively achieving positive outcomes for Indigenous people. In turn, this information can help identify where further work is needed. The latest edition of the report was released on 25 August 2011. Previous editions were published in 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2009.

National Indigenous Reform Agreement

In December 2007, COAG identified Indigenous policy as one of seven priority areas of national reform. COAG set six high-level targets for closing the gaps in Indigenous outcomes, and identified seven 'building blocks' that underpinned a National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) (COAG 2011). The NIRA sets out governments' agreed objectives and outcomes, and clarifies the respective roles and responsibilities of the Commonwealth and the States and Territories in the delivery of services. The NIRA contains the COAG targets and a number of other performance indicators. The performance of all governments against the targets and indicators is assessed by the COAG Reform Council (CRC). The Steering Committee collates the NIRA performance information for analysis by the CRC. The CRC has published three reports assessing progress against the NIRA, in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Indigenous Expenditure Report

In December 2007, COAG committed to reporting on expenditure on services to Indigenous Australians, to inform better understanding of the level and patterns of expenditure. The first Indigenous Expenditure Report (IER) was published in 2010 and, in 2011, COAG transferred responsibility for future reports to the Steering Committee. A second report was published in 2012.

The IER provides estimates of expenditure by the Australian Government and State and Territory governments on Indigenous specific services and the estimated

Indigenous share of mainstream services. Expenditure is reported across 86 categories, mapped to the OID and NIRA building blocks.

In the 2012 IER, total direct government expenditure on services to Indigenous Australians was estimated to be $25.4 billion in 2010–11, accounting for 5.6 per cent of total direct general government expenditure. Indigenous Australians made up 2.6 per cent of the population. Estimated expenditure per head of population was $44 128 for Indigenous Australians, compared with $19 589 for other Australians (a ratio of 2.25 to 1). The $24 538 per person difference reflected the combined effects of:

- greater intensity of service use ($16 109 or 66 per cent) — Indigenous Australians use more services per capita because of greater need, and because of population characteristics such as the younger age profile of the Indigenous population

- additional cost of providing services ($8429 or 34 per cent) — it can cost more to provide services to Indigenous Australians if mainstream services are more expensive to provide (for example, because of location), or if Indigenous Australians receive targeted services (for example, Indigenous liaison officers in hospitals) in addition to mainstream services (SCRGSP 2012a).

The estimates in the IER provide information relevant to a number of key policy questions.

- How much did government spend on key services?

- How much was spent on Indigenous Australians and how does this compare with expenditure on other Australians?

- What were the patterns of service use by Indigenous Australians and how do these compare with service use by other Australians?

- What drove the differences in expenditure between Indigenous and other Australians?

However, the estimates in the IER *on their own* cannot answer questions about the adequacy, effectiveness and efficiency of government expenditure on services for Indigenous Australians. This requires more targeted evaluation, combining information on expenditure with information on the level of need and the performance of services.

Report on Government Services: Indigenous Compendium

Heads of government (now COAG) commissioned the annual Report on Government Services (RoGS) to provide information on the equity, efficiency and effectiveness of government services. For a number of years, the Steering Committee has devoted particular attention in the report to mainstream services delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The RoGS Indigenous Compendium brings together in an accessible form all the Indigenous data to be found in the main report. However, the focus of the report is on mainstream services and it does not include information on many Indigenous-specific services.

2.4   The OID report framework

This paper mainly draws on results from the OID report, which uses a strategic framework (see Figure 2.1) based on the best available evidence about causes of disadvantage, in order to focus policy attention on prevention, as well as addressing existing disadvantage (SCRGSP 2011b). The Steering Committee has aligned the indicators and strategic areas for action in the OID with the NIRA indicators and building blocks.

Linked priority outcomes reflect a vision of how life should be for Indigenous people. These priority outcomes have been endorsed by both Indigenous people and governments. It is difficult to measure progress or to hold governments accountable for achieving these broadly stated priority outcomes. So the framework includes two layers of measurable indicators. The logic of the framework is that, over time, improvement in these indicators will demonstrate progress toward the priority outcomes.

The first layer of indicators is made up of the six Closing the Gap targets set by COAG, and six headline indicators developed by the Steering Committee in consultation with Indigenous people and researchers. Together, the COAG targets and headline indicators provide a high-level summary of the state of Indigenous disadvantage. However, whole-of-government action over a long period will be necessary before significant progress can be made in many of these indicators.

In order to inform policy in the shorter term, seven 'strategic areas for action' underpin the COAG targets and headline indicators. The evidence shows that action is needed in these areas in order to achieve the COAG targets and headline indicators. For each strategic area, a small number of 'strategic change indicators' inform governments and the community about the current rate of progress and help to identify specific policy areas where more attention is needed.

Figure 2.1   OID report framework

Priority outcomes

Safe, healthy and supportive family environments with strong communities and cultural identity

Positive child development and prevention of violence, crime and self-harm

Improved wealth creation and economic sustainability for individuals, families and communities
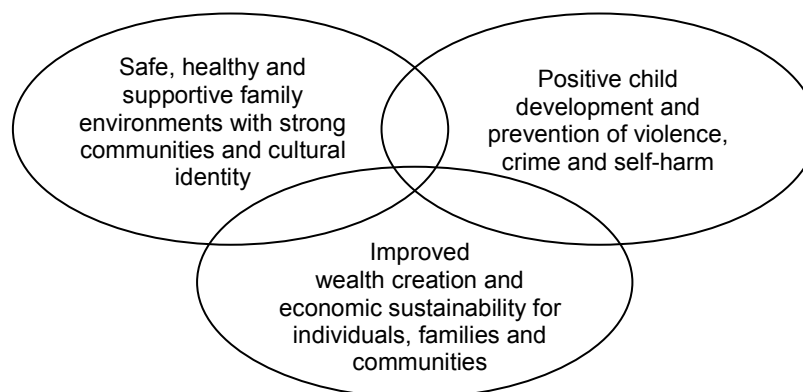
COAG targets and headline indicators

COAG targets	*Headline indicators*
Life expectancy	Post secondary education — participation and attainment
Young child mortality	Disability and chronic disease
Early childhood education	Household and individual income
Reading, writing and numeracy	Substantiated child abuse and neglect
Year 12 attainment	Family and community violence
Employment	Imprisonment and juvenile detention

Strategic areas for action

Early child development	*Education and training*	*Healthy lives*	*Economic participation*	*Home environment*	*Safe and supportive communities*	*Governance and leadership*
Maternal health	School enrolment and attendance	Access to primary health care	Employment by full time/part time status, sector and occupation	Overcrowding in housing	Participation in organised sport, arts or community group activities	Case studies in governance
Teenage birth rate	Teacher quality	Potentially preventable hospitalisations	Indigenous owned or controlled land and business	Rates of disease associated with poor environmental health	Access to traditional lands	Governance capacity and skills
Birthweight	Indigenous cultural studies	Avoidable mortality	Home ownership	Access to clean water and functional sewerage and electricity services	Alcohol consumption and harm	Engagement with service delivery
Early childhood hospitalisations	Year 9 attainment	Tobacco consumption and harm	Income support		Drug and other substance use and harm	
Injury and preventable disease	Year 10 attainment	Obesity and nutrition			Juvenile diversions	
Basic skills for life and learning	Transition from school to work	Tooth decay			Repeat offending	
Hearing impairment		Mental health				
		Suicide and self-harm				

Source: SCRGSP (2011b).

There are complex interactions between the indicators in the OID framework. Box 2.2 shows how the higher level 'headline indicators' are influenced by a range of more immediate outcomes, while Box 2.3 shows how addressing individual areas (housing overcrowding in this example) can affect a range of other outcomes.

Box 2.2   Multiple influences on outcomes — the case of health

The COAG target of 'Life expectancy' is linked to COAG's 'Young child mortality' target and the 'Disability and chronic disease' headline indicator. In turn, these outcomes are influenced by outcomes such as 'Birthweight' and 'Injury and preventable disease' in the 'Early child development' strategic area for action, and 'Obesity and nutrition' and 'Tobacco consumption and harm' in the 'Healthy lives' strategic area. But actions in these areas must be supported by actions to address outcomes such as 'Access to clean water and functional sewerage and electricity' and 'Overcrowding in housing' in the 'Home environment' strategic area, and 'Alcohol and drug consumption and harm' in the 'Safe and supportive communities' area. Other social determinants of health in the education and employment areas must also be addressed.

Box 2.3   Some actions can have multiple effects

Reducing overcrowding can affect outcomes in the 'Education and training', 'Healthy lives', 'Home environment' and 'Safe and supportive communities' strategic areas, and can contribute to the COAG target of 'Reading, writing and numeracy' and the headline indicators of 'Disability and chronic disease' and 'Family and community violence'. Other influences are also important but there is sufficient evidence for education, health and justice departments to be concerned about housing issues.

```
                              ┌──────────────────────────┐
                              │  Education and training   │
                              └──────────────────────────┘
                                            ╭────────────────╮
                                            │    Reading,    │
                                            │ writing & numeracy │
                                            ╰────────────────╯
                              ┌──────────────────────────┐
                              │      Healthy lives        │
                              └──────────────────────────┘
                                            ╭────────────────╮
  • Overcrowding in housing  ───►           │  Disability &  │
                                            │ chronic disease │
                                            ╰────────────────╯
                              ┌──────────────────────────┐
                              │     Home environment      │
                              └──────────────────────────┘
                                            ╭────────────────╮
                                            │     Family     │
                                            │ & community violence │
                                            ╰────────────────╯
                              ┌──────────────────────────┐
                              │ Safe and supportive communities │
                              └──────────────────────────┘
```
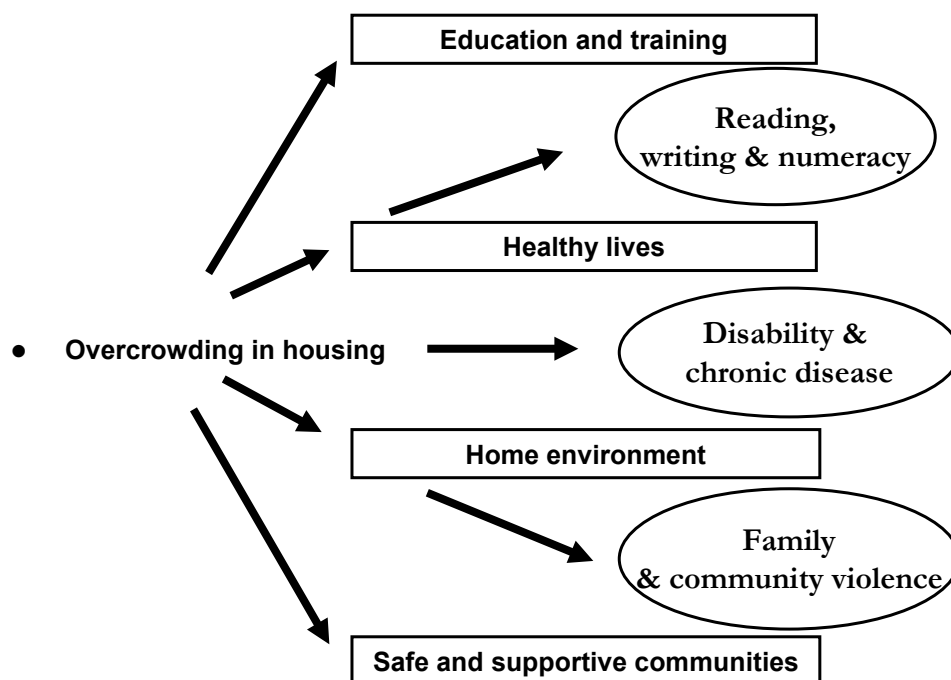

2.5   How do outcomes for Indigenous and other Australians compare?

The results reported in this paper should be thought of as averages — although on average Indigenous people experience significant disadvantage, most Indigenous people are living productive lives, contributing to their families and communities. Everything that follows should be seen in this context.

There is still a considerable way to go to achieve COAG's commitment to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage. There are wide gaps in average outcomes between Indigenous and other Australians. However, the challenge is surmountable and, in a few areas, the gaps have been narrowing. Nevertheless, many indicators reveal that outcomes are not improving, or are even deteriorating.

Of the 45 quantitative indicators in the OID report, data available at the time of the 2011 report showed improvement in outcomes for 13 indicators — including in employment, educational attainment and home ownership. However, there had been no real improvement for ten indicators, and for another seven, including social indicators such as criminal justice, outcomes had actually deteriorated. For the remaining third, data limitations meant that it was not possible to conclude whether there had been any change (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2   Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2011 — snapshot of indicator changes
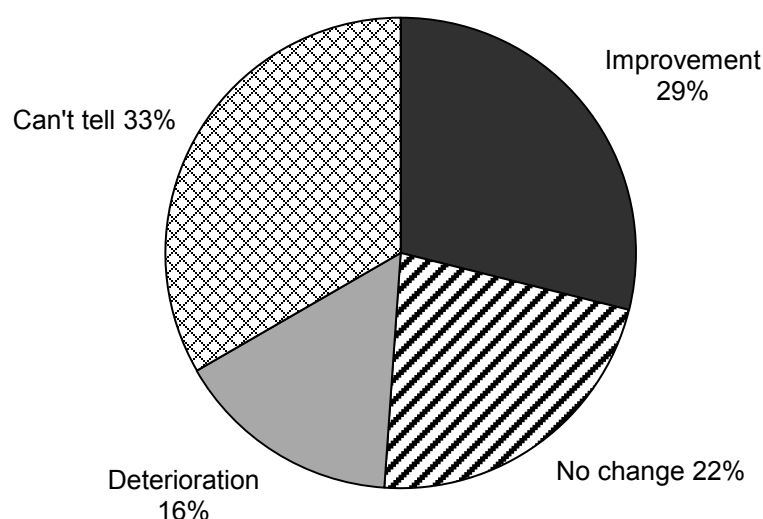
Data source: SCRGSP (2011b).

## Outcomes for Indigenous Australians vary by remoteness

Much of the debate in Indigenous affairs has focused on outcomes for Indigenous Australians in remote areas. However, the majority of Indigenous Australians live in major cities and regional areas — only a quarter live in remote and very remote areas.

For indicators where data can be disaggregated by remoteness, the proportion of Indigenous Australians experiencing disadvantage typically increases with remoteness. Figure 2.3 shows outcomes in 2008 declining with remoteness for:

- self-reported Year 12 completion — from just over 50 per cent in non-remote areas to around 25 per cent in very remote areas

- achievement of Certificate III or higher qualifications — from around 30 per cent in non-remote areas to 12 per cent in very remote areas

- living in a home owned or being purchased by a member of the household — from 35 per cent in non-remote areas to 5 per cent in very remote areas

- being employed in a non-CDEP job — from 53 per cent in non-remote areas to 29 per cent in very remote areas

- young people neither working nor studying (and at risk of long-term disadvantage) — from 38 per cent in non-remote areas to 47 per cent in very remote areas

- living in overcrowded housing — from 20 per cent in non-remote areas to 61 per cent in very remote areas.

Figure 2.3   Outcomes for Indigenous Australians by remoteness, 2008[a]
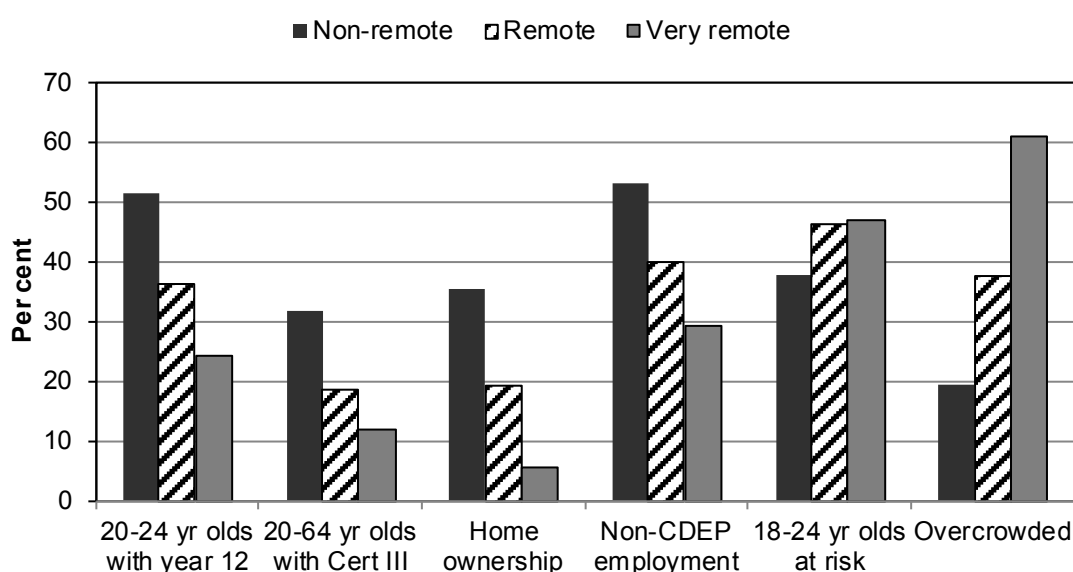
yr=year; Cert III=Certificate III or above; CDEP=Community Development Employment Projects.

a See source tables for definitions and notes.

Data sources: ABS, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) 2008, unpublished; SCRGSP (2011b), tables 4A.5.1 (Year 12), 4A.7.5 (post secondary), 8A.3.1 (home ownership), 4A.6.15 (employment), 6A.6.1 (transition from school to work), 9A.1.2 (overcrowding).

Economic participation by Indigenous Australians

Participation in the economic life of the community has a significant influence on the living standards of individuals and households. Having a job or being involved in a business activity can lead to improved incomes for families and communities, and enhance self-esteem and reduce social alienation. Long-term reliance on income

support can entrench the disadvantages that accompany low socioeconomic status, and can contribute to long-term welfare dependency.

In many ways 'a rising tide lifts all boats' — Indigenous Australians have benefited from Australia's recent prosperity. But, as shown in Figure 2.4, simultaneous improvements for other Australians mean the gaps have been slow to close.

Figure 2.4   Selected economic outcomes[a]
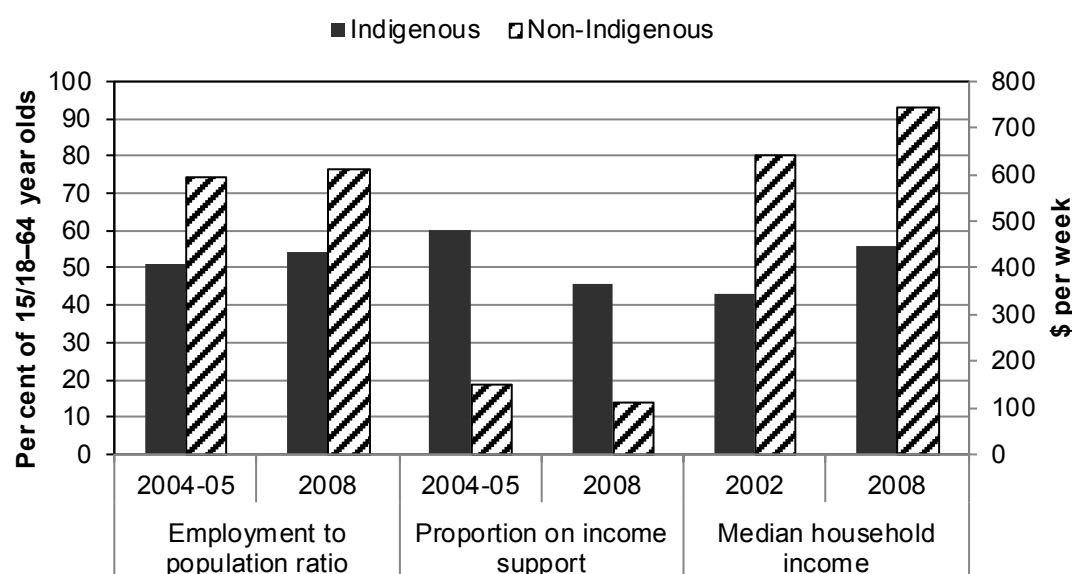
Data sources: ABS, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004–05, unpublished; ABS, NATSISS, 2002 and 2008, unpublished; SCRGSP (2011b), figure 4.6.1 (employment), figure 8.4.2 (income support), figure 4.9.2 (equivalised household income).

Between 2004-05 and 2008, for those aged 15–64 years, a small apparent increase in the employment to population ratio for Indigenous Australians (from 51 per cent to 54 per cent) was not statistically significant. The increase for other Australians (from 74 per cent to 76 per cent) was statistically significant (Figure 2.4).

Over the same period, the proportion of people aged 18−64 years whose main source of income was Community Development Employment Program payments or government cash pensions and allowances fell for Indigenous Australians (from 61 per cent in 2002 to 46 per cent in 2008 (Figure 2.4).

Between 2002 and 2008 (in constant 2008 dollars), median gross weekly equivalised household incomes increased for both Indigenous households (from $347 per week to $445 per week) and other households (from $640 per week to $746 per week) (Figure 2.4).

Are health outcomes improving for Indigenous Australians?

The COAG targets in the NIRA (COAG 2011) place a particular emphasis on health — as does the independent Close the Gap Indigenous health campaign (AHRC 2012).

Health issues start early — providing children with a good start in life can influence the whole of their lives. Problems at this early stage can create barriers that prevent children achieving their full potential.

Figure 2.5   Young children's health — birthweight and mortality[a, b]
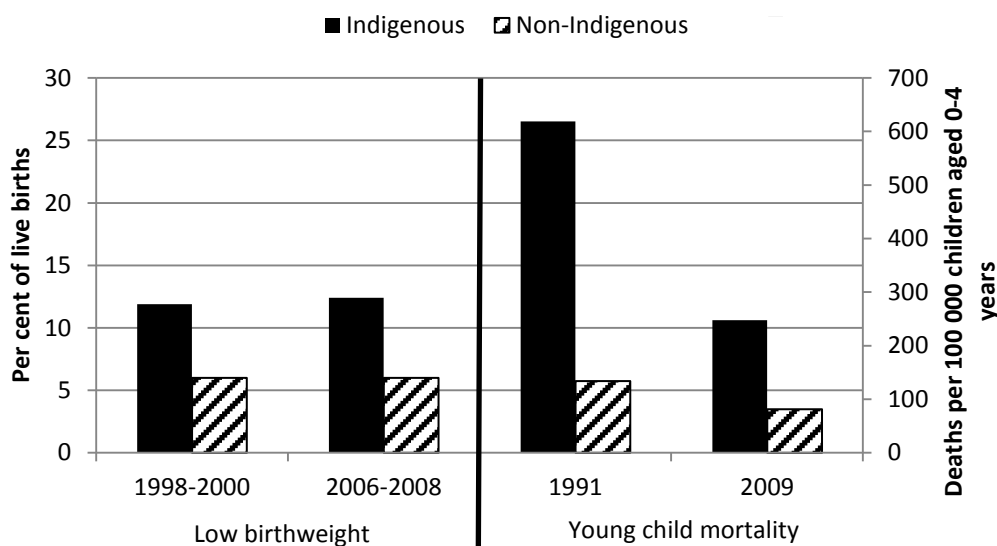
a See source tables for definitions and notes. **b** Young child mortality for WA, SA and the NT combined.

Data sources: AIHW, National Perinatal Data Collection; SCRGSP (2011b), tables 5A.3.5 to 5A.3.14 (birthweight), table 4A.2.15 (child mortality).

Between 1998–2000 and 2006–2008, average birthweights and proportions of low birthweight babies born to Indigenous and other Australian mothers were relatively constant, with no change in the significant gap (Figure 2.5).

A longer time series (1991 to 2009) is available for young child (0–4 years) mortality for Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory, and shows that Indigenous child mortality rates have significantly declined over that period, from 619 to 247 deaths per 100 000 children (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.6   Hospitalisation rate, children aged 0–4 years, 2009–10ᵃ
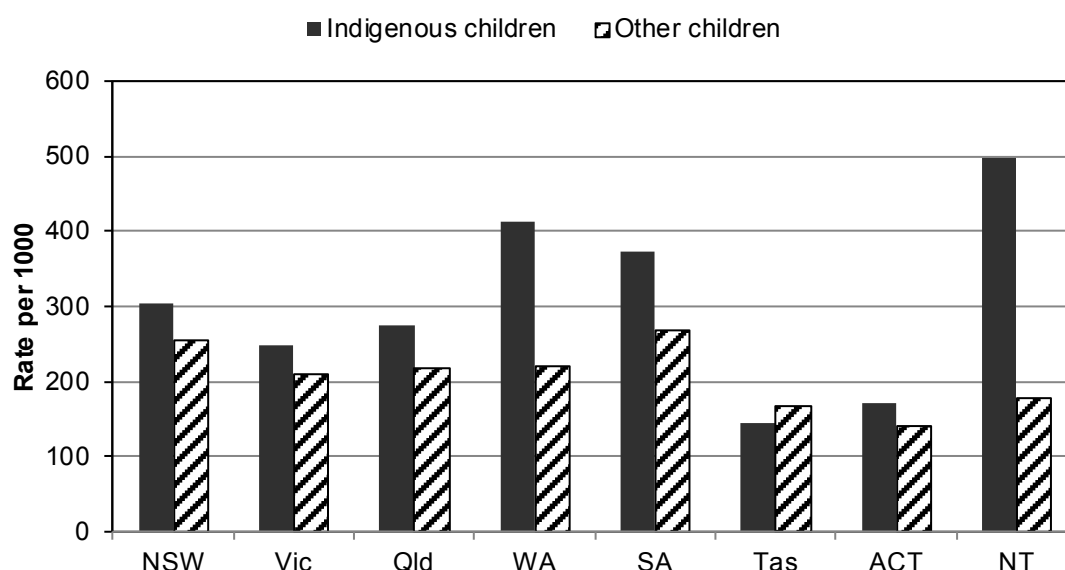
■ Indigenous children   ▨ Other children

ᵃ See source table for definitions and notes.

Data sources: AIHW, National Hospital Morbidity Database, unpublished; SCRGSP (2011a), table NIRA.11.2.

In 2009-10, hospitalisation rates for Indigenous children were higher than for other children in all States and Territories except Tasmania (Figure 2.6). Earlier data for 2008-09 were available by remoteness, and reveal that hospitalisation rates in major cities were similar for Indigenous and other children, but that rates for Indigenous children were 1.3 times as high as other children's rates in regional areas and twice as high in remote areas (SCRGSP 2011b, table 5A.4.6).

Figure 2.7   Potentially preventable hospitalisations[a]

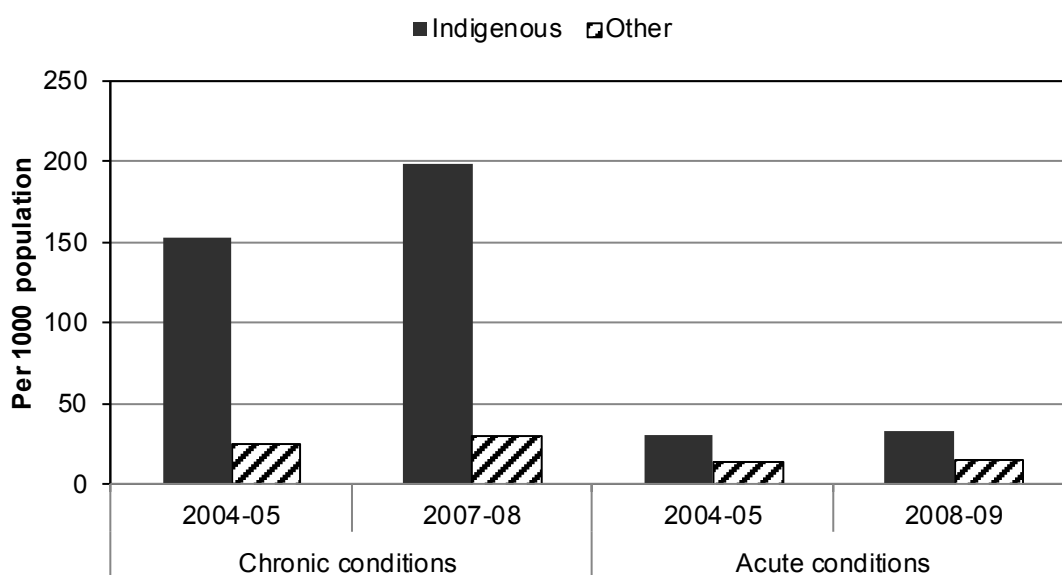a NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA, SA and public hospitals in the NT. b See source table for definitions and notes.

Data sources: AIHW, National Hospital Morbidity Database, unpublished; SCRGSP (2011b) tables 7A.2.1 and 7A.2.5.

Poor health is an increasing problem for Australian adults, particularly as the population ages. Poor health affects the quality of life of many Indigenous people, and can also contribute to barriers to social interaction, education and employment.

As illustrated in Figure 2.7, hospitalisation rates for Indigenous Australians with potentially preventable chronic conditions were seven times as high as the rates for other Australians in 2008-09 (SCRGSP 2011b, table 7.2.1). The Indigenous hospitalisation rate increased between 2004-05 and 2007-08, and the gap with other Australians increased (data for chronic conditions for 2008-09 are not directly comparable with the earlier data) (SCRGSP 2011b, table 7A.2.1).

Hospitalisation rates for Indigenous Australians with potentially preventable acute conditions were nearly two-and-a-half times the rate for other people in 2008-09, with a small increase between 2004-05 and 2008-09 (Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.8   Avoidable mortality, 0–74 year olds[a, b]

■ Indigenous   ▫ Non-Indigenous
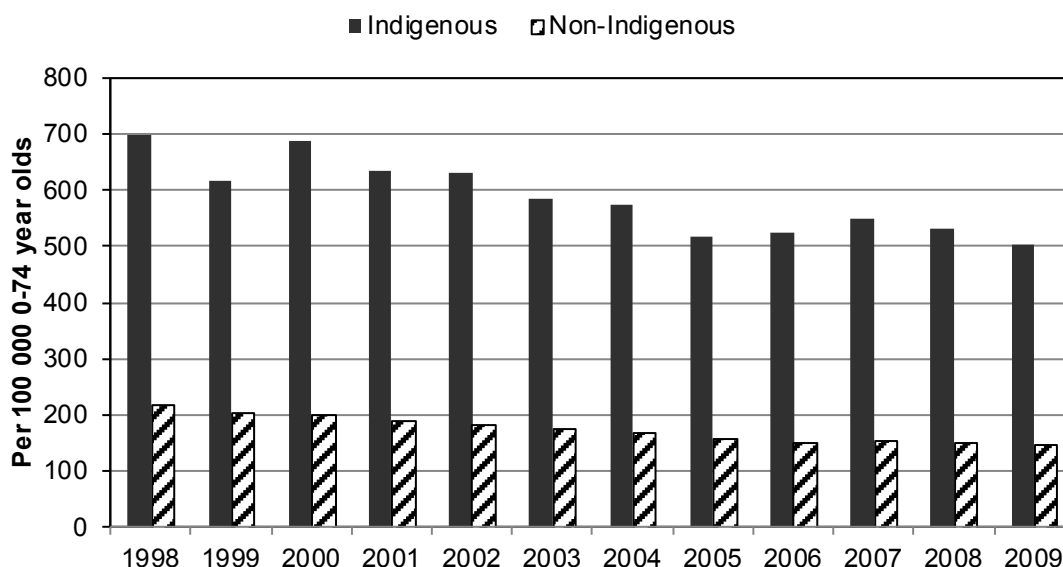
a NSW, Queensland, WA, SA and the NT. **b** See source table for definitions and notes.

Data sources: ABS, *Causes of Death, Australia 2009*, Cat. no. 3303.0, (unpublished); SCRGSP (2011b), table 7A.3.4.

There has been some improvement in other health outcomes for Indigenous Australians — between 1998 and 2009, mortality rates from avoidable causes for Indigenous people declined by almost 30 per cent, and the gap between Indigenous and other Australians narrowed (but did not close) (Figure 2.8).

Lifestyle factors can contribute to poor outcomes

Lifestyle risk factors, including smoking, being overweight or obese, risky alcohol consumption and use of illicit drugs, influence a range of health outcomes for all Australians. However, data to enable comparisons with other Australians are only available for some indicators.

Figure 2.9   Lifestyle risk factors[a]
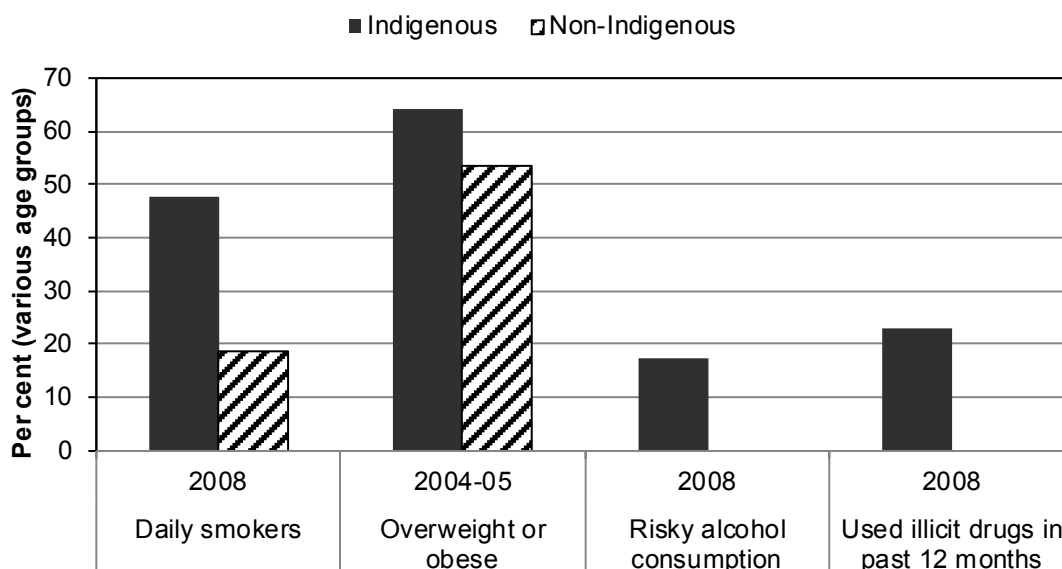
a See source tables for definitions and notes.

Data sources: ABS, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004–05, unpublished; ABS, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2008, unpublished; SCRGSP (2011b), tables 7A.4.1 (smoking), 7A.5.2 (overweight and obesity), 10A.3.3 (alcohol) and 10A.4.2 (drugs).

Smoking rates remain high

In 2008, after accounting for the different age structures in the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, the current daily smoking rate for Indigenous adults (45 per cent) was two-and-a-half times the rate for other adults (19 per cent) (Figure 2.9). Indigenous adults living in remote and very remote areas combined (50 per cent) had slightly higher rates of smoking than those living in non-remote areas (46 per cent) (SCRGSP 2011b, table 7A.4.7).

Non-age standardised data show no change in current daily smoking rates among Indigenous adults from 2001 to 2008 (SCRGSP 2011b, table 7A.4.1).

Being overweight or obese contributes to poor health outcomes

In 2004-05 (the most recent data available at the time of the 2011 OID report), 31 per cent of adult Indigenous Australians were obese and, after accounting for the different age structures in the two populations, the rate of obesity among Indigenous adults was almost twice the rate for other adults (SCRGSP 2011b, table 7A.5.2). The proportion of Indigenous adults who were overweight or obese did not change significantly between 2001 and 2004-05 (AIHW 2009).

Rates of drinking alcohol vary widely

No comparable data are available for other Australians, but in 2008, more than one quarter of Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over reported that they had abstained from drinking alcohol in the previous 12 months (SCRGSP 2011b, table 10A.3.3). People in remote areas (41 per cent) were more likely than people in non-remote areas (22 per cent) to report abstaining from drinking (SCRGSP 2011b, table 10A.3.5). However, 17 per cent of Indigenous Australians reported drinking at chronic risky/high risk levels (Figure 2.9). Rates were similar for Indigenous Australians living in remote areas and non-remote areas (SCRGSP 2011b, table 10A.3.5).

Illicit drug use

No comparable data are available for other Australians, but in both 2002 and 2008, among Indigenous Australians who accepted the substance use form,[4] 23 per cent reported using illicit drugs in the previous 12 months (Figure 1.8). Cannabis was the most commonly used substance (SCRGSP 2011b, table 10A.4.2).

Education is a key to overcoming disadvantage

Improved educational outcomes are essential to overcoming many aspects of disadvantage. School leavers without strong literacy and numeracy skills face poor employment prospects and low income. There are also links between education and health outcomes.

---

4 The substance use questions in the 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) are comparable to those used in the 2002 NATSISS. However, when comparing data for 2002 and 2008 it should be noted that there were changes in the proportion of people who did not accept the substance use form, with the 2002 NATSISS having a 6 per cent non-response compared with 9 per cent for the 2008 NATSISS.

Figure 2.10 Students achieving Year 3 minimum standards, 2011[a, b]
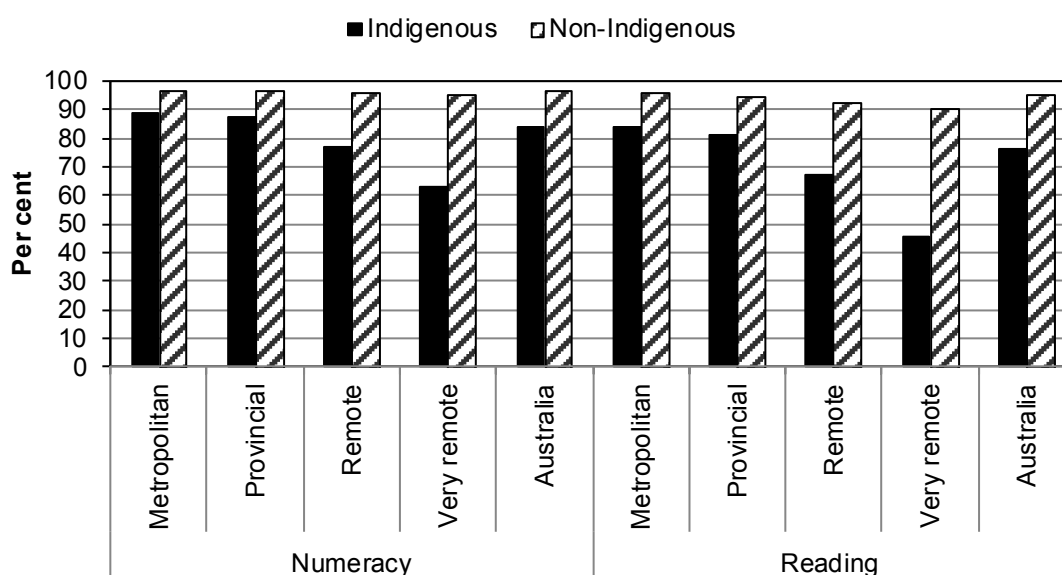
a Exempt students were not assessed and were deemed not to have met the national minimum standard. b The method used to identify Indigenous students varies between jurisdictions.

Data sources: ACARA, *National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy: Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy,* 2011, unpublished; SCRGSP (2011a), tables NIRA15.1 and NIRA 15.2.

In 2011, the majority of Indigenous students achieved the Year 3 national minimum standards for reading, writing and numeracy, but there were significant gaps compared with non-Indigenous students:

- reading — 76 per cent of Indigenous students achieved the minimum standard, compared with 95 per cent of other students (Figure 2.10)

- writing — 80 per cent of Indigenous students achieved the minimum standard, compared with 96 per cent of other students (SCRGSP 2011a, table NIRA15.2)

- numeracy — 84 per cent of Indigenous students achieved the minimum standard, compared with 96 per cent of other students (Figure 2.10).

The proportion of Indigenous students in urban (metropolitan and provincial) areas meeting the national minimum standards was higher than the proportions in remote and very remote areas (Figure 2.10).

Between 2008 and 2011, at a national level, there were small but statistically significant increases in the proportions of Indigenous students achieving at or above the national minimum standard in reading in years 3 and 7, and in numeracy in years 3 and 5 (COAG Reform Council 2012, p. 37).

Figure 2.11   Apparent retention rates of full-time secondary students[a]
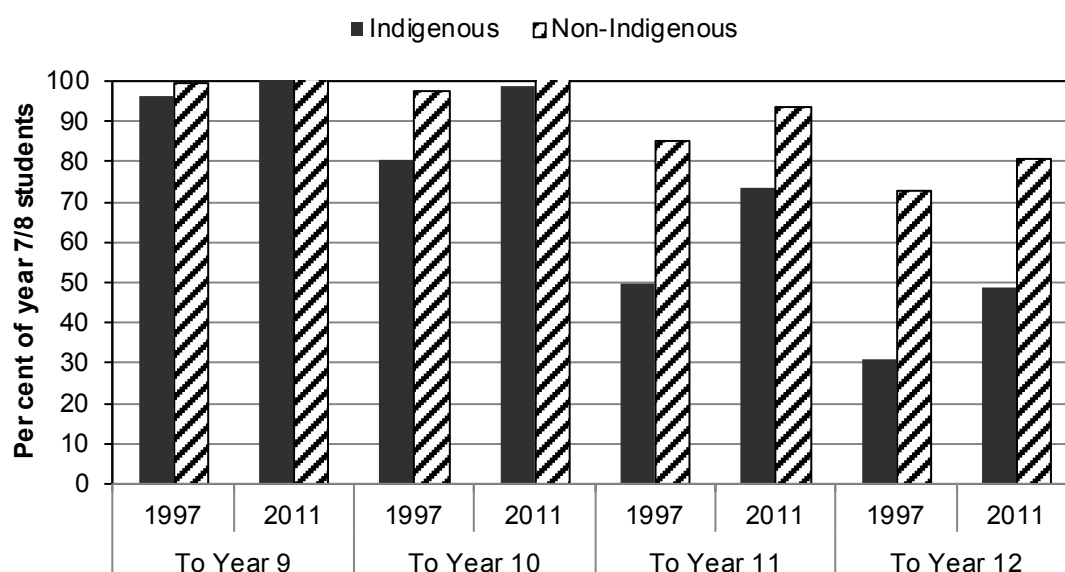
a The apparent retention rate is the percentage of full time students who continued to Year 12 from respective cohort groups at the commencement of their secondary schooling (Year 7 or 8).

Data source: ABS (2012b), NSSC table 64a.

Over time, higher proportions of Indigenous children are completing more years of school, although apparent retention rates[5] for Indigenous students still drop rapidly outside the compulsory years of schooling. Indigenous students' retention to Year 12 increased from 31 per cent in 1997 to 49 per cent in 2011, but is still well below the 79 per cent rate for other students (Figure 2.11).
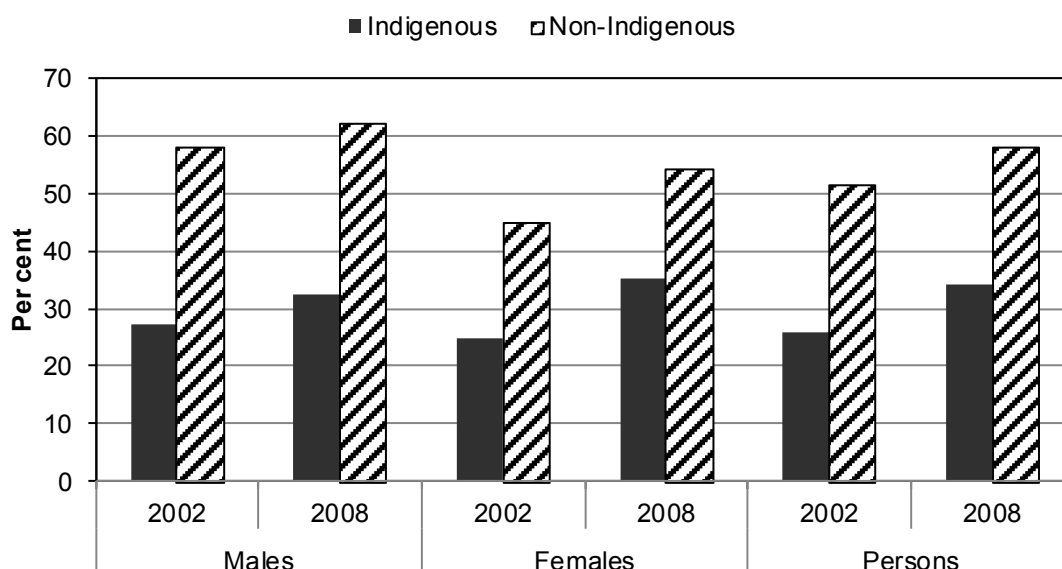
---

5   The apparent retention rate is the percentage of full-time students who continued to years 9, 10, 11 and 12 from respective cohort groups at the commencement of their secondary schooling (Year 7 or Year 8, depending on the jurisdiction).

Figure 2.12 20–64 year olds with Certificate III or above (or studying)ᵃ

ᵃ See source tables for definitions and notes.

Data sources: ABS, GSS and NATSISS 2002, unpublished; ABS, NATSISS 2008, unpublished; ABS, NHS 2007–08, unpublished; SCRGSP (2011b), table 4A.7.1.

Post-school outcomes for Indigenous Australians have also improved. The proportion of Indigenous 20–64 year olds with a Certificate III or above, or who were currently studying, increased from 26 per cent in 2002 to 34 per cent in 2008. The proportion for other 20–64 year olds increased from 52 per cent to 58 per cent over the same period (Figure 2.12).

Safe and supportive communities

Safe and supportive families and communities provide the foundations for the physical and mental wellbeing of children and adults. Together they can provide a protective, caring and resilient environment, promoting a range of positive outcomes.

However, many Indigenous communities live under severe social strain. Community breakdown can contribute to alcohol and drug misuse, child abuse and neglect, violence and imprisonment, and poor health, education, employment and income outcomes. Governments' ability to influence these outcomes varies.

A range of factors can inhibit healthy community functioning. Unemployment, welfare dependency and low incomes affect living standards, self-esteem and overall wellbeing. Excessive drinking has both health and social consequences. Drug use contributes to illness, violence and crime, family and social disruption,

and workplace problems. Overcrowding in housing can increase domestic tensions and affect people's health and education

This part of the paper examines outcomes for Indigenous people in housing overcrowding, child abuse and neglect, violence, imprisonment and juvenile detention.

Overcrowding

Figure 2.13   People in overcrowded housing, 2008[a, b]
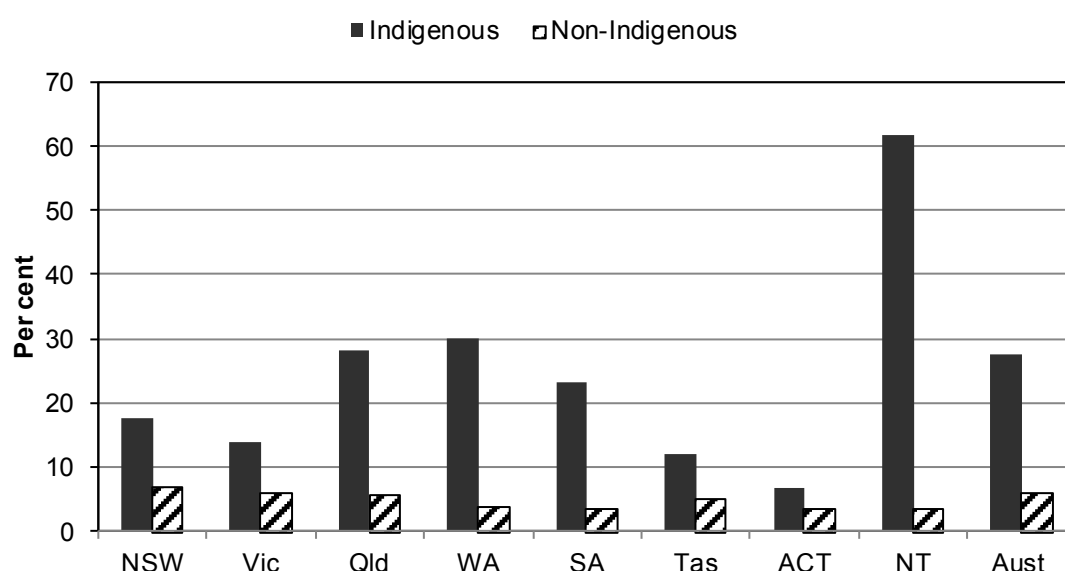
a Households requiring at least one additional bedroom, based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard for Housing Appropriateness. **b** See source tables for definitions and notes.

Data sources: ABS, NATSISS 2008, unpublished; ABS, NHS 2007–08, unpublished; SCRGSP (2011b), table 9A.1.1.

In 2008, 28 per cent of Indigenous Australians lived in overcrowded housing, five times the rate for other Australians (Figure 2.13). Overcrowding rates increased with remoteness, from 13 per cent in major cities to 58 per cent in very remote areas (SCRGSP 2011b, figure 9.1.2). There was no statistically significant change in the overcrowding rate between 2002 and 2008 (SCRGSP 2011b, figure 9.1.2).

Substantiated child abuse and neglect rates continue to rise

No data exist on the actual extent of abuse, neglect and harm to children within the family environment. The available data refer only to matters that have been notified to the authorities, and investigated and substantiated. Numbers and rates of

substantiations are affected by the willingness of people to report incidents, government policies and practices (including variations in what constitutes substantiation), and the availability of services.

Figure 2.14   Substantiated notifications of child abuse or neglect (time series)a
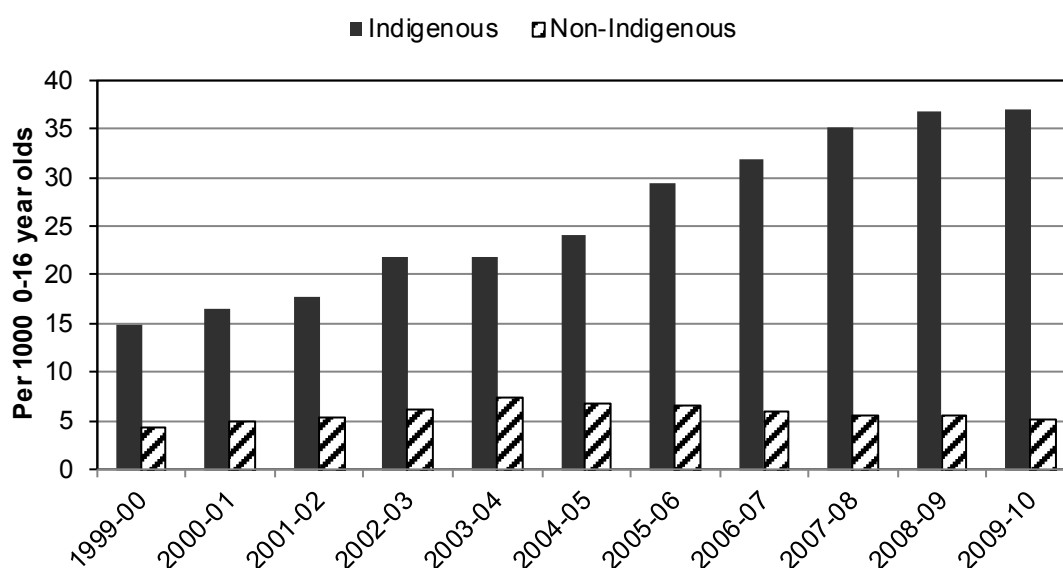
a See source table for definitions and notes.

Data sources: AIHW, derived from *Child Protection Notifications, Investigations and Substantiations , Australia* data collection, unpublished; SCRGSP (2011b), table 4A.10.2.

In 2009-10, Indigenous children were subject to substantiation at over seven times the rate for other children (Figure 2.14). From 1999-2000 to 2009-10, the substantiation rate for Indigenous children increased from 15 per 1000 children in 1999-2000 to 37 per 1000 children in 2009-10. The rate for other children increased from 4 to 5 per 1000 children over the same period. It is possible that some of the increase for Indigenous children is due to improved child protection action, but some is likely to reflect real increases in child abuse and neglect, given little improvement in the social and economic circumstances of Indigenous people.

Figure 2.15   Substantiated notifications of child abuse or neglect (by jurisdiction), 2009-10ᵃ
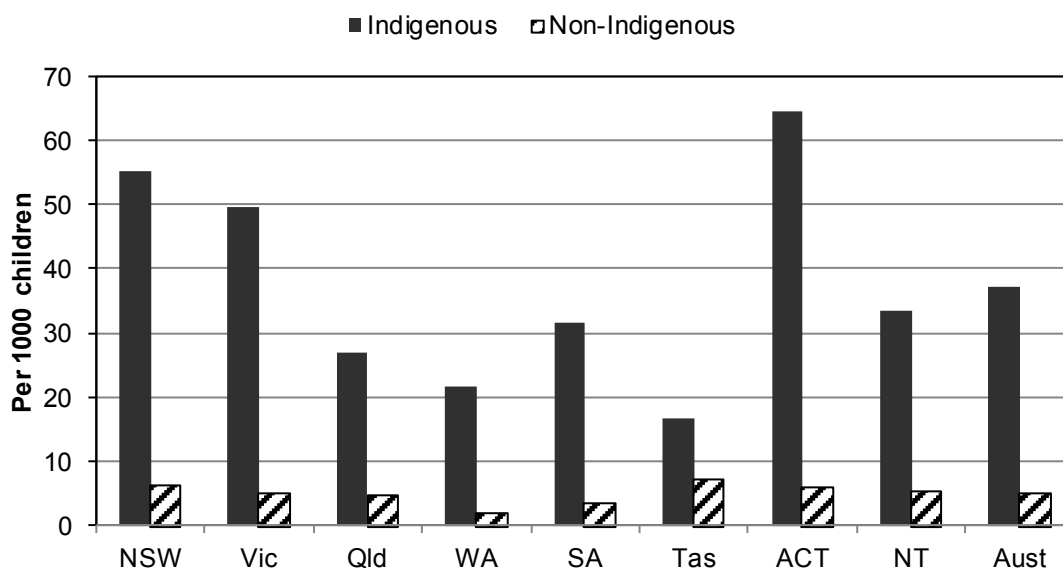
a See source table for definitions and notes.

Data sources: AIHW, derived from *Child Protection Notifications, Investigations and Substantiations, Australia* data collection, unpublished ; SCRGSP (2011b), table 4A.10.2.

The substantiation rate for Indigenous children was higher than the rate for other children in all States and Territories (Figure 2.15).

Violence can undermine safe and supportive communities

Social, economic and environmental factors — including unemployment, low income, housing overcrowding and alcohol and substance misuse — can all contribute to family and community violence. A higher proportion of Indigenous adults (20 per cent in 2008) than other adults (11 per cent in 2006) reported in surveys that they had been victims of physical or threatened violence in the previous 12 months (SCRGSP 2011b, table 4A.11.1).

Figure 2.16 Hospitalisation for family violence related assaults^a
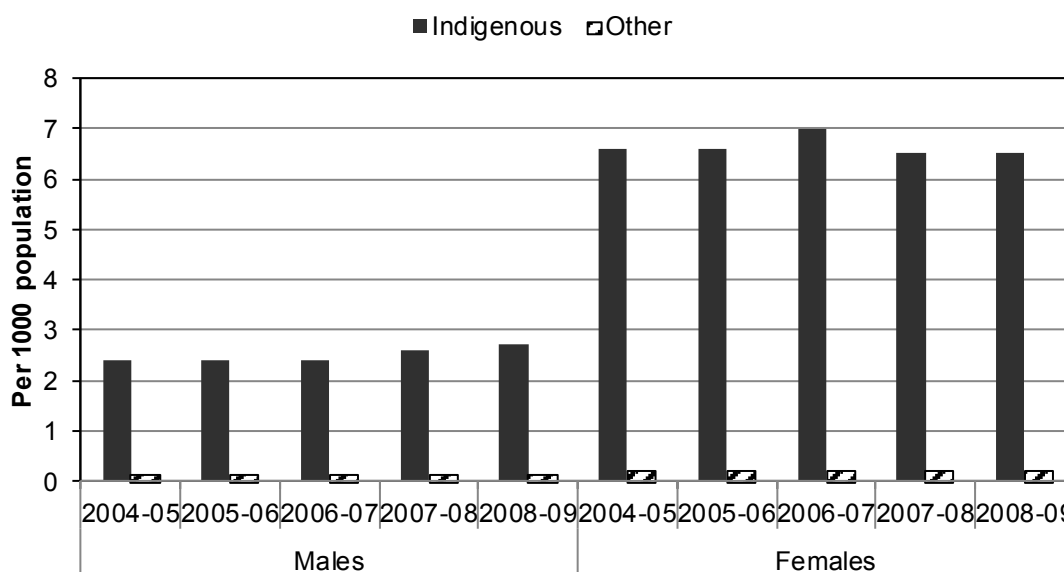
a NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA, SA, and public hospitals in the NT. **b** See source table for definitions and notes.

Data sources: AIHW, National Hospital Morbidity Database, unpublished; SCRGSP (2011b), table 4A.11.6.

Between 2004-05 and 2008-09, the rate of hospitalisations for family violence related assault remained fairly constant for both Indigenous and other Australians. In 2008-09, after adjusting for the different age structures of the Indigenous and other populations, Indigenous females were hospitalised for family violence assault at over 30 times the rate for other females (Figure 2.16). Indigenous males were hospitalised for family violence assault at 25 times the rate for other males (Figure 2.16).

Indigenous people are over-represented in the criminal justice system

Indigenous people are over-represented in the criminal justice system, as both young people and adults. Poverty, unemployment, low levels of education, having a parent previously or currently in custody, and lack of access to social services are associated with high crime rates and high levels of imprisonment.

Figure 2.17 Imprisonment rates, age standardised, per 100 000 adult males, Australia[a, b]
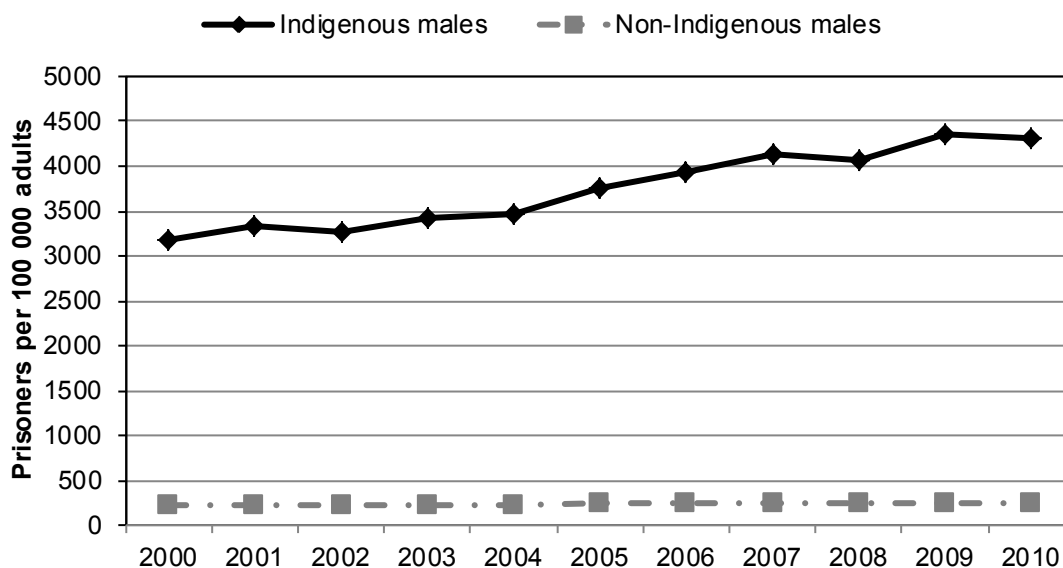
a Age standardised. **b** See source table for definitions and notes.

Data sources: ABS (various years) *Prisoners in Australia*, Cat. no. 4517.0; SCRGSP (2011b), table 4A.12.4.

After adjusting for differences in the age structure of the Indigenous and other populations, the national Indigenous imprisonment rate was 14 times the rate for other Australians in 2010. The Indigenous imprisonment rate increased by over 50 per cent between 2000 and 2010, while the rate for other Australians only changed slightly (Figure 2.17).

Figure 2.18 Juvenile detention rates[a]
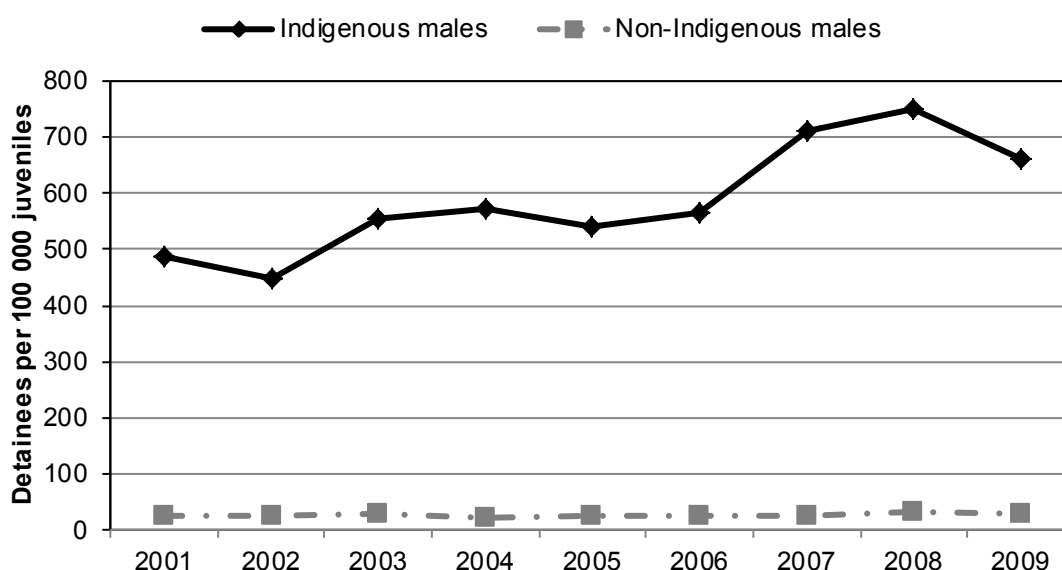
a See source table for definitions and notes.

Data sources: Richards and Lyneham (2010) unpublished; SCRGSP (2011b), table 4A.12.13.

The early involvement of young people in the criminal justice system puts them at much higher risk of further involvement as adults. The detention rate for Indigenous juveniles was 22 times the rate for other juveniles in 2009 (Figure 2.18). Detention rates for Indigenous juveniles were relatively stable between 2003 and 2006, increased in 2007 and 2008, and then decreased to 365.0 per 100 000 young people in 2009. Small numbers of detainees can lead to fluctuations in rates from year to year even where changes in actual numbers are small.

2.6 Beyond outcome reporting

The results presented in this paper (and which form the basis for major reports such as the OID report and the NIRA) are only part of the information needed to assess policy and program effectiveness. Australia is on the way to developing an integrated performance reporting system, with increasing amounts of information available on:

- outcomes for Indigenous Australians — from the OID and NIRA reports
- service delivery and expenditure — from the Report on Government Services: Indigenous Compendium and the Indigenous Expenditure Report
- program evaluations — compiled by the COAG Closing the Gap Clearinghouse.

Program evaluation

The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse was established by COAG to create a clearinghouse for evidence-based research on overcoming disadvantage for Indigenous Australians. It is being delivered by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in collaboration with the Australian Institute of Family Studies. (AIHW and AIFS 2012).

The Clearinghouse is becoming a valuable resource for policy makers and Indigenous communities. However, it will only achieve its full potential if governments commit to both funding and publishing more evaluations and research.

The OID report (SCRGSP 2011b), using analysis of case studies and extensive consultation with Indigenous Australians, governments and researchers, identified the following 'success factors' in successful programs (which overlap closely with those identified by the Clearinghouse (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse 2011, 2012)):

- cooperative approaches between Indigenous Australians and government — often with the non-profit and private sectors as well

- community involvement in program design and decision-making — a 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down' approach

- good governance — at organisation, community and government levels

- ongoing government support — including human, financial and physical resources.

These success factors are closely related to the six determinants of good governance discussed in the OID report: governing institutions; leadership; self-determination; capacity building; cultural match; and resources (SCRGSP 2011b). While these success factors emphasise the roles of government and Indigenous Australians, without direct involvement of the private sector there are limits to improvements in outcomes, particularly in areas such as employment and economic development. Reconciliation Australia (2012) outlined how a range of organisations both public and private have developed Reconciliation Action Plans and are contributing to improving economic and other outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

2.7   Conclusion

The outcomes in this paper show that, although the majority of Indigenous Australians lead productive lives, on average, Indigenous Australians are significantly disadvantaged compared with other Australians across a wide range of socioeconomic indicators. However, the data also show that some outcomes for

Indigenous Australians are improving, particularly in education and economic participation.

Available case studies, evaluations and other research suggest that certain programs and policies can be successful in addressing aspects of Indigenous disadvantage. However, there is an urgent need for more (and better) research and evaluation to identify successful Indigenous programs and the reasons for their success. Both governments and Indigenous people need a better basis for learning about what works (and what does not) if they are to apply those lessons more widely.

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2008, *Experimental Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2006*, Cat. no. 3238.0.55.001, Canberra.

—— 2012a, *Australian Demographic Statistics March Quarter 2012*, Cat. no. 3101.0, Canberra.

—— 2012b, *Schools Australia 2011*, Cat. no. 422.10, Canberra.

AHRC (Australian Human Rights Commission) 2012, *Close the Gap Campaign for Indigenous Health Equality*, http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/ health/index.html.

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2009, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework, 2008 Report: Detailed Analyses*, Cat. no. IHW 22, Canberra.

—— and AIFS (Australian Institute of Family Studies) 2012, Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/ (accessed 27 September 2012).

Closing the Gap Clearinghouse (AIHW, AIFS) 2011, *What Works to Overcome Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Learnings and Gaps in the Evidence*, produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, Canberra and Melbourne, http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/documents/annual_papers/what_works_t o_overcome_disadvantage.pdf (accessed 27 September 2012).

—— 2012, *What Works to Overcome Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Learnings and Gaps in the Evidence 2010–11*. Produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, Canberra and Melbourne, http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/ documents/annual_papers/what_works_to_overcome_disadvantage_2010-11.pdf (accessed 27 September 2012).

COAG (Council of Australian Governments) 2011, *National Indigenous Reform Agreement (Closing the Gap)*, Canberra, http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/national_agreements/indige nous_reform/National_Indigenous_Reform_Agreement_from_13_Feb_11.pdf (accessed 19 September 2012).

COAG Reform Council 2012, *Indigenous Reform 2010–11: Comparing Performance across Australia*, Sydney, http://www.coagreformcouncil.gov.au/reports/indigenous.cfm (accessed 19 September 2012).

Reconciliation Australia 2012, *Reconciliation Action Plan: Impact Measurement Report 2011*, Canberra.

Richards, K. and Lyneham, M. 2010, *Juveniles in Detention in Australia, 1981– 2008*, Monitoring Reports, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.

SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision) 2011a, *National Agreement Performance Information 2010–11: National Indigenous Reform Agreement*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

—— 2011b, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2011*, Productivity Commission, Canberra, http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/indigenous/key-indicators-2011 (accessed 20 September 2012).

—— 2012a, *2012 Indigenous Expenditure Report*, Productivity Commission, Canberra, http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/ier/indigenous-expenditure-2012/key-points (accessed 19 September 2012).

—— 2012b, *Report on Government Services 2012: Indigenous Compendium,* Productivity Commission, Canberra, http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/rogs/indigenous-compendium-2012 (accessed 27 September 2012).

3   The Indigenous policy experience 1960 to 2012

Fred Chaney[1]

Abstract

The Indigenous policy experience from 1960 to 2012 saw the de jure legal position of Indigenous people significantly changed for the better, while the role of government also changed and various purchaser–provider models were used to pursue policy objectives.

In remote communities in particular the 'removal of the footprint of government' and the remoteness of policymakers resulted in outcomes well below what had been hoped for. Interventions by metropolitan government and attempts to coordinate services had limited success. The evaluation of programs had limited value in overcoming the structural deficiencies of government, which seemed unable to act in accordance with its own understanding of 'what works'. There was resistance to evaluating how critical responsibilities were met by government or shifted to individuals, families and service providers.

To quote Dillon and Westbury, 'How is it that governments … have allowed this level of systemic failure for so long … while promoting worn out policy approaches that have proved unworkable?' (*Beyond Humbug*, 2007)

3.1   The Indigenous policy experience 1960 to 2012

A 20 minute segment on a 52-year policy experience is a tall order. I have a broad sense of that period because I have been involved with Aboriginal people and their issues over the whole of that time. That involvement has, however, been in a range of roles — as a student, a lawyer, a politician and legislator, a minister, a researcher, a statutory officer, through a statutory corporation, and through involvement in NGOs. I remain involved because I know how much remains to be done if we are to do justice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, many of whom remain the most socially and economically disadvantaged Australians. My involvement, however,

---

[1] Chair, Desert Knowledge Australia; Board member, Reconciliation Australia.

has been more about assisting in doing things which seemed to need to be done, rather than the detached analysis in which many participants in this workshop excel. I acknowledge the contribution of scholars and analysts to my own understandings (for example, the work of John Taylor and many others in the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research) and that of others actively involved over decades, who also have contributed by scholarship and analysis (for example, Bill Gray, Noel Pearson, Marcia Langton, Neil Westbury and Michael Dillon).

It is impossible in the time available to comprehensively cover the complex policy and administrative changes that have occurred. Given the subject matter of this workshop, my focus will be on the broad approaches to service delivery over that period. The passing references to important developments in the Indigenous rights area, such as land rights and native title, as well as major debates about treaty and sovereignty, is not to suggest that they are unimportant but that they do not directly go to the history of service delivery over that period. My own view is that the Indigenous rights issues are fundamentally important to the relationship between Australia and our first nations, and ultimately to outcomes. The High Court decision in *Mabo* was the most significant shift in the balance of power between the settler society and Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders since 1788. That case has brought Aboriginal people to many tables, not as supplicants but as stakeholders. Importantly, it has also brought important economic players, particularly miners but other corporate interests as well, into the relationship. At their best, miners and other commercial entities have much to show government about evidence-based approaches to policy and delivery, about the importance of and potential benefits from careful evaluation, about long-term approaches to tackling wicked problems, about learning by doing and about genuinely working in respectful partnerships.

Over the period since 1960, the past has become a foreign country. In our justified concern about present circumstances, we and, I think, Aboriginal people, often overlook where we have come from and what they have won.

In 1960, Aboriginal people were mostly denied the vote, were not counted in the Census, were still subject to extreme controls by bureaucrats, in some parts of Australia were confined to reserves or lived around our towns and cities in humpies and car bodies. Families were dismembered, not for reasons of welfare but for reasons of social engineering that were fundamentally racist and wrong. The policy of assimilation was contemptuous of Aboriginal society; Aboriginal people were sexually preyed on, were moved off their homes and lands without consultation or compensation whenever other interests wanted those lands, had little or no protection of their culturally significant sites and, to try to sum it up, must have been regarded as a subhuman species to justify their treatment.

In our frequent despair at our failure over 50 years to get all the results that Aboriginal people have asked for, and which governments often have wanted too, there has been much historical revisionism about the good old days before Whitlam, before self-management, before ATSIC, before the do-gooders and socialists and indeed communists messed it up. I did not witness all of what were supposed to be the good old days, but what I did see was not good at all. When in 1960 I visited the reserves in the south-west of Western Australia and the fringe camps around Perth, and when I saw a film of Papunya at the time the great art movement of the desert was taking off in the early 1970s, I saw the most degrading physical living conditions. There were few if any Aboriginal professionals. Aboriginal people were not generally prominent, whether in the arts, academia or sport, and they operated on the fringe of the economy. Overt racism was politically correct. In all those respects, changes have been gradual but in a positive direction.

When I visited the community of Carnarvon in 1979, people still were living in abandoned car bodies, as Aboriginal people lived in creek beds and on rubbish dumps around the country. Now, mostly, Aboriginal people live in houses — albeit often overcrowded houses. And as for the pastoral idyll the revisionists talk about, yes there were some pastoralists with great relationships with the traditional owners of their leases living in bush camps near the homestead. But other traditional owners lived in squalor. 'They are like family', I often was told by more positive pastoralists. But when a property was sold, that part of the family was usually left behind, even where there were children whose half brothers and sisters were leaving. And after the equal wage case led to many traditional owners no longer working on cattle stations, few pastoralists provided excised living areas for traditional owners (as the Emanuel family at Christmas Creek station in the Kimberley did).

What has happened since 1960 is a succession of policy initiatives with successes and failures, often intermingled.

The first change was the securing of a basic democratic right, the right to vote, in 1962, through Commonwealth legislation following a parliamentary committee enquiry.

Then, after an excellent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led campaign, 90 per cent of Australians voted 'yes' in the 1967 referendum to remove the provision that Aboriginal people were not to be counted in the Census, and to give the Commonwealth power to legislate with respect to Aboriginal people. This was an unprecedented level of support for a referendum, and its significance is as much symbolic as real — it is widely credited among Aboriginal people I have met with admission to full citizenship.

In 1964, the North Australian Workers Union began the campaign for equal wages for Aboriginal pastoral workers. The Conciliation and Arbitration Commission heard the case, and its ruling on equal wages came into force in 1968. The (probably) unintended consequences of that decision (the ejection of many communities from their traditional lands and their subsequent social and economic degradation in desert towns), led to the later government decisions to purchase leases to enable the return of people to country. Current enthusiasts for emptying the 'cultural ghettoes' of the remote communities might usefully answer the question 'where should these people go, to do what?'

Aboriginal affairs policy became more complex and contentious after 1967, with the emergence of the Land Rights movement. This was a claim for rights peculiar to Aboriginal people and roused misgiving in the breasts of many. 'We are all equal and Aboriginals should not have special rights' was the negative argument; 'They should not have what we can't have'. This argument was particularly strongly articulated by people who, in the past, had been unconcerned about Aboriginal inequality. Queensland and Western Australia were particularly strident about this issue.

The failed Gove land rights case in 1971 put to bed for the time being the use of the courts to assert native rights to land. The careful judgment of Justice Blackburn, however, articulated the basis of rights to land under Aboriginal law, which he described as a government of laws and not of men. His judgment articulated what needed to be delivered politically, as judicial precedent was thought at that time to preclude common law recognition of Aboriginal land rights.

Until the 1970s, much policy was based on the idea that Aboriginal Australians would gradually be absorbed into the general population, although there was little interest in attending to the social and economic barriers to full participation in Australian society.

In tracing this history, it is worth noting that 'post-assimilation' policy did not begin with Whitlam. Prime Minister McMahon's Australia Day speech in 1972 stepped away from the policy of assimilation. The Budget speech in 1972 of the first Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Peter Howson, described provision for the first time of federal funds for land purchase, cultural organisations and Aboriginal medical and legal services.[2] Under the influence of government advisers including Nugget Coombs, Professor Stanner and Barrie Dexter, new policy

---

[2] He later became a prominent critic of these policies. In a classic case of revisionism, when in a public exchange I pointed out that he was in fact the father of the new approach to Aboriginal affairs policy, he countered that he had disagreed with what he had done as minister, apparently forced into these policies by the prime minister.

approaches saw active Aboriginal participation as essential to improving Aboriginal circumstances. We now have had 40 years experience of admittedly spasmodic application of that idea, and have learned a lot about its importance. We seem to have been less successful in learning how to apply our knowledge; a matter that should be of central concern to this workshop.

In most areas of social policy, the Whitlam period was a time of frantic policymaking, with enthusiasm more evident than competent administration. There were three Aboriginal affairs ministers in three years. The idea that Aboriginal people should be given responsibility for their own affairs was accompanied by what Dillon and Westbury described as 'the removal of the footprint of government' (2007, p. 208ff.). As has been the case ever since (to greater and lesser degrees) the gap between good intentions and execution was wide.

Two achievements of the Whitlam period stand out as having long-term impact — the passage of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* and the introduction of land rights legislation for the Northern Territory.

Whitlam appointed the Woodward Commission in 1973 to advise, not on the desirability of land rights in the Northern Territory, but on how to grant them. Two reports later, the Government and the Opposition endorsed the Woodward approach, and Whitlam introduced legislation in 1975. The legislation was still in the Parliament at the time of the dismissal but was reintroduced by Fraser with some limited changes but with a wider reach over the pastoral estate. It was passed in 1976, and about half the Northern Territory is now held by Aboriginal people under perpetual inalienable freehold title.

Discontinuities of policy are often a contributing cause of failure. However, there were substantial continuities of Aboriginal affairs policy at the Commonwealth level from 1972 to 1983. Whatever the skirmishes politically, there was bipartisan support for funding Aboriginal corporations to deliver policies across a range of areas, such as health, legal services, children's services, land purchase for social, cultural and economic purposes, and encouraging States to legislate for land rights within their respective jurisdictions. There were, however, very different approaches in some States, with opposition to notions of self-management (as opposed to approaches based on bureaucratic controls) and violent opposition to land rights in Queensland and Western Australia. There was also a view in some States that anything to do with Aboriginals was the responsibility of the Commonwealth; for example, Aboriginal housing in Victoria. This was notwithstanding the Commonwealth position that Aboriginal Australians had normal citizenship entitlements from the States. From time to time, the Commonwealth asserted its position by making state grants subject to conditions

requiring a fixed proportion of expenditure to be directed to services for Aboriginal people.

During this period, the Commonwealth also supported a number of representative structures to provide a national Aboriginal voice; for example, Whitlam with the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee and Fraser with the National Aboriginal Conference. Neither of these bodies had executive functions and were subject to criticism on various grounds, although my personal experience as a minister was that they held the Government and the minister to account in the court of public opinion to good effect, and I found their counsel and advice invaluable — even though they went international in their complaints about our failings as a government.

In 1977, the Community Development Employment (CDEP) scheme was introduced by Ian Viner as a response to Aboriginal concerns that welfare payments were causing social dysfunction. (Note that this is the same as more recent concerns expressed by Noel Pearson about the corrosive effects of welfare on Aboriginal communities.) It was intended as a 'work for the dole' equivalent, with additional funds being provided for administration and some plant and equipment. It has continued in one form or another to the present day, with frequent reviews. (Recent decisions to end CDEP have in turn been reviewed.) In some communities (for example, the Ngaanyatjarra communities in Western Australia) CDEP has been an essential part of maintaining functioning communities.

The setting up of the Aboriginal Development Commission in 1981 was a further step in enlarging Aboriginal control of program delivery. The Development Commission assumed responsibility for some of the programs previously administered by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. It was controlled by an all-Aboriginal board, and had a high degree of freedom from government direction and control.

This broad bipartisanship was lost in 1983, when Labor adopted a policy of national land rights, using Commonwealth constitutional power to require the adoption of land rights across the States. This was a bridge too far for the Liberal and National parties. Although there had been confrontations between the Commonwealth and States during the Fraser Government (for example, Aurukun and Mornington Island in Queensland and Noonkanbah in Western Australia) the basic commitment to federalism, as well as the politics of confronting popular state leaders, had prevented the use of Commonwealth constitutional power to override the States. Although the Hawke Government policy for national land rights came to nothing after commitment to the policy collapsed in the face of opposition from a Labor

State government (Burke in Western Australia) and the mining industry, subsequent policy developments during the 1980s saw other policy differences emerge.

The establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) in 1990 was intended as a larger step toward Aboriginal responsibility for both advice to Government on policy, and program delivery. An elected national board with an appointed chair had policy and administrative functions. Elected regional councils had representative, funding, and service delivery obligations. The Commonwealth Government would look to ATSIC for policy advice and Aboriginal organisations would look to it for funding. The establishment of ATSIC was opposed by the Opposition and by the Aboriginal Development Commission (ADC) but it was legislated for in 1989 with Australian Democrat support. It survived until 2004 when, after a series of allegations and scandals at national board level, the Labor Opposition indicated it would be replaced and the Howard Government took the opportunity to announce its abolition and the return of responsibility for programs to line departments. In practice, the regional structures of ATSIC worked well in many regions, such as Murdi Paaki and Shepparton, but were lost along with the national body.

For the purpose of this roundtable, perhaps the most relevant developments over the past 50 years are that, until 1972, program delivery was a responsibility of the normal agencies of governments. Starting in 1972, responsibility was shifted to funded Aboriginal-controlled organisations, incorporated in the main under Aboriginal-specific legislation. This involved the funding of thousands of organisations annually across communities in remote, regional and urban communities. Line agencies retained (or over time regained) responsibility in some areas (health in particular) but also delivered services by funding Aboriginal-controlled organisations. Post ATSIC, line agencies resumed responsibility but, in line with current public service procedures, often used purchaser–provider models with Aboriginal organisations (with departments acting as contract administrators rather than service deliverers).

Unsurprisingly, there have been regular concerns about failures in Aboriginal-controlled service delivery organisations, including complaints of maladministration, nepotism, and sometimes corruption. Such well-publicised problems became the public and political face of ATSIC and Aboriginal programs over that whole period. This is a problem in its own right — the failures of the few drowning out the efforts of the rest. If even 10 per cent of funded organisations were defective (and given the statistics for small business failure in the general community, 10 per cent failure would be a very good outcome) that would result in a 'scandal' per working day for the media to report and for ATSIC, the minister and the Government to respond to.

The emphasis in the ATSIC legislation was on audit of Aboriginal organisations. There were layers of audit which, from my observation, were used less as learning experiences than as the basis for punishment and defunding. Similarly, the administration of the Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations was, for a substantial period, in the audit and punish mode (although more recent registrars have adopted capacity-building approaches based around learning by doing and learning from mistakes.

What have we learned over 50 years? In my view, a lot, with academics, bureaucrats and the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (with the Productivity Commission as secretariat) finding a lot of common ground about what works. What I believe this roundtable should take from the past 50 years is that the failure of funding agencies (whether the ADC, ATSIC or line departments) to apply what has been learned is a larger issue than the issue of the evaluation of the providers and their program delivery. We need much more critical evaluation of how we go about the purchase of services, as well as evaluation of the provider.

As Dillon and Westbury pointed out in 2007:

> What has not been recognised (at least within government) has been the extent to which government funding arrangements have reinforced community and organisational dysfunction. (p. 191)

The Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP) sets out in its reports the preconditions for success (and observes that the lack of these factors can often contribute to program failures):

- Cooperative approaches between Indigenous people and government – often with the non-profit and private sectors as well.
- Community involvement in program design and decision making – a 'bottom up' rather than 'top down' approach.
- Good governance – at organisation, community and government levels.
- Ongoing government support – including human, financial and physical resources. (SCRGSP 2011 and previous)

I think that there are few, if any, authorities who would challenge that analysis. Wicked problems, multi-factoral problems affecting people, such as health, education and employment, do not admit to solutions that do not involve those for whom the program is established. However, I do not know any Indigenous communities or individuals who would claim that their experience of dealing with government has been in line with those preconditions.

The Commonwealth has acknowledged the interconnectedness of the problems it seeks to address, and concluded that whole-of-government approaches are required. Two Management Advisory Committees have described the changes in organisation and processes that are essential if whole-of-government is to work. The changes included five basic imperatives:

- substantial initial cross-agency – stakeholder agreement about the broad purposes to be pursued

- use of the outcomes budget framework to pool resources and to create appropriate accountability frameworks

- lead-agency staff empowered with sufficient authority to manage whole-of-government settings and to lead the engagement of local stakeholders

- empowering these same managers to engage with relevant individuals and interests

- ensure the individuals engaged in those latter roles have the appropriate networking, collaboration and entrepreneurial skills.

Note that this is an internal high level Commonwealth assessment, not that of some external critic. These are the people with administrative skin in the game. In my view, these imperatives are not ever met.

More detailed and authoritative academic and bureaucratic views on the failure of whole-of-government initiatives are set out in the supporting material to the *Fixing the Hole in Australia's Heartland* report by remoteFOCUS at Desert Knowledge Australia (Walker, Porter and Marsh 2012, p. 57ff.).

3.2 The purpose of evaluation

The idea that we should evaluate programs is incontestable. But the purpose of evaluation and how best to go about evaluation are significant. Is evaluation part of an audit–punish process? Is it a learning tool, where evaluation allows learning by doing? Is a favourable evaluation an aid to maintaining funding or just an academic exercise keeping someone, the evaluator, in a nice job? Should we evaluate the performance and approach of purchasers in the same way that we evaluate providers, given that providers are often asked to operate under circumstances that are inappropriate to the task?

I ask these questions because I have seen examples of what seem to me to be flawed or non-rigorous evaluations, where I have concluded that the motivation of the evaluator is to avoid hard-working people, working in difficult circumstances on

difficult (wicked) problems, being de-funded by well-remunerated people sitting in lordly judgment behind their computers in the comfort of their air-conditioned offices. Many evaluators may be reluctant to see a year, perhaps years, of labour against the odds rewarded by the click of a computer button removing a program from further consideration. In addition, funding may well be removed from programs that have been evaluated as very successful. So why should providers cooperate with evaluators when it is all a time-consuming game of no benefit to the provider?

Evaluation of purchasers and their approaches does occur; for example, Bill Gray's evaluation of the effectiveness of the Secretaries Group in the COAG trials; Peter Yu's evaluation of the Northern Territory Intervention; the measurement of school attendances post the intervention; and the evaluation of income management. But how are those evaluations used?

A recent report on income management, *Evidence–Free Policy Making? The Case of Income Management*, concluded that:

> Despite government claims managements of 'evidence' for the benefits of the new program, its own evaluation proposal makes it clear the evidence is not there. (Cox 2011, p. 85)

The same report quotes with approval Gary Banks:

> It will be clear … that policy decisions will typically be influenced by much more than objective evidence, or rational analysis. Values, interests, personalities, timing, circumstance and happenstance — in short democracy — determine what actually happens. (Banks 2009, quoted in Cox 2011, p. 3)

The positive examples of evaluation which come to my mind relate to corporations rather than government. I sit on the board of a provider which works in government schools, but with external funding coming from the private sector, mainly miners. We are regularly independently evaluated and have non-government funding relationships extending over more than 15 years. Our funders are interested in learning as we go. They participate in the management of each individual project and, so far, have extended their support as we learn from what we are doing. For example, we have regularly achieved the objective we share with funders, the school, parents and students, of having Aboriginal children achieve Year 12 — *achieve*, not just attend, graduate able to go to university or into trades or good jobs. Two of our funders looked at the qualifications of our school leavers in their projects and wanted to improve the maths–science outcomes. So we have been encouraged to do maths–science enrichment in relevant primary schools. This sort of evaluation leading to action makes sense.

One funder, after about seven years of support, did an independent evaluation checking the education/employment/income situation of our graduates. The results were excellent, so their response was to double the size of that particular project. That's evaluation with a positive purpose. In a session with that funder, we were advised that they had evaluated all their 20 or so Aboriginal-related projects and had identified which produced best results. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the successful projects (including ours) involved significant per capita investment. They talked of a 20-year time frame and the links between early childhood programs, preschool programs, school-to-work programs and employment programs. An evaluation of their approach compared to the approach of government funders of service deliverers would be instructive. Going into a particularly difficult remote community, they have built a substantial workshop to industry standards, employed an independent community developer to work with the community and offered us 10-year funding if we can find premises to work on education in that community. Government is not like that to deal with.

I think that some of the problem lies in the myths of new public service management as it is applied to remote areas and, perhaps, to wicked problems generally. The theory presupposes a market able to deliver outcomes set by distant bureaucrats, who are able to contract out their responsibility to achieve good results. Miners, with their experience of project management, better understand taking responsibility for managing towards a long-term outcome, dealing with complexities and problem as they arise. You learn from mistakes, stop doing things that are unproductive and actively look for what will work. You do what needs to be done to achieve the objective.

In contrast, how does government seem to me? One-year funding with no continuity guaranteed, onerous and hence costly reporting requirements, frequent policy changes, lengthy negotiations about working to shared objectives that are dropped without apology or explanation because priorities or policies have changed. Agreements are made and then not honoured. Two and a half years ago I attended a high-level meeting in a remote community, with officials from a number of departments, to discuss (since failed) policy changes being imposed against the will of the communities involved. The communities expressly agreed with the broad policy objectives of promoting training leading to employment, but argued that the changes the Commonwealth was implementing would not work. The most senior person present, a deputy secretary, contributed nothing and seemed to think that whatever the problem was, it was not his. Bad policy decisions had to be made to work by people living in some of the most difficult circumstances in Australia. The negative outcomes over the next two years were as predicted by the community and, over the course of that time, it became clear that the external agencies contracted by the Commonwealth had not understood and hence not implemented important

elements of the program. Now there are high-level meetings trying to find an approach that will work in a practical way, although the legislative framework inhibits practical implementation.

By chance, I was in one of the associated communities a week before the changes were to be implemented, when three public servants from three relevant agencies arrived to explain what was to happen. In fact, the public servants misinformed the audience about the pending changes. This was probably incompetence rather than malice but I am sure the reporting back by this flying squad would have claimed they had met with the communities they visited and informed them of the changes.

Clearly, I am not Indigenous but, from what I have observed, whatever the policy intentions, the system is broken. Without systemic change the idea that we can do better through evaluation I think is a vanity. My plea is to evaluate the systemic barriers that prevent the kind of effective engagement identified by the Steering Committee and the Management Advisory Committees previously mentioned. A lot of Aboriginal people are alienated and disengaged because of their experiences of dealing with governments.

My sense about this roundtable is that there is a real risk that it will be another futile effort. I say that because there are so many reports and assessments of Aboriginal policy and programs. There is now an accepted wisdom about what works, but repeating the words seems to make no difference to how governments and bureaucracies behave. The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery sets out how things should be done — but that is not how they are done. In any event, what about the much larger group of communities that are not part of that agreement? How are they dealt with? The system under which we operate is broken, and it is the broken system that we should be evaluating.

3.3   Is the system workable?

Of course, evaluation should be central to how policies are implemented. In 1988, in *Shades of Darkness,* Paul Hasluck captured how a rational system dealing with wicked problems might operate:

> … my personal belief, as in other fields of government, is that policy is shaped and developed best when it is the outcome of practice rather than of theory. The purpose behind a policy is achieved through agencies of government working on a situation and problems that arise. I wanted my officers to see a policy of assimilation as an ideal and as the ultimate purpose of their work but not to bind themselves to a theory. Let the policy take shape and let the administrative measures be chosen through decisions and actions on successive tasks. The results would be observed at each stage.

The process of assimilation would be one of progressive change and we would need to watch the change and make adjustments in plans and methods to suit the situations that emerged. We should be concerned with what happened to people rather than with any theory. (Hasluck 1988)

The formal policy is no longer assimilation — but that is not the point of the quotation. Delete the word assimilation and apply it to any policy. It is the approach that is relevant to this workshop. This approach presupposes a constant capacity for evaluation during a lengthy process. It presupposes an ideal which you work towards flexibly, and a high degree of local knowledge and variability. As Hasluck said 'the applicability of the policy to Aborigines was uneven'. The rigidity of national policy, legal and administrative frameworks, and the lack of locally knowledgeable staff, make an iterative learning by doing approach impossible. We are light years away from the pragmatic approach to administration of policy suggested by Hasluck.

In fact, we have fallen back, lacking clarity in current policy objectives — are they for assimilation or for recognition of Aboriginal people having the right to cultural difference and preservation? This matters. As a senior Aboriginal leader put it to me, some Aboriginal parents resist education because they don't want their children to stop being blackfellas. The impliedly assimilationist tone of much policy debate is a barrier to achieving the educational and employment objectives we all, Aboriginals included, have.

The Commonwealth has a Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services, Brian Gleeson. His role is to report to the relevant minister on the development and delivery of government services and facilities, including improvements to the coordination and delivery of such services, in 29 specified remote communities. At a conference on evaluating complex policy initiatives, the Coordinator-General listed 10 barriers to effective evaluation of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery:

- fuzzy program logic and diffuse objectives

- the difficult concept of the comparison community

- lack of minimum service standards against which to measure progress

- lack of place-based data and ability to share data (privacy considerations)

- lack of performance measures in local implementation plans

- diffusion of responsibility and lack of leadership authority

- multiple levels of action — across governments, between governments, at community level

- multiple objectives — new ways of working, improving service systems, improving outcomes

- difficulty in measuring improvements in social outcomes over the short term

- local implementation plans that include in excess of 3000 actions nationally (Gleeson 2012).

The lessons he drew included using local expertise where possible and building in accountability to the community as well as governments. In addition to his formal presentation, available on the website, his reported oral comments less diplomatically described his task as 'impossible'. The setting of 3000 actions was an impossible number. He is quoted as saying 'I mapped out in all the 29 communities every single service — whether it's access to police, childcare facility, crèche, down to a swimming pool. And I tell you what, a lot of crosses compared to the ticks'.

Recently abolished, the Northern Territory equivalent of the Coordinator-General reported to her government in late 2012. Her report demanded that greater priority be given to a rigorous review and evaluation of programs but also drew attention to the failure to take into account the cultural context and needs of Aboriginal towns and communities, the failure to counteract entrenched structural racism and exclusionary practices affecting the provision and delivery of services, the fragmentation of funding, investment in repair rather than prevention, the marginalisation of Aboriginal people in decisionmaking etc etc etc (Havnen 2012). The list of her concerns is too long to include here. Her (in my view entirely valid) concerns dwarf the issue of evaluation of individual programs.

These comments relate largely to the issues confronting programs in remote communities, the communities where the statistics are generally the worst. They reflect a view that the system of government, the governance of governments, is a barrier to achieving government and community objectives, and is in need of fundamental reform. These issues are canvassed in much more detail in the report previously referred to, *Fixing the Hole in Australia's Heartland* (Walker, Porter and Marsh 2012). I commend it to this roundtable's participants.

Fixing the Hole in Australia's Heartland is not a report on Aboriginal policy, programs and administration, but on how government operates. Had it focused on Aboriginal issues, that would have obscured the role of government in causing dysfunction. But the analysis is particularly important to Aboriginal communities because of the role government plays in those communities. Trying to centrally manage programs across the wide variety of circumstances in remote Australia is correctly described by Brian Gleeson as 'impossible'.

When I read the 'Stronger Futures' legislation recently supported in the Parliament by both the Government and the Opposition, I could identify the good intentions but thought the approach worthy of the failed Soviet Union. The endless opportunities for bureaucrats at all levels to intervene in the lives of Aboriginal people provide a chilling prospect. Can the Commonwealth, whoever is in government, claim to have the stable, skilled, local bureaucratic capacity to deliver over a 10-year term, to work as Hasluck suggested? The one capacity we can be sure government has and will have is the capacity to 'breach' individuals for non-compliance when the helping activities fail. All that requires is the press of a computer key.

Any successful approach has to be local — suited to local circumstances and realities. It has to start where the people are if they are to be engaged. As Noel Pearson has sagely observed, things have to be done in the right order, as circumstances require — another reason why approaches will be different from place to place. To be successful, an approach has to be supported by all levels of government. If, as at present, there is intergovernmental tension and rivalry, the game is lost. The approach has to have a legal framework that allows sufficient flexibility to do what has to be done to involve the people concerned in the design and delivery of programs, which in turn must take into account cultural perspectives. There has to be local capacity to manage towards agreed objectives and to deploy available resources accordingly. There has to be acceptance that mistakes will be made and that they will be used as learning experiences. There has to be local accountability. Government has to use employment rather than welfare approaches. We are a long way from meeting those conditions.

To again quote Dillon and Westbury:

> How is it that governments at all levels, and of all political persuasions, have allowed this level of systemic failure for so long? Why is it that governments have found it easier to ignore systemic failure, while promoting worn out policy approaches that have proved unworkable? (2007, p. 192)

References

Banks, G. 2009, 'Evidence-based policy-making: What is it? How do we get it?', *ANZSOG/ANU Public Lecture Series, Canberra, 4 February 2009*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

Cox, E. 2011, 'Evidence-free policy making? The case of income management', *Journal of Indigenous Policy*, no. 12, September 2011, Sydney University Press.

Dillon, M.C. and Westbury, N.D. 2007, *Beyond Humbug: Transforming Government Engagement with Indigenous Australia*, Seaview Press, West Lakes, South Australia.

Gleeson, B. 2012, 'Evaluating complex policy initiatives — Is the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery delivering?', *Australian Evaluation Society Conference, Adelaide,* http://www.cgris.gov.au/site/presentations.asp.

Hasluck, P. 1988, *Shades of Darkness: Aboriginal Affairs, 1925–1965*, Melbourne University Press.

Havnen, O. 2012, *Office of the Northern Territory Coordinator-General for Remote Services Report, June 2011 to August 2012*, Northern Territory Government, NT, http://www.territorystories.nt.gov.au/handle/10070/241806.

SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision) 2011, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

Walker, B.W., Porter, D.J. and Marsh, I. 2012, *Fixing the Hole in Australia's Heartland: How Government needs to work in remote Australia*, Desert Knowledge Australia, Alice Springs.

THE CHALLENGES IN EVALUATING SOCIAL AND INDIGENOUS POLICY

4 Challenges in evaluating Indigenous policy

Les Malezer[1]

Abstract

Conventional evaluation methodologies used by government fail to comprehensively understand the full range of factors that contribute to the successful delivery of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. Consequently, there is a failure to understand how programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can be delivered and evaluated in a framework of self-determination.

Evidence from Australia and internationally consistently shows that community empowerment and involvement are the precursors for long-term economic development. Accordingly, Indigenous social policy should be evaluated in the context of self-determination and empowerment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

To be reminded of this, we need go no further than the reports and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

There is no clarity regarding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' aspirations, how to define these aspirations as goals and targets, and how to design and deliver programs to achieve the goals. Most importantly, government, and therefore the multiple agencies of government, have failed to connect with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the foundation, if not the framework, on which goals, targets and evaluation should be built. The declaration, though adopted by governments, is a message from the Indigenous peoples of the world. The declaration calls for and requires significant change in the actions of government and a paradigm shift in the role of Indigenous people.

This redefines the responsibility of government as a provider of financial and technical resources: first, to enable communities to pursue their development

---

[1] Co-Chair, National Congress of Australia's First Peoples.

objectives; and, second, to build their capacity through the technical skills and assistance needed to control and manage services and development.

My presentation addresses the need to adequately evaluate and respond to issues in the implementation of services and programs under the control of the peoples concerned.

4.1   Introduction[2]

I'd like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people, the owners of the land on which we are meeting, for the honour of being able to meet and talk about our business here. I would also like to thank Auntie Agnes for her presentation this morning and her welcome to country.

This presentation has haunted me for a little while. A lot of things can be said about evaluation. How should I approach the topic? What outcome do we want to achieve by the end of the roundtable? Why are we doing this? What are we going to achieve from this?

I'd like to acknowledge the work of the Productivity Commission, as the secretariat for the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, for producing the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage reports, and to recognise the enormous amount of data provided in those reports. As I have previously said to the Commission, I really think it is fantastic work. But the real challenge is: what to do with all this information? This is one of the questions that I will address in my presentation.

I have taken my cue from the title of this session — 'The challenges in evaluating social policy in general, and Indigenous policy in particular'. I am certainly one to start throwing out the challenges. I would like to thank Fred Chaney in his presentation for 'kicking open the door' to some of the key issues, and I hope to build on his comments in this presentation.

4.2   What is 'evaluation'?

I am going to start by asking: 'what is evaluation?' I do not think that there is an authoritative definition, so I will put forward the following as a working definition:

Evaluation is the application of scientific methods to assess the design, implementation, improvement or outcomes of a program. The purpose is to obtain objective knowledge

---

[2] This is an edited transcript of the presentation given by Les Malezer at the Roundtable.

and scientifically or quantitatively measure pre-determined and external concepts, with a focus on facts, as well as reach value-laden judgments of the programs, outcomes and worth.

I am going to address the three aspects of evaluation referred to in that definition:

- assess the design and implementation — apply scientific methods to assess the design, implementation, improvement or outcomes of a program

- obtain knowledge, measures and facts — attain objective knowledge, and scientifically or quantitatively measure predetermined and external concepts, with a focus on facts

- reach judgements of worth — reach value-laden judgements of a program's outcomes and worth.

I'll be focusing particularly on the third point, value-laden judgments, because that is what evaluations are really about: who is doing the evaluation, and why are they doing it?

Assess the design and implementation

Evaluation processes for governments

Let me put this in the context of what governments are concerned about. Figure 4.1 is reproduced from a recently released Department of Finance and Deregulation report *Centrally Commissioned Processes and Reviews for the Australian Government – High Level Overview* (2012), which illustrates the procedures that agencies use in relation to delivering programs and services. It shows a circular process, starting with planning and designing, then moving clockwise to resourcing and decisionmaking, implementing, evaluating, and, finally, reporting. It can be seen that evaluation is not only about how things have been done, but also how things should be done and how they contribute to planning and design, and so on.

Figure 4.1   **Procedures for the state**
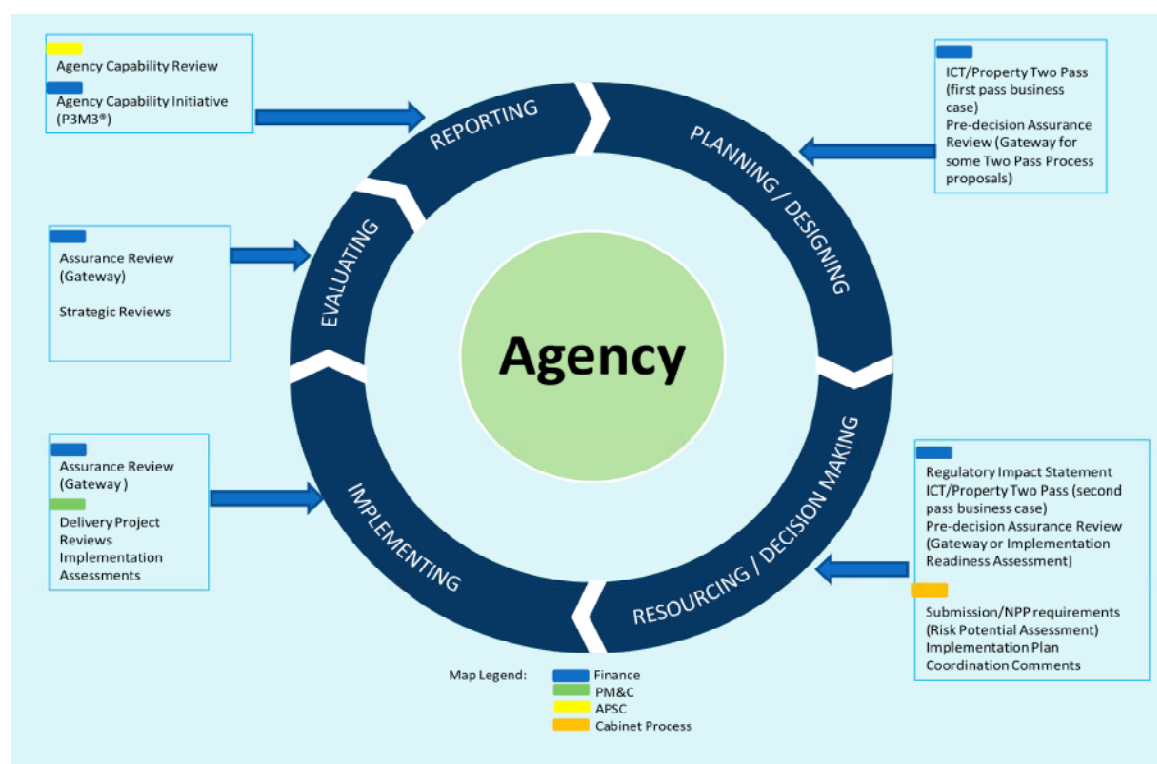
Source: Department of Finance and Deregulation 2012, *Centrally Commissioned Processes and Reviews for the Australian Government – High Level Overview,* p. 5.

The figure illustrates from *government's* point of view what each process does, and which parts of government will be engaged in each process. But where is the Indigenous point of view? What issues does evaluation raise for Indigenous peoples? What evaluative procedures might Indigenous peoples use?

Evaluation processes for Indigenous peoples

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 September 2007. The declaration highlights the individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples, including rights to self-determination, governance and development. It also 'emphasizes the rights of indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions, and to pursue their development in keeping with their own needs and aspirations'. It 'prohibits discrimination against indigenous peoples', and 'promotes their full and effective participation in all matters that concern them and their right to remain distinct and to pursue their own visions of economic and social development' (UN 2007).

I would like to focus particularly on articles 18 to 21 and Article 23 of the declaration:

Article 18 is about representation and decisionmaking:

> Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.

Article 19 is about governments consulting and cooperating with Indigenous peoples in good faith:

> States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions [*that is, the indigenous peoples' representative institutions*], in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

Article 20 is about recognition of Indigenous people's own institutions:

> 1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.

> 2. Indigenous peoples deprived of their means of subsistence and development are entitled to just and fair redress.

Article 21 addresses disadvantage and special measures:

> 1. Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.

> 2. States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of the economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.

Article 23 relates to the importance of Indigenous self-management and control over programs and services:

> Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.

In looking at those articles (and some may be more important than others in particular circumstances), they basically come back to the fundamental principles that:

- Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their needs and the best way of addressing their needs

- Indigenous peoples have the right to exercise prior informed consent on any programs that may affect them

- Indigenous peoples have the right to good faith relationships with government.

Obtain knowledge, measures and facts

The second point in my definition of evaluation is about obtaining knowledge, measures and facts. The purpose is to obtain objective knowledge, and scientifically or quantitatively measure predetermined and external concepts, with a focus on facts.

This is very much what the Productivity Commission does. The Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage reports produced every two years provide valuable and detailed data about what is happening with Aboriginal people and Aboriginal communities. As I've said before, the Productivity Commission and governments should be praised for their work in generating statistical and qualitative information.

However, stakeholders have no role in assessing the information or capacity to do so. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, who should be the beneficiaries of such knowledge, measures and facts, have no way in which to study the gap between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Australia. Consequently, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples do not have the capacity to participate in the design of service delivery.

A number of problems limit the ability of Aboriginal peoples to use the knowledge, measures and facts to their advantage. For example, programs to overcome Indigenous disadvantage cross over governments and agencies, making it difficult for Indigenous people to engage. This distribution across governments and across multiple agencies inevitably results in confusion over who has responsibilities, what are their obligations, and how those obligation are being handled or met.

Reaching judgments of worth

The third point in my definition of evaluation is about reaching judgments of worth. The purpose of evaluation is to reach value judgments about programs and their outcomes.

The principle of self-determination requires Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have effective governance over laws, policies and programs that relate directly to their wellbeing. However, the Closing the Gap – Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage framework does not necessarily cater to the political, social, cultural and economic development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, because it is focused on overcoming disadvantage and is not couched in terms of promoting development within communities.

Governments are too focused on making judgements based on their own values and interests; that is, the Closing the Gap – Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage framework reflects the government's value judgments about the wellbeing and aspirations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, not those of Indigenous people themselves.

This issue concerned me during one of today's opening presentations, which dealt with the issue of child abuse and the need for children to be protected by the system. I am not denying that there are problems and dysfunctional communities. However, the people who are making assessments about whether children are in danger, whether children should be removed, and where they should be moved to and so on, are making value judgements. My concern with discussions I've had with child protection agencies is that these value judgements come from the non-Indigenous community and are not necessarily reflective of the views of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This issue came up recently in reports of a dramatic increase in the number of Aboriginal children being placed away from Aboriginal families and communities.

This is just one example where value judgments that affect Indigenous peoples are not the value judgments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and peoples themselves. For instance, Aboriginal peoples may be interested in and require things such as:

- political development (governance and leadership)
- property rights (the ownership of land and resources)
- cultural security (the exercise of their responsibilities in relation to their territories)
- heritage protection (languages and Indigenous knowledge)

- economic growth (lands and resources)

- social cohesion (positive reinforcement of identity, supportive families and communities, and local decisionmaking).

Those aspirations may not necessarily be the same things that governments value when they talk about overcoming disadvantage and inequality.

4.3   Special measures

Article 21 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples says:

> States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (UN 1965) clarifies that special measures taken to overcome disadvantages experienced by racial groups are not acts of racial discrimination providing they do not continue after disadvantage is addressed (Article 1.4).

The International Convention also identifies 'concrete measures', as distinct from 'special measures'. Concrete measures are measures taken to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights (Article 2.2). For example, Aboriginal land rights legislation is not a special measure, it is actually a concrete measure. Aboriginal cultural heritage protection is not a special measure, it is a concrete measure.

Australia is being held more accountable for what it calls 'special measures'. I'd like to expose the distinction between actions taken as special measures, and actions taken as concrete measures.

The International Convention requires that state parties shall provide special measures and concrete measures 'to ensure the adequate development and protection of certain racial groups or individuals belonging to them, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms' (Article 2.2).

The UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination calls in particular upon state parties to:

> (a) Recognize and respect indigenous distinct culture, history, language and way of life as an enrichment of the State's cultural identity and to promote its preservation;

(b) Ensure that members of indigenous peoples are free and equal in dignity and rights and free from any discrimination, in particular that based on indigenous origin or identity;

(c) Provide indigenous peoples with conditions allowing for a sustainable economic and social development compatible with their cultural characteristics;

(d) Ensure that members of indigenous peoples have equal rights in respect of effective participation in public life and that no decisions directly relating to their rights and interests are taken without their informed consent;

(e) Ensure that indigenous communities can exercise their rights to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs and to preserve and to practise their languages. (CERD 1997, General Recommendation 23, 4(a) to (e)).

I hear from time to time the comment from government agencies that the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (and therefore the rights of Indigenous peoples) are aspirational, and have no legal effect in Australia.

4.4   Conclusion

In returning to the first point in my definition of evaluation — assessing design, implementation, improvement or outcomes — the Closing the Gap – Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage framework forms a large part of assessment. The Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage framework includes the six COAG targets and some additional headline indicators, including for participation in secondary education, and for disability and chronic disease, household and individual incomes, substantiated child abuse or neglect, family and community violence, and imprisonment and juvenile detention.

These are important indicators, endorsed by Australian governments. But they do not address other important needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. For example, they do not address the legacies of historical injustice, such as stolen wages, the stolen generation, stolen territories, the need for development, and the pursuit of culture and identity by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Consequently, there is a disregard for the essential needs of self-determination through governance, decisionmaking, law and Indigenous peoples' own institutions.

Twenty years ago, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody stated that:

… the key to overcoming the deaths in custody lay in the recognition of Aboriginal people as a distinct people, the Indigenous people of Australia, who were cruelly

dispossessed of the land until recent times, denied respect as human beings and the opportunity to re-establish themselves on an equal basis. As with Indigenous peoples in other countries, it is a matter of great difficulty to work out ways in which within the framework of the large society they can retain their identity as a people and exercise significant degree of control over their lives and futures. (Royal Commission 1991)

This was the message 20 years ago delivered in a comprehensive and extensive report, focused particularly on imprisonment and deaths in custody, but emphasising at the same time that there has to be respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have particular rights which have been historically denied.

I will conclude with comments from an international report on Indigenous peoples' experience and perspectives. Whilst it refers to Cambodia and Cameroon specifically, they were part of a broader report put together by the United Nations Interagency Support Group reporting on indicators for Indigenous peoples (UN Economic and Social Council 2006).

The report concluded that Indigenous peoples' perception of poverty are not static, but change according to their level of integration into mainstream society and the market economy, and in response to specific problems of lack of access to land and resources that Indigenous communities have traditionally owned or used. The report found that the following factors contributed to Indigenous poverty:

- lack of land and resource rights
- lack of recognition of the collective rights of Indigenous peoples
- level of access to services (for example, education and health)
- food security
- cultural poverty (with particular reference to the erosion of traditional decisionmaking)
- lack of knowledge and information.

In conclusion, it is a good thing to have these data and these statistics made more freely available. But what is crucially important is how that information is being used, who is processing it, and how it influences the design of programs and service delivery.

I fear that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are completely left out of the process. We can see that there is a process inside government, but the proper engagement of Indigenous communities is being totally overlooked or conveniently avoided. It is not just a case of finding new programs and finding another experimental way of addressing a problem. It is actually admitting to ourselves that

we have severe problems here if communities are not fully involved in their own development.

References

CERD (Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination) 1997, *General Recommendation 23,* http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol) /73984290dfea022b802565160056fe1c?Opendocument.

DoFD (Department of Finance and Deregulation) 2010, *Strategic Review of Indigenous Expenditure*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, http://www.finance.gov.au/foi/disclosure-log/2011/docs/foi_10-27_strategic_review_indigenous_expenditure.pdf.

—— 2012, *Centrally Commissioned Processes and Reviews for the Australian Government – High Level Overview,*

http://www.finance.gov.au/gateway/docs/current_overview_centrally_commissio ned_reviews.pdf.

Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1991, *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody National Report,* vol. 1*,* http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/rciadic/.

UN (United Nations) 1965, *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b3940.html.

—— 2007, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf.

—— Economic and Social Council 2006, *Report of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues,* Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, fifth session, New York, 15–26 May 2006.

5   The case for making public policy evaluations public

Deborah A Cobb-Clark[1]

Abstract

This paper sets out the case for making public policy evaluations public. It first reviews the various challenges associated with impact evaluations, paying particular attention to the unique hurdles involved in evaluating Indigenous policy. Lessons learned from clinical trials registries in medical research are then used to argue that Australian economic and social policy evaluations could be improved by making them public.

5.1   Introduction

Efficient and effective public policy must be informed by solid evidence about what actually works, for whom, under what circumstances, and at what cost. Program evaluation plays a critical role in building the evidence base necessary to answer these questions and in providing all levels of government with the necessary information to develop initiatives that allow more to be achieved with the same or, perhaps, even fewer, resources.

This paper sets out the case for making public policy evaluations public. I begin by first reviewing the various methodological, data, administrative, and political challenges that undermine our ability to use program evaluations as a tool for improving public policy decision-making. My focus is strictly on impact evaluations and I pay particular attention to the unique hurdles involved in evaluating Indigenous policy. I then draw on the lessons learned from clinical trials registries in medical research to argue that Australian economic and social policy could be improved by making the evaluation of those policies publically accessible to service providers, other government agencies, researchers, and taxpayers.

---

[1]   Director and Ronald Henderson Professor, Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, University of Melbourne; and Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA)

5.2   Why are evaluations often not informative?

In theory, program evaluation is very straightforward. One simply randomly assigns some individuals to participate in a particular program (or to receive a specific service) and others to randomly miss out. The former group are then 'treated', while the latter group become the 'controls'. The impact of the program is estimated by simply taking the difference in the outcomes achieved by treated individuals and those achieved by the controls. Matters become somewhat more complicated when individuals cannot literally be randomly assigned to government policy initiatives. However, it is often possible to conduct a credible impact evaluation with a quasi-experimental design utilising exogenous variation (for example, across time, age, locations) in program eligibility or implementation. Random (or plausibly exogenous) variation in the receipt of treatment eliminates the need for complicated econometric techniques to generate estimates of treatment effects.

The reality of program evaluation, however, almost always deviates wildly from the theory. What is straightforward when discussed in the pages of a textbook, becomes anything but when discussed in a policymaker's office. Real world public policy evaluations are conducted under a number of constraints, both methodological and political.

The methodological constraints: The reality is more challenging than the theory

Some things are simply harder to evaluate than others. Evaluation always becomes harder when (i) a large segment of the population is affected; (ii) the policy is complex; (iii) program implementation or delivery lies in the hands of others; and (iv) individuals have control over their treatment status.

In particular, program evaluation becomes harder as the affected population becomes larger, for two reasons. First, it becomes much more difficult to find a sensible counterfactual or control group. In the United States and Canada, many welfare policy reforms, for example, take place at state or provincial levels, which allows otherwise similar jurisdictions to act as counterfactuals. In contrast, Australian income-support policy is under the purview of the Commonwealth Government and policy reforms tend to affect the nation as a whole. Although it is still possible to use before–after research designs to evaluate Australian income-support policy, much stronger assumptions are needed for identification than would be the case if both geographic and time variations were available (Cobb-Clark and Crossley 2003; Meyer 1995). Second, it becomes much more difficult to ignore the general equilibrium effect of policy reform. Although it might be reasonable to

ignore the way that a small, localised training program affects employment in the Australian labour market as a whole, this assumption is surely less justifiable when the program is implemented nationally.

Program evaluations also become more challenging as the complexity of the underlying policy intervention increases. Particularly challenging social problems, for example, are likely to be met with multifaceted policy initiatives with multiple objectives. Sometimes these objectives are clear. Frequently, however, the policy goals are ill-defined, unarticulated, or even directly contradictory. Moreover, evaluations are always constrained by our ability to actually measure the outcomes that we care about. While it is perfectly legitimate for policymakers to be concerned with things like the extent to which a program engenders a sense of community spirit or empowerment, evaluating it from this perspective requires that we can actually measure these outcomes. Finally, it is not always possible to separately evaluate the individual components of a complex initiative despite policymakers' considerable interest in doing so.

Evaluation can also be tricky whenever the program being evaluated is implemented or administered externally. In this case, it is often necessary for components of the evaluation (for example, recruiting participants, collecting data) to be outsourced to the agencies delivering treatment. It can be very difficult to maintain random assignment in this situation, in part because program administrators may be more accustomed to using their professional judgement to match clients to programs. Unfortunately, this makes it impossible to get an estimate of the program impact *per se* independent of the selection process used to match individuals to that program. At the same time, it is often still possible to get an estimate of the effect of the combined treatment; that is, the process used to assign treatment plus the program itself. In many cases, this will continue to be very valuable since very few real world initiatives are actually directed at randomly selected individuals. Hence an estimate of the combined treatment effect is likely to be of great use to policy makers.

The most challenging — and consequently least plausible — evaluations occur when individuals can influence whether or not they receive treatment. For example, workers may reduce their hours of work in order to be eligible for a government training program. Schools may select certain students over others in order to receiving funding that is dependent on student demographics. In most cases, the success of public policy initiatives relies on individuals and institutions responding to exactly these sorts of economic incentives. However, these same responses can wreak havoc on an evaluation strategy. The problem is quite simple: if treatment status is not randomly (or exogenously) assigned, those in the treatment group will differ from those in the control group in unobservable ways (for example,

motivation or ability) that are potentially related to their outcomes (for example, wage rates or test scores). This means that a simple comparison of outcomes for those who do and do not receive treatment will not necessarily tell us very much about the impact of the treatment itself. There is a raft of non-experimental econometric techniques, including propensity score matching and instrumental variables, that get hauled out in such situations. But at the end of the day, these approaches only deal with that part of selection into treatment that is based on individuals' (or schools') observable characteristics. It is still necessary to rely on a maintained (i.e. untestable) assumption that, conditional on these characteristics, there are no unobservable differences between the treatment and control groups which would affect the outcome we are interested in. This assumption is clearly easier to defend the more data we have and the more characteristics we can take into account.

The final point to make here is that, in the end, program evaluations always rest on the available data. It is simply not possible to evaluate what we cannot observe. It is not uncommon for data limitations to constrain the evaluation questions, the evaluation method, the quality of the evaluation, and indeed whether an evaluation is even possible. It is also important to note that while non-experimental evaluation approaches can be very useful in providing critical information in less than ideal evaluation situations, they are very data intensive relative to experimental and quasi-experimental approaches. One of the most important investments we can make is in data sources which can be used to support public policy evaluation.

The political constraints: Better than nothing is not the same as good enough

In addition to the methodological constraints described above, program evaluations are typically also subject to a number of time, budget, administrative, and political constraints — which for convenience I will simply label as 'political' constraints. These constraints come in a myriad of forms and have a critical — usually unfortunate — role in shaping the overall evaluation methodology. Increasingly, practical advice in managing these constraints is being sought by researchers engaged in real world program evaluation. For example, Bamberger *et al.* (2004, p. 5) write in their recent article:

> This paper discusses two common scenarios where evaluators must conduct impact evaluations when working under budget, time or data constraints. Under the first scenario the evaluator is not called in until the project is already well advanced, and there is a tight deadline for completing the evaluation, frequently combined with a limited budget and without access to baseline data. Under the second scenario the evaluator is called in early, but for budget, political or methodological reasons it is not

possible to collect baseline data on a control group and sometimes not even on the project population.

The authors go on to make the obvious point that as a result of these constraints, many of the basic principles of program evaluation get sacrificed. Their goal is to provide practical workarounds to yield the best possible evaluation under the circumstances.

What is particularly striking about the Bamberger *et al.* (2004) paper is their realistic portrayal of the situation that most program evaluators find themselves in. Many — perhaps even all — public policy evaluations in Australia are conducted under exactly these sorts of constraints. However, while it may be possible to 'rescue' some semblance of an evaluation strategy with very clever lateral thinking, it is critical to recognise that in the end we may not have actually learned very much. Often 'better than nothing' passes for 'good enough', leaving us as uninformed as ever, despite having spent millions (or tens of millions) of dollars on the evaluation exercise.

The particular challenges in Indigenous program evaluation

There are unique methodological and political challenges in evaluating Indigenous programs, which I outline here.

First, Indigenous Australians make up only around 2 per cent of the total Australian population and Indigenous communities themselves are often quite small. As a result, many data sources are unsuitable for Indigenous program evaluation because they do not have sufficient numbers of Indigenous respondents for analysis. Even when quantitative analysis is possible, small sample sizes can drastically limit statistical power. This means that, given realistic sample sizes, only very large program impacts are likely to be detected at standard statistical levels.

Second, for cultural, historical, and political reasons it is often argued that Indigenous communities are unique and therefore cannot be meaningfully compared to one another. To the extent that this is true — or we accept it out of cultural sensitivity — it becomes nearly impossible to define a meaningful control group against which to measure impacts.

Third, many Indigenous policy initiatives are targeted at communities. Moreover, the Indigenous population is characterised by fluid, extended family structures and cultural norms for resource sharing. Together these imply that it is very difficult to estimate the effect of treatment on the individuals treated (i.e. a treatment on the treated impact). For example, even though income management theoretically

applies to an individual benefit recipient, in reality it is likely to have substantial spill-over effects on his or her extended family and other community members. As a result, in most cases, we will be estimating parameters which are closer to a community-level impact of the intention to treat.

Fourth, and related to the above, because Indigenous programs are often community-based interventions they need the approval and support of community elders. There is almost no sense in which Indigenous communities are randomly selected for treatment. The effects of the selection process itself — normally long, drawn-out negotiations between government and Indigenous elders — will be a component of what is measured in the estimated treatment impact. It is impossible to identify the effect of the program itself in isolation from these selection effects. That is not a particular problem given that it is unlikely that programs will ever be randomly assigned to Indigenous communities. However, it does complicate our interpretation of the estimated impacts and must be borne in mind.

Fifth, Indigenous policy is often highly political and involves a cast of thousands, including Commonwealth, State, and local governments; social service agencies and non-government organisations; Indigenous representatives and their communities; and a raft of advisors, advocates, and analysts. At any one time, there is likely to be a myriad of interventions affecting the Indigenous population. This means that it is very difficult to evaluate any single program in a particular Indigenous community because a multitude of programs are being delivered simultaneously. If another Indigenous community is used as the counterfactual, it is certainly the case that the 'control' group is also treated — just with a different set of policies and programs. Therefore, standard evaluation techniques provide only an estimate of the marginal difference between one set of interventions and another set, many (indeed most) of which overlap. This is almost never the estimate we want, and in some cases, may not be interesting at all.

Has a lack of Indigenous-specific evaluation limited our ability to learn from past policies? It is impossible for me to say for sure, but it seems exceedingly hard to believe that this is not the case. If nothing else, the continuing gap in Indigenous versus non-Indigenous outcomes in the face of the very substantial resources committed to Indigenous policy clearly indicates that we must do better at finding effective policies that will truly improve the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians. Program evaluation that is well done, methodologically sound, and corresponds to accepted scientific principles is critical to achieving that goal.

5.3 The case for making public policy evaluations public

The example of health care evaluation

Ten years ago the *British Medical Journal* published an editorial arguing for increased transparency in economic evaluations of health care as a means of ensuring higher methodological quality. Specifically, the authors argued that:

> We need periodic methodological assessments of economic evaluations using adequate sampling frames. The assessments should be ongoing and publically accessible. Unless swift action is taken, low methodological quality risks bringing the practice of economic evaluation into disrepute — an outcome that is in no one's interest (Jefferson and Demicheli 2002).

This increasing pressure for greater transparency in health care evaluations resulted in part from several systematic reviews conducted in the early 1990s which cast doubt on the scientific reliability of published evaluations. Each of these reviews argued for improvements in the standards for conducting and reporting economic evaluations (see Jefferson and Demicheli 2002). In short, increased transparency and wider dissemination of results were viewed as fundamental to raising the methodological quality of economic evaluations in health care.

The reasons for this are not hard to understand. Despite the widespread use of randomised control trials (often regarded as the 'gold-standard') in health care interventions, it is often the case that results are not widely disseminated. Indeed, many experts may never learn that a trial has taken place. Gold and Studdert (2005) point to a number of ways that incomplete, non-systematic reporting of results undermines the randomised control trial methodology in health care research. First, the results of many trials are never published and those that ultimately are published are systematically different from those that are not. Specifically, studies that show the efficacy of the intervention are simply more likely to be published. This sort of positive publication bias makes it impossible to form valid judgements about an intervention's true effectiveness from the published literature. Second, there may be strong financial incentives to withhold negative results and suppress data.[2] In particular, Gold and Studdert (2005) point to the recent legal case against the pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) which manufactures the popular anti-depressant Paxil. Although not officially approved for children, millions of Paxil prescriptions were nonetheless written for children. The legal case revolved

---

[2] The authors refer to the first as a form of scientific misconduct and argue that the second may constitute fraud.

around GSK's failure to acknowledge and report the results of several studies that had raised doubts about Paxil's effectiveness and safety for children. The plaintiff argued that GSK had a duty to disclose negative studies, not just positive ones.

One important response to the call for greater transparency in health care evaluations has been the establishment of clinical trials registries. In particular, in 2005 the Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry (ANZCTR) was established at the University of Sydney as part of the World Health Organization Registry Network. It accepts trials for registration from all countries around the world and from the full range of therapeutic areas, including trials of pharmaceuticals, surgical procedures, preventative and lifestyle measures, and rehabilitation strategies.[3] Registration of trials occurs before the first patients are recruited. The ANZCTR is overseen by an advisory board and a substantial amount of initial funding was provided by the Australian Government through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

The registration of Australian health care trials with an institution such as ANZCTR is voluntary. While some argue that mandatory registration risks manufacturers' proprietary information and undermines incentives to engage in research and development, others argue that those risks must be balanced against the benefits of registration, which only occur if registration is comprehensive (Gold and Studdert 2005). In practice, however, registration has become *de facto* mandatory for those seeking to publish the results of their trials. Since early 2004, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) has made trial registration a necessary condition for the publication of any manuscript reporting trial results (Gold and Studdert 2005). In the United States, it is a legal requirement that many types of medical trials be registered.[4]

Economic and social policy evaluation

There are many parallels to be drawn between evaluations in health care and program evaluation in economic and social policy more generally. Most importantly, increased transparency and wider dissemination of results are absolutely essential to improving the quality and information content of our economic evaluations of Indigenous policy, education initiatives, and income-support, disability, and job training programs etc. Moreover, the arguments in favour of an institutional arrangement like a clinical trials registry are as compelling in these areas as they are in the area of health care.

[3] See http://www.anzctr.org.au.

[4] See http://www.clinicaltrials.gov.

First, initiatives in Indigenous, education, or income-support policies can have as profound an effect on individuals' lives as those in health care. It follows then that it must be as important to do a credible job of evaluating them. Second, although meta-analyses of the program evaluation literature are nearly nonexistent, it must surely be the case that — as in health care — positive publication bias skews the published results. Here, however, 'positive' often refers not to the efficacy of the particular drug or treatment, but rather to the desirability of the program from bureaucrats' or politicians' perspectives. Third, the Paxil case illustrates the tension between private (manufacturer) and public interest in publicising the results of medical trials. A similar tension arises when government departments or non-governmental organisations have a private incentive to withhold information about the impact of particular programs or policy initiatives.

In short, many of the factors which led to the call for greater transparency in health care evaluations a decade ago are relevant in economic and social program evaluation today. We must raise the standards of program evaluation. Greater transparency and wider dissemination of results are central to achieving these goals. In particular, greater transparency would (i) put pressure on evaluators to lift their game; (ii) allow evaluations themselves to be evaluated against sound scientific principles so that we can make judgements about which to weight more heavily and which to ignore; (iii) provide an opportunity for truly informed public debate about the issues facing us; and (iv) substantially enhance our chances for sound decision-making.

At the same time, the comparison with health care trials is not perfect. Publication has always been more critical to the private interests of pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers, thus the position taken by the ICMJE in supporting trial registration has had a significant role in ensuring that trials do in fact get registered. The same cannot be said of economic and social policy evaluations more generally. In fact, governments often work hard to ensure that results are not made publically available. Moreover, randomised control trials are less common outside the health care arena. Evaluation in other policy areas relies more heavily on quasi-experimental (that is, 'natural') and non-experimental evidence. This implies that methodologies are much more complex, which would require much more flexible reporting systems. Finally, several key drug failures (for example, Paxil) have focused the collective mind on the importance of sound health care evaluations in a way that is unlikely to happen in other policy arenas.

These caveats imply that rather than adopting the existing medical trials registries as is, the basic principles underlying them will need to serve as a framework for developing unique institutional arrangements that can achieve the same objectives

in other policy areas. They do not, however, strike me as arguments against making public policy evaluations public.

5.4   Conclusion

At this moment, the Australian Government is poised to spend literally billions of taxpayer dollars on major social initiatives in Indigenous policy, educational reform policy, and supporting the disabled policy. This is an enormous commitment of public resources which comes with huge opportunity costs given the political imperative to return the government budget to surplus. Sound, independent program evaluation will be crucial to ensuring that we receive value for money.

Unfortunately, our current evaluation system generally produces poor-quality evaluations that in the end do not tell us very much. Often evaluations are conducted within the very government agencies responsible for meeting program objectives. When external evaluators are used, it is common for the government to insist that the results not be published. In short, the results of these evaluations are typically not independent, transparent or widely distributed. As a result, methodological quality is undermined. All of this is inconsistent with the move to evidence-based policy and undermines our ability to deliver on closing the Indigenous gap, raising educational achievement, and reducing social exclusion.

Public registration of economic and social program evaluations will not completely resolve these problems, of course, but is an important step in the right direction. In addition, we need to work harder to ensure that a sensible evaluation plan is embedded — and funded — in the design of the program from the start. In particular, capacity constraints imply that welfare reform in Indigenous communities, educational reform, and the national disability insurance scheme will be rolled out over time in certain locations or for certain groups of individuals. These rollouts — if planned properly now — will allow high-quality program evaluations of these initiatives to take place.

It is also critical that we have systematic program evaluations that are truly independent of government. The lack of a willingness to commit to eventual publication of results has meant that Australian academics are increasingly disengaged from evaluations of major economic and social initiatives. This is unfortunate because there is a great deal of evaluation expertise within the academic community; moreover, the academic publication process has a critical role to play in quality assurance. One potential mechanism for supporting this would be a separate agency which commissions all policy evaluations on behalf of the government, but which is independent of government (like the Reserve Bank of Australia or the

Productivity Commission). All evaluations conducted by (or commissioned through) this agency could then be published externally, perhaps with a short embargo period.

Finally, all components of any program evaluation, including the unit-record data on which it rests, must be widely and publically available, so that results can be replicated and confirmed. Widespread publication of evaluation results must become the norm.

If we truly wish to make progress on the economic and social agenda we have set ourselves, better than nothing will not be good enough.

References

Bamberger, M., Rugh, J., Church, M, and Fort, L. 2004, 'Shoestring evaluations: designing evaluations under budget, time and data constraints', *American Journal of Evaluation,* 25(1), Spring, pp. 5–37.

Cobb-Clark, D.A. and Crossley, T. 2003, 'Econometrics for evaluations: an introduction to recent developments', *Economic Record,* 79(247), December, pp. 493–513.

Gold, J.L. and Studdert, D.M. 2005, 'Clinical trials registries: a reform that is past due', *The Journal of Law, Medicine, and Ethics,* 33(4), December, pp. 811–20.

Jefferson, T. and Demicheli, V. 2002, 'Quality of economic evaluations in health Care: it is time for action to ensure higher methodological quality', *British Medical Journal,* 324, 9 February, pp. 313–14.

Meyer, B.D. 1995, 'Natural and quasi-experimental experiments in economics', *Journal of Business and Economic Statistics*, 13(2), April, pp. 151–61.

6   Holding governments to account

Jody Broun[1]

I begin by acknowledging the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people.

I also acknowledge Les Malezer, Gary Banks and Robert Fitzgerald; Fred Chaney and Justin Mohammed.

I have been asked to speak on the role of non-government organisations in holding governments to account — something I have experienced from both sides of the relationship, but I have generally been in roles where non-government organisations have been holding me to account. Community working parties, the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council, the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, all harsh judgers — so I can tell you that I prefer to be on this side of that relationship.

I'm not going to cite reams of statistics at you, nor am I going to give you a history lesson; however, as you would have heard this afternoon, the history of Aboriginal policy in Australia is littered with examples of poor policymaking, and even poorer outcomes for Aboriginal people — some of that policy, unfortunately, has even been recycled!

A lack of genuine engagement of Aboriginal people and their representatives has resulted in keeping outcomes low and expectations lower!

The 2010 report (released under FOI in 2012) of the Australian Government Department of Finance and Deregulation that assessed the capacity of the Commonwealth's array of programs and whole-of-government coordination to achieve the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Closing the Gap objectives concluded:

> Despite the concerted efforts of successive Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to address Indigenous disadvantage, progress has been mixed at best, modest improvements in some areas have been offset by static or worsening outcomes elsewhere … Past approaches to remedying Indigenous disadvantage have clearly failed, and new approaches are needed for the future. (DoFD 2010)

---

[1] Co-Chair, National Congress of Australia's First Peoples.

While we might disagree that there have been concerted efforts, we could agree with the further point in the report that:

> Robust evidence is lacking on the performance and effectiveness of many Indigenous programs … Program evaluation activity … has been patchy at best, and many of the evaluations which have been conducted have lacked a suitable measure of rigour and independence. (DoFD 2010)

Rigour and independence — both crucial elements in any accountability and evaluation framework.

This situation means that non-government and independent organisations have a valid and important role in evaluating government policy objectives and program delivery and in holding government to account for outcomes.

There has been a history of non-government organisations, black and white, challenging government policy settings and holding the governments accountable for outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy. Many examples exist in our history where the monitoring by non-government organisations has driven the policy responses of government.

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was demanded for many years by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal non-government, legal and advocacy bodies due to the unacceptable conditions and numerous deaths of Aboriginal prisoners.

The various legal services at the time all contributed to applying pressure for the royal commission which, when it was finally appointed in 1987, examined the deaths in custody of 99 individuals in the previous nine years and five months. It resulted in 339 recommendations for social policy reform and systemic reforms in justice, but also in other areas. Unfortunately, not all the recommendations have been implemented or continued and we are still seeing unacceptable deaths in custody across the nation.

Organisations such as the Australian Council of Social Service, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation and Amnesty International, all play vital roles in holding government to account and evaluating performance in their areas of expertise. Independent monitoring is crucial as mentioned earlier.

While governments are also improving their accountability frameworks, transparency and monitoring of outcomes, internal reporting can sometimes hide real outcomes.

The Prime Minister reports annually to parliament on progress in meeting the Closing the Gap targets, but undoubtedly we still need independent analysis of these reported outcomes. Non-government organisations play an important role in monitoring the real outcomes on the ground.

The Department of Finance and Deregulation report is a good — if slightly unwelcome — example of internal review and assessment. Although, disappointingly, there is a reluctance to take on much of the common-sense, practical recommendations from the report.

However, I believe there is a stronger commitment to transparent reporting and built-in evaluation. The COAG National Indigenous Reform Agreement (agreed in 2008 and refreshed in 2011) acknowledges the deficiencies in data and reporting and has committed all governments to 'enhanced reporting against specific indicators ... ensuring their data is of high quality and is available for reporting' and ensuring that data quality improvements 'are achieved as set out in schedule F' (COAG 2011).

Institutions such as the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), the Productivity Commission, the COAG Reform Council and the National Mental Health Commission all contribute to overall accountability of government.

The Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, for which the Productivity Commission provides the chair and secretariat, produces the regular *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* (OID) report, which provides accountability, reliable data analysis and comparative studies of outcomes in Indigenous policy and programs across Australia that assist in identifying good practices, successful policy interventions and case studies. As noted in the most recent edition:

> The report is more than a collection of data, it draws on extensive evidence to identify areas where government policies can have the greatest impact. (SCRGSP 2011, p. 1)

I was actively involved in one of my earlier roles in the identification and agreement of the indicators framework and have viewed, with some satisfaction, the report's evolution to being an essential and much awaited contribution to the policy debate, and I congratulate Gary Banks and Robert Fitzgerald on its success.

As Director General of Aboriginal Affairs in New South Wales, I applied the principles of the OID report to the *Two Ways Together* (TWT) policy for working in partnership with Aboriginal people, whole-of-government coordination, and accountability for outcomes. TWT included an annual report against key indicators that was provided to the New South Wales Premier.

So what about Congress and our role in holding government to account? First a quick introduction to Congress.

Congress is part of the legacy provided by courageous fighters and leaders from many generations. Congress is a company, independent of government, established to realise our aspirations and be part of the continuing journey to achieve rights and justice for the first peoples of this country.

Over the decades there has been a variety of models representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In 1973 the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee (NACC) was launched as an advisory body to the Whitlam Government. The NACC morphed into the National Aboriginal Conference in 1977 under the Fraser Government.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) was established in 1989 and provided a really strong representative model with elected members in regional councils across the country and commissioners at the national level, influencing and developing policy and programs.

And ATSIC was influential.

I was Executive Director of Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure in Western Australia for eight years and had to negotiate with nine ATSIC regional councils to formulate a bilateral agreement between the State and Commonwealth governments. It was hard work and took three years, but it was worth the wait to have a good governance model with Aboriginal decision-making, integrated planning and service delivery at the heart of it.

When ATSIC was abolished in 2005, a national body was necessary once again.

Community demands for a national body, commitments from political parties in the lead up to the 2007 federal election, and national consultations led by Tom Calma and Jackie Huggins, set the groundwork for the Congress to be established.

Congress is the only company registered with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission to include gender equity in its constitution and we are responsible for giving a national voice to our members and the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Since our establishment just over two years ago we have signed up over 4500 individual members and 150 organisations.

Congress is a very different organisation to ATSIC:

- we are a company not created under legislation
- membership is at the heart of the organisation
- we are not involved in service delivery
- we don't have a regional structure.

Our purpose, outlined in our constitution, is:

- to provide national leadership and recognition of the status and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as first nations peoples
- to protect and advance the wellbeing and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities
- to be a representative voice of, and a conduit for communications with and between, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- to secure economic, political, social, cultural and environmental futures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by working with governments, service providers, communities and other stakeholders
- to build strong relationships based on mutual respect and equality with government and industry, and among Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples
- to identify issues, research solutions and educate government, service providers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples.

The Congress structure has three chambers representing peak bodies, organisations and individuals.

We have a board of eight: the male and female co-chairs are elected by the whole membership and a male and female director are elected from each chamber.

One hundred and twenty delegates meet each year — 40 from each of those chambers.

Additionally, there is an ethics council to ensure that Congress policy and practice meet the highest ethical standards.

In representing our members we seek to work in unity and to engage and draw on the expertise of our members; not to replace or duplicate their roles, or, in particular, the role of peak bodies.

As we know, the rights and unique place of first peoples have international recognition.

The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was supported by the United Nations in 2007 and supported by the Australian Government in April 2009, and provides a platform for a partnership between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and government.

Congress is recognised as being an expression of the declaration, particularly Article 18:

> Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own Indigenous decision making institutions. (UN 2007)

Congress has identified the declaration as the platform for our relationship with government and the promotion and protection of rights is a primary purpose for our organisation. We will work with the AHRC, the Australian Government and our peoples to ensure the rights in the declaration are acknowledged, understood and realised.

The report *2009 Our Future in our Hands* saw Congress as:

> An important mechanism to assist government in shaping its approach and in holding them accountable for service delivery to individuals and communities … This includes by ensuring that there are adequate monitoring and evaluation processes in place to ensure that our communities are benefiting from services that are designed to assist us. (AHRC 2009)

Since those of us on the inaugural elected board took up our roles in July 2011 the Congress has contributed strong positions on the Northern Territory Stronger Futures legislation, languages, education, national cultural policy, health equality and the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution — to name a few. A rights framework shapes our responses to these issues.

We have established policy working groups on a range of priorities identified by our members — on health, education, justice, country and sovereignty — and the work plans for each of those working groups hold government to account for outcomes. For instance, one of the strategies in the justice workplan is to develop justice targets for inclusion in the Closing the Gap framework.

Clearly, to achieve our objective of holding governments to account and promoting a rights agenda we require data — data that is reliable and robust.

Congress can and should be questioning government reports and providing shadow reports — acknowledging that poor, inconsistent and incomparable data still

affects the design, targeting and evaluation of government service delivery and measuring of outcomes.

One well-developed area that Congress is involved in is health.

Health was identified in the first survey of members as the highest priority for Congress and so a number of actions have been taken over the past year to position Congress in national policy development.

- the National Health Leadership Forum (NHLF) was established in August 2011. It comprises 12 peak organisations representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and sits within Chamber 1 of Congress. All are non-government organisations and each has its own area of expertise.

- Every major Aboriginal or Islander national health organisation is represented in this forum. The members are:
  – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation
  – the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association
  – the Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association
  – the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses
  – Indigenous Allied Health Australia
  – the Indigenous Dentists' Association Australia
  – the Lowitja Institute
  – the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association
  – the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)
  – the National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Physiotherapists
  – the Torres Strait Regional Authority.

- The NHLF is co-chaired by Justin Mohamed, Chair of NACCHO, and myself and has its own independent secretariat funded by members and the Department of Health and Ageing. (I want to acknowledge the members of the NHLF who are here today.)

- The NHLF is a partnership vehicle for the development and implementation of health policy and programs and is leading the way in which Congress can work as an interface between peak bodies and government.

- While all NHLF members have held government to account in the past, our capacity to do this is strengthened as a collective. The NHLF is all of these organisations speaking with one voice.

- A further function of the NHLF is to lead the Close the Gap Campaign for Indigenous Health Equality, which reflects the fact that the Close the Gap Campaign's Indigenous Leadership Group was the precursor to the NHLF.

- The Close the Gap (CTG) Campaign was founded by the then Social Justice Commissioner Dr Tom Calma in 2006.

- It was the first time relevant health and human rights bodies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous, sat at the 'same table' to discuss health equality. The steering committee includes Oxfam, Amnesty International and the Australian Medical Association.

- It was definitely about non-government organisations holding government to account for improving health outcomes.

- An annual shadow report on health targets is done independently and with input from all member organisations.

- The CTG campaign led the national effort to achieve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equality, securing bipartisan support for the commitments in the Close the Gap Statement of Intent, including the development of a national comprehensive plan to achieve health equality within a generation announced late last year.

In the *2009 Our Future in Our Hands* report, the role of Congress in contributing to close the gap was envisaged as:

- providing the basis for a new relationship with government based on genuine engagement and partnership

- ensuring that there is a shared journey between Aboriginal people and governments

- holding governments to account for their performance — ensuring that they remain focused over the longer term and have transparent accountability frameworks (AHRC 2009).

The NHLF and CTG Campaign are practical manifestations of this in the health area but also provide a model for the other policy areas.

The new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan was announced in November last year and Congress, through the NHLF, are having an active role in its development.

- The Health Plan will give effect to the Australian Government's undertaking to close the gap in life expectancy and infant mortality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and the broader population.

- The NHLF has contributed inputs to the development of the plan and discussion paper.

- The critical factors of success for the plan are:

  - facilitating partnerships, shared ownership and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership at national, regional and local levels (the NHLF provides the perfect interface for this at the national level)

  - targeting barriers to good health, enabling access to health services and the social determinants of health, and recognising the role that connection to culture has in the enjoyment of health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

  - recognising racism, its impact and solutions (this includes addressing systemic and institutionalised racism within the health system).

- The NHLF has recommended key principles for the health plan:

  - **A holistic definition of health**. Health is not merely the absence of disease. In the Aboriginal context, health is complex and multi-faceted, including the physical, social and emotional health of individuals, and the wellbeing of whole communities. The holistic definition of health incorporates broader issues of social justice, wellbeing and equity as key attributes of health for Aboriginal peoples.

  - **Adopt a rights-based approach to health**. This requires active participation in the development and implementation of health policy and programs. It also provides useful guidance as to the various roles and responsibilities that should be reflected in the health plan; in other words, the Government's responsibility is not to make people healthy but to provide people with equal opportunities to be healthy, and to develop an effective health system that is available, accessible, acceptable and of sufficient quality.

  - **Shared ownership between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and all levels of government**. Past health plans demonstrate that to be successful there must be buy-in and commitment to the plan by both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and governments.

  - **Adopt strengths-based approaches**. The health plan should help empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

- **Address social determinants**. The health plan must create linkages with other policy areas and health impact should be taken into consideration for the development of all government policy.

- **Community control**. The health plan must facilitate and build the capacity of Aboriginal community controlled health services. There should also be an increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contribution into the governance of mainstream health care.

- **Capacity building of the health sector and workforce**. This includes building the cultural competency of health professionals and increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples employed in health professions and the health bureaucracy.

- **Structures and processes are in place to evaluate the plan and provide accountability**. These accountability mechanisms should facilitate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership.

We hope that we have all learned from past policy, implementation and accountability failures and that we can apply those lessons to this plan.

Clearly, the government, non-government and private sectors have a shared responsibility to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Congress has a role in holding governments to account, but also in challenging our own organisations for accountability and strong governance.

We see the Productivity Commission as a key partner in fulfilling that role but equally there are a number of other organisations that we can work with and whose expertise we can utilise—the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, university research centres like the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. There is a lot of potential for partnership across the non-government and research sectors.

We have already commenced this relationship with the Productivity Commission. Congress also envisages being a major player in COAG Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander processes and issues and having a seat at that table, as implied in the National Indigenous Reform Agreement.

There needs to be a broad monitoring and evaluation framework to enhance transparency and accountability — driven by Congress.

As evidenced by the formation of the NHLF, we are stronger together if we have a common voice. This is an area Congress is keen to pursue.

Congress has one of the important elements — independence — but we also need the robust framework and access to reliable data to realise our role.

As concluded in the Department of Finance report: past approaches to remedying Indigenous disadvantage have clearly failed, and new approaches are needed for the future.

Congress is part of that new approach and, working with all our non-government organisational members, we will hold government to account for working in new ways too.

Thank you

References

AHRC (Australian Human Rights Commission) 2009, *Our future in our hands — creating a sustainable national representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*, Report of the Steering Committee for the creation of a new National Representative Body, Australian Human Rights Commission, http://humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/repbody/report2009/index.html.

COAG (Council of Australian Governments) 2011, *National Indigenous Reform Agreement*, www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/national_agreements.

DoFD (Department of Finance and Deregulation) 2010, *Strategic Review of Indigenous Expenditure*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision) 2011, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2011*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

UN (United Nations) 2007, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf.

KEY THEMES IN EVALUATION OF INDIGENOUS POLICY AND PROGRAMS

7   Designing evaluation strategies

Matthew James[1]

Abstract

This paper provides an overview of evaluation strategies and their development, with a particular focus on Indigenous policy. The paper starts by outlining the purpose of evaluation and, in doing so, highlights some gaps in the current evidence base. It then looks at the role of evaluation in the policy process and the issues that can arise if evaluation is simply seen as an activity that is separate from policy and that starts after policy is developed. The key message of the paper is that if evaluation is to inform policy it needs to be built into policy processes.

The paper highlights the importance of monitoring and the need to estimate counterfactuals (what would have happened in the absence of a policy or program). It then comments on the importance of involving Indigenous Australians in the evaluation of Indigenous programs before concluding with an overview of some of the practical challenges in undertaking evaluations in Australia.

7.1   Why conduct evaluations?

It may seem unusual to ask why evaluations should be conducted, but this is a good question as evaluations, not to mention rigorous evaluations, are not always the norm. The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, for example, is identifying several areas in which good quantitative studies are lacking. For example, the evidence base from which to increase school attendance in remote Indigenous communities is very thin. Gaps in the evidence base are not unique to Indigenous policy and are not unique to Australia.

If the use of evaluation and good evidence is to be enhanced then it is useful to understand the factors that work against the use of good evidence. One obvious factor is a desire to 'just get on with it' and implement policies and programs. While

---

[1]   Branch Manager, Performance and Evaluation Branch, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

an understandable and in some ways laudable sentiment this sort of thinking is ultimately self-defeating as programs and policies are not developed and implemented for their own sake but rather to improve outcomes — good evaluation and analysis are often needed to assess the impact of policies on outcomes. It is obviously not enough just to see if outcomes have improved but to establish that outcomes have improved as a result of the policy and not some other factor.

Donald Campbell, who is sometimes described as the father of modern evaluation, expressed a well known vision for an experimental society that would be committed to reality testing, to self-criticism and to avoiding self-deception (Oakley 2000). However, Campbell recognised the forces that worked against the use of good evidence in policy formulation. For example, Campbell noted in 1969 that 'specific reforms are advocated as though they were certain to be successful'. He also noted that:

> If the political and administrative system has committed itself in advance to the correctness of efficiency of its reforms, it cannot tolerate learning of failure. To be truly scientific we must be able to experiment. We must be able to advocate without that excess of commitment that blinds us to reality testing. (Campbell 1969)

Willingness to test various approaches is not just an issue for governments and policymakers. Governments need to be allowed to try different approaches and, if they do not work as well as expected, should not face criticism for trying something different. If failure is not allowed, true experimentation is not possible. US President Lyndon Baines Johnson expressed the following frustration about the Great Society programs:

> I wish it had been different. I wish the public had seen the task of ending poverty the same way as they saw the task of getting to the moon, where they accepted mistakes as a part of the scientific process. I wish they had let us experiment with different programs admitting that some were working better than others. It would have made everything easier. But I knew the moment we said out loud that this or that program was a failure, then the wolves who never wanted us to be successful in the first place would be down upon us at once, tearing away at every joint, killing our effort before we even had a chance. (Andrew 1999)

The concern that President Johnson expressed is still relevant today as we do not have all the answers to overcoming disadvantage or to closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage. Some of the best evidence we do have, such as the impact of high-quality early childhood education, comes from a small number of high-quality evaluations. Without evaluations such as the evaluation of the Perry preschool program much of our evidence would not exist.

There is no foundation to the notion that we have all the answers about overcoming socioeconomic disadvantage and that further evidence is not required. Even a casual

reading of the evidence base confirms this. However, we do know quite a bit and a lack of knowledge should not be used as an excuse for inaction. As an example, if an Indigenous community has too few police — based on need and compared to other communities — there is a good argument that more police should be provided. A detailed study is not required to make this assessment.

A key reason to conduct evaluations is to influence and effect policies, but it is not valid to assess the utility of an evaluation by simply assessing its impact on policy. A high-quality evaluation may have no impact on policy due to a range of factors, including political and other judgements. By their nature evaluations are backward looking and are not designed to tell policymakers what to do next. Working out what to do next requires policy-relevant analysis, not just an evaluation of an existing policy or program.

Simplifying the evidence base is also unwise. Evaluations are important — the detail matters and this detail comes from good evaluations and research. For example, while charter schools in the United States do not, other things being equal, produce better results than public schools, some charter schools are highly successful (Dobbie and Fryer 2009). In addition, the fact that some high-quality early childhood education programs have large positive impacts does not mean that all early childhood education programs have similar impacts, which underscores the importance of rigorously evaluating particular polices and approaches.[2]

Pawson and Tilley advocate what they describe as 'realistic evaluation'. A key focus of this approach is to be careful about universal claims.

> Realist evaluation steers a path between making universal claims about what works, and focusing on the particulars of specific measures in specific places relating to specific stakeholders. Thus it places no faith in black-and-white (or even red, amber and green) policy prognostications of the kind that suppose that street-lighting works to reduce crime, or that mentoring programmes for disaffected youth are harmful, or that 5-fruit-and-veg-portions-a-day health education initiatives have a null effect. (Pawson and Tilley 2004)

---

[2] In late 2012, a major evaluation of the US early childhood education program for disadvantaged children, HeadStart was released (http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/resource/third-grade-follow-up-to-the-head-start-impact-study-final-report-executive). The evaluation, which involved random assignment to a treatment and control group, concluded that, in summary there were initial positive impacts from having access to Head Start, but by the end of third grade there were very few impacts found for either cohort in any of the four domains of cognitive, social-emotional, health and parenting practices. The few impacts that were found did not show a clear pattern of favourable or unfavourable impacts for children.

7.2 The need for better evidence — some lessons from the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse

The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse is systematically bringing together the evidence on 'what works' in closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage. However, the Clearinghouse is constrained by gaps in the evidence base. In many instances, overseas studies have to be cited and, in some areas, good quantitative Australian studies are lacking.

One large issue that has arisen from some of the Clearinghouse products is the general nature of some of the evidence. For example, the evidence base is not informative as it first seems to show that 'bottom-up' approaches work best or that involving local people is key. First, arguing that bottom-up approaches work best provides no advice on what programs or policies to implement. A highly effective program could be implemented using a bottom up approach but so could a program that has consistently been shown in net impact studies to have no effect. Second, how should bottom-up approaches be developed? This is not an easy question to answer as the approach required varies from place to place and the Australian evidence on which to base this question is relatively thin.

Evidence from the Poverty Action Lab is showing that in a development context top-down approaches actually work better for some policies than bottom-up approaches (J-PAL 2012). The details matter. In addition, the authors of a major World Bank publication *Policy Research Report: Localizing Development: Does Participation Work?*, conclude that while involving local people can have positive impacts the benefits on income poverty are modest. A key finding of the report is that care is required with local development projects as, in some instances, projects can be captured by local elites and more disadvantaged community members can be marginalised. The key lesson from the World Bank study is that the evidence base for community development approaches is much thinner than is often thought and, more importantly, community development approaches do not provide a panacea for overcoming disadvantage:

> Evaluations of participatory development efforts improved somewhat between 2007 and 2012, generating some new evidence. However, the evidence base for most questions relevant to policy remains thin, and far too little attention is still paid to monitoring and evaluation. Project design continues to show little appreciation of context, and inflexible institutional rules fail to internalize the complexity inherent in engaging with civic-led development. Unless these problems are addressed, participatory development projects will continue to struggle to make a difference. (Mansuri and Rao 2013)

7.3 Evaluation and policy development

The key to a good evaluation strategy is to build evaluation and analysis into policy design. Evaluation should not just be seen as something that happens after a policy is implemented — if evaluation is not considered from the start many types of assessment will not be possible. Evaluation may not be possible at all unless it is built into the policy development budget.

Random control studies are a very obvious example of why evaluation should be considered in policy design. As random control trials can involve providing a treatment to one group and not to a control group, this sort of approach has to be built into policy design, by definition.

Another key reason that evaluation should be built into policy design is that it can be critical to have access to key data before a policy commences if that policy is to be evaluated well.

It is sometimes implied in the Indigenous policy literature that baseline data should be collected before a policy is implemented. While there is an element of truth in these claims they can be misleading and may be counterproductive. The key issue is not whether baseline data are collected but whether the data to make a good assessment are available. If key data are lacking then that data should ideally be collected before a policy commences. However, there is no need to collect existing data into a baseline study before a program or policy commences if that data are readily available and can be produced at any time.

The confusion about the term 'baseline' in an Australian context comes from applying concepts from developing countries that have less relevance in Australia. In developing countries, basic data are often missing, hence the desirability of collecting baseline data before a program or policy commences. On the other hand, Australia has relatively good existing data. For example, data on school attendance are readily available. Insisting that baseline data be collected in an Australian context can be counterproductive and may divert attention from what is really required. If the data are already available and can be reproduced later then that should not be the initial focus. The initial focus should be on collecting any additional data and information that does not already exist. The term baseline does not even appear in one of the best known evaluation textbooks, *Evaluation a Systematic Approach* (Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman 2004), but it is mentioned in

textbooks that discuss evaluation in a development context (Bamberger, Rugh and Mabry 2012).[3]

If new data and information are required to properly assess a policy the collection and timing of that data collection should be built into the initial policy design otherwise key data will either not be collected at all or will come too late to inform policy development and implementation.

Another issue regarding the interface between policy and evaluation is the desirability that policy be based on a clear theory of action. Unfortunately, this is not always the case and, as a result, evaluators sometimes need to develop a theory of action before an evaluation is conducted. Ideally, policy documents should provide a clear logical link between the action and the desired outcome. Otherwise evaluators have to spend time reproducing what should really be a basic feature of policy development. In some instances, as Rossi et al have argued, where program goals and objectives are very unclear or implausible meaningful evaluation may not be possible (Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman 2004, p. 137).

Another issue is being realistic about likely policy outcomes and goals. If policy outcomes and goals are not developed carefully, effective policies may be seen as failures not because they are failures but because the initial goals were unrealistic. As an example, while place-based approaches are popular in Australia, it is important to be realistic about what this sort of approach can achieve. Place-based approaches often have a limited impact on service systems as those service systems are managed and implemented on a whole-of-jurisdiction basis. Given this, it is not realistic to expect place-based approaches to have a large impact on service systems unless those who are tasked with implementing the place-based policy are given the authority to change those service systems.

The recent evaluation of the Groote Eylandt Regional Partnership Agreement showed that this agreement has been successful (MacDonald and Browne 2012). Two key elements of this success are worth noting: taking sufficient time to develop a local plan that all the parties agreed to and agreeing on a realistic set of actions that were then completed.

In his famous article, the 'Iron law of evaluation and other metallic rules', Peter Rossi argued that the expected net value of any net impact assessment of any large scale social program is zero. Rossi cited examples of effective programs and also

---

[3] For example, the Michael Bamberger, Jim Rugh and Linda Mabry book, *RealWorld Evaluation: Working Under Budget, Time, Data and Political Constraints*, which outlines the challenges involved in conducting evaluation in less developed countries, has extensive material on the collection of initial baseline data.

noted that a persistent problem is that policy often underestimates the complexity of the social world and that as a result 'we are overly optimistic about how much an effect even the best of social programs can expect to achieve' (Rossi 1987). These comments, which were written in 1987, are still relevant today. If realistic goals are not set, effective policies may be seen to have failed.

7.4   Monitoring

A common expressed frustration with policy evaluations is that they can be too late to inform the ongoing operation of a program or policy and for policy design. One way to avoid this frustration is to ensure that good monitoring is undertaken. Good monitoring can also make any evaluation easier as key data is being collected and analysed throughout the life of the program or policy.

For some programs and policies good monitoring may be all that is required — it may not be necessary to conduct a formal evaluation. However, good monitoring requires not just the collection of data but also good analysis. There is little point in collecting reams of data if that data are not being effectively analysed.

7.5   Estimating the counterfactual

Much of the evaluation literature focuses on how to estimate the counterfactual — what would have happened without the policy or the program Often popular or public discussions of policy issues proceed as if we do not need to worry about counterfactuals. Advocates will sometimes cite either improvements to or deteriorations in outcomes and assert that they somehow relate to the value or failure of policy. In reality, outcomes can change due to many factors unrelated to a program or a policy, including existing trends and the state of the economy. While this is an obvious point, it should never be forgotten.

Estimating the counterfactual for an evaluation of an Indigenous policy can sometimes be challenging. For example, for the evaluation of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) it was difficult to identify comparable communities that could act as a type of control group. The NTER covered such a large number of communities in the NT at once that it was not possible to identify other communities in the NT itself that could have acted as a good control group. It would have been possible to compare trends with Indigenous communities in other parts of Australia but this would have been problematic as the NT is unique in that it is the only jurisdiction in Australia where the vast bulk of the Indigenous population lives in remote communities. For the Cape York Welfare Reform evaluation it has been

possible to compare trends within other remote Indigenous communities in Queensland.

While it was not possible to identify comparison communities for the NTER communities it was possible to look at trends over time thereby using the outcomes in the NTER communities prior to the NTER itself as a control. It was also possible to use natural experiments across the NTER communities to compare trends. For example, trends in recorded crime in communities that gained additional police as part of the NTER were compared with communities where police numbers did not change (AIC 2011).

A key challenge for any evaluation of place-based initiatives in Indigenous communities is the natural noise in data when small numbers of people are involved. This can mean that simply analysing changes in performance indicators may not be very informative. As an example, NAPLAN results for a small school can be very volatile from one year to the next. If in one year five students are in Year 3 and in the next year seven students are in Year 3 it only takes differences across a small number of students to have a quite large impact on the measured result. For this reason, it is sometimes critical to have access to unit record data.

For the evaluation of Cape York Welfare Reform (CYWR) access to unit record data was very important. There has been a large improvement in school attendance in Aurukun in recent years. The task from an evaluation perspective is to explain why this happened. The fact that it happened does not necessarily imply anything about the success of CYWR, as some other factor may have explained the change. Without access to unit record data we would have struggled to establish whether the Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) had any effect. FaHCSIA ensured that unit record data on school attendance was matched with data on FRC conferences. This allowed us to see whether school attendance for individual students improved immediately after action on the part of the FRC. Without evidence like this it would have been very hard to establish whether the FRC, or some other factor, was affecting school attendance.

7.6   Involving Indigenous people

Much of the policy literature on overcoming Indigenous disadvantage focuses on the importance of involving local people in both policy design and policy implementation. However, despite this focus there have been only limited attempts to systematically collect the perspective of Indigenous Australians at a local level using sample surveys.

Indigenous communities are consulted on many issues and, in some cases, they suffer from a consultation burden (AIC 2011, Chapter 2). However, community consultation processes no matter how well they are conducted do not negate the desirability of conducting surveys using standard statistical techniques. Community consultations that involve public meetings may not illicit the views of people who will not speak in front of others because they feel intimidated. This is not an issue that is unique to Indigenous communities. If policy is to genuinely listen to the voice of Indigenous people then those views need to be rigorously collected.

FaHCSIA has now successfully overseen two large scale surveys in Indigenous communities: the Community Safety and Wellbeing Research Study (CSWRS) and the Social Change Survey that has been conducted as part of the evaluation of CYWR. In both instances local researchers were engaged to conduct the surveys and to help determine how particular questions should be asked. Importantly, local researchers were provided with training and support.

By involving local people the CSWRS and the Social Change Survey were more successful than they otherwise would have been. This owed a lot to the skills of the local Indigenous researchers who were able to ask questions in a way that made sense in a local context and who were also able to build trust, thereby gaining the views of people who are not normally asked for their perspectives.

Local surveys can provide rigorous information on both local aspirations and on people's lived experiences. In many instances, these data can be more important than data from other sources. Indeed for some questions such as those on crime victimisation, sample surveys provide better evidence than police data given that much crime is unreported.

7.7 Some key challenges in undertaking evaluations in Australia

The single most difficult challenge in undertaking evaluations in Australia, particularly of place-based initiatives, relates to the difficulty in obtaining access to existing data. Bamberger, Rugh and Mabry noted that because evaluation can threaten programs and personnel, some people who are important data sources may take protective measures by limiting or denying access to information (2012, p. 116). The challenges faced in gaining access to data need to be built into evaluation timetables and support should be provided to those undertaking evaluations to try to ensure that data are available in a timely manner. Evaluators, unlike official auditors, cannot demand that data and information be provided. This has particular relevance where an Australian Government agency seeks to obtain

data that relates to State or Territory policies and programs as an Australian Government agency cannot demand or require that key data and information be provided.

Some of the challenges inherent in obtaining access to data relate to rules around national minimum datasets. As an example, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) holds several national minimum datasets, including data at a local level. Although the AIHW holds the data the AIHW is not free to release these data even to other Australian Government agencies without the agreement of the State and Territory data custodians. Gaining the agreement of those data custodians can be a time consuming process and there can be a lack of consistency. Some jurisdictions are prepared to release data quickly while others may, at times, take months to make a decision and when they do they may try to place quite stringent restrictions on the release of the data. Lengthy delays in attaining access to data can delay the completion of evaluations and may have a serious impact on the quality of the evaluation itself.

In some instances, national minimum datasets do not exist and it is necessary to directly approach individual Australian Government and State Government agencies to access data. This process can work well if it is based on mutual trust and respect; however, this can cause significant delays. Mutual trust and cooperation are key as it is not reasonable to expect an outsider to have a detailed knowledge of the data that an agency may hold.

Some of the practical issues that face evaluators are often not discussed in the literature but these practical issues such as gaining timely access to data can be the key issue. To be fair, the issues often relate to staff shortages in data areas rather than deliberate delays or obfuscation. Often complex datasets require skilled analysts to extract the data. If there are only a small number of analysts, backlogs can quickly develop.

It is not only timely access to data that can delay evaluations but also timely feedback. If feedback from key agencies and stakeholders on draft evaluation reports is not provided according to agreed timeframes, the evaluation can be delayed.

Practical difficulties in undertaking evaluations need to be built into planning processes for evaluations, and, where access to key data is a key factor, agreement to provide key data for evaluations should be built into initial policy design.

7.8   Conclusion

This paper has emphasised the importance of careful planning and the importance of building evaluation and monitoring into policy design. If evaluation and monitoring are not built into the policy development process some types of evaluation will not be possible and important data may not be collected.

References

AIC (Australian Institute of Criminology) 2011, *Northern Territory Emergency Response: Evaluation Report 2011*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, Chapter 5.

Andrew J.A. 1999, *Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society*, DEE IR, Chicago, Chapter 2.

Bamberger M., Rugh J. and Mabry L. 2012, *RealWorld Evaluation: Working Under Budget, Time, Data and Political Constraints*, Sage Publications.

Campbell D.T. 1969, 'Reforms as experiments', *American Psychologist*, vol. 24, pp. 404-429.

Dobbie W. and Fryer R.G. 2009, 'Are high-quality schools enough to increase achievement among the poor?', *NBER Working Paper No. 15473*, http://www.nber.org/papers/w15473.

J-Pal (Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action lab) 2012, *Community Participation*, http://www.povertyactionlab.org/policy-lessons/governance/community-participation, accessed 2012.

MacDonald M. and Browne M. 2012, *Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Regional Partnership Agreement: Progress Evaluation, May 2012*, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra, http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/indigenous-australians/publications-articles/evaluation-research/groote-eylandt-and-bickerton-island-regional-partnership-agreement-progress-evaluation.

Mansuri G.R. and Rao V 2013, *Localizing Development : Does Participation Work?* World Bank, Washington D.C.

Oakley A. 2000, 'Experiments in Knowing, gender and method in the social science', New York Press, p. 320.

Pawson R. and Tilley N. 2004, 'Realist evaluation', available at http://www.communitymatters.com.au/gpage1.html.

Rossi P.H. 1987, 'The iron law of evaluation and other metallic rules, *Research in Social Problems and Public Policy*, vol. 4, 1987.

Rossi P.H., Lipsey M.W. and Freeman H.E. 2004, *Evaluation as Systematic Approach*, Sage Publications.

8   Data for better Indigenous policy evaluation: achievements, constraints and opportunities

John Taylor[1]

Abstract

Since the 1990s the range and volume of data on the Indigenous population available to policy-makers have grown substantially. These data now inform the evaluation of progress on all aspects of the Closing the Gap agenda via a comprehensive and integrated reporting framework. The resulting demography has been highly productive and increasingly well resourced although issues of data quality and methodological inexactitude continue to limit utility. There is also is a growing gap between available statistics and the needs of Indigenous incorporated groups for information. This paper examines select ongoing difficulties with data for Indigenous policy, where appropriate (possible) it makes suggestions for improvement, and it finishes by raising questions about the proper conduct of data collection by governments in the aftermath of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

8.1   Introduction

Some years ago, I contributed to a United Nations (UN) workshop in Ottawa, on *Indigenous Peoples and Indicators of Wellbeing.* The aim was to address concerns raised by Permanent Forum members that the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Human Development Index (HDI) failed to fully incorporate Indigenous people's concerns, interests and interpretations of wellbeing, development and progress — indeed, that they could often work to their detriment. The outcome was a series of forceful statements about a need to develop more rights-based indicators in order to ensure that issues of interest to Indigenous peoples, such as control over land and resources, equal participation in

---

[1] Professor and Director, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University.

decision-making, preservation of culture and control over development processes, were able to find expression in line with the free, prior and informed consent provisions of international human rights instruments (United Nations 2006).

In a subsequent paper (Taylor 2008) I reviewed the concepts and indicators of the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage (OID) framework (SCRGSP 2011) noting that they overlapped substantially with the socioeconomic components of the MDG and HDI frameworks. I also observed that the structure of the OID framework involving headline indicators leading to detailed strategic change indicators was consistent with the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) toolkit for including Indigenous peoples in sector program support as part of an information pyramid that, at the lower levels, provided disaggregated indicators and described interrelationships with underlying problems (DANIDA 2004, p. 16). To this extent, I concluded that the Australian reporting framework on Indigenous progress represented international best practice. And yet, as noted, the view of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is that the MDGs (and by implication frameworks such as the OID) do not capture many of the criteria that Indigenous peoples consider of relevance to them. By focusing solely on gaps with mainstream majority populations, they implicitly downplay the significance and relevance of unique Indigenous priorities and world views.

As a shortcoming in public policy, Tim Rowse (2012, pp. 196–7) has grappled with this issue in a recent series of essays on 'Rethinking Social Justice'. He argues that current policy is so fixated on equality of outcome that it fails to consider how to allow Indigenous peoples a choice in their mode of engagement with the wider society. Furthermore, he notes that in their delineation of policy-relevant evidence government agencies rarely share responsibility for data collection with those that they monitor and that this has consequences for the quality and effectiveness of policy-making (Rowse 2012, p. 196). Oddly enough, while the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Indigenous Reform Agreement states that 'effective engagement with Indigenous communities is critical to ensuring that Indigenous people's needs and aspirations are built into the planning and implementation of initiatives agreed by COAG', it comes with no means of measuring achievement in this space (in contrast to other elements of the agreement) let alone with any clear definition of what is to be understood by the term 'effective' (Rowse 2012, p. 198). As a portrayal of the Closing the Gap paradigm and its assemblage of evidentiary data Rowse invokes the image of a benign Cyclops capable of thinking and reporting on certain forms of wellbeing but blind to others (2012, p. 198). To the extent that this is a reasonable portrayal, current practice can be said to limit the scope of policy development in ways that are sub-optimal, even detrimental, from Indigenous perspectives. In my view, part

of the problem arises from the construction of Australian postcolonial demography as an instrument of public policy.

The origins and implications of postcolonial demography are detailed elsewhere (Taylor 2009, 2010; Rowse and Smith 2010). Briefly, this refers to the period following the 1967 Referendum when the interest of the then Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics to ensure a full enumeration of the Australian population coincided with a perceived wish of Indigenous people to continue to be identified in the census but without 'distinctions of descent' (Rowse and Smith 2010). The result was a self-identified race question in the 1971 Census that ever since (with modification to replace 'race' with 'origin') has produced the population binary — Indigenous – non-Indigenous — as the basis for data collection and associated development and evaluation of social justice policy. The resulting demography has been highly productive and increasingly well resourced although issues of data quality and methodological inexactitude continue to hinder progress while there also is a growing gap between available statistics and the needs of Indigenous incorporated groups for information. In this paper, I take selective stock of this demography and consider its utility for policy development — what are its achievements, what are its weaknesses and what might be done differently to produce better Indigenous policies?

8.2   Achievements

The main achievement has been the expansion and standardisation of data collection and output systems. Since the adoption in the 1990s of the standard self-reported Indigenous status question in all official statistical collections (including administrative collections and all official household surveys) as well as a much-expanded Indigenous-specific survey and census program (ABS 2007), there is no doubt that the range of data on Indigenous population is now extensive and provides relevant input to just about all aspects of the Closing the Gap agenda.

Furthermore, methods for improving the quality of data are under constant development, with the latest initiatives found in longitudinal survey work and data linkage projects. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has expert working groups on Indigenous statistics and the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse scrutinises each of the headline indicators for hard evidence of what works and what does not work policy and program wise. At the output end, the Productivity Commission's *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* report, the *Review of Government Services Indigenous Compendium* and the *Indigenous Expenditure Report* and the joint ABS–AIHW report on the *Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* all provide regular summary profiles of social and economic

conditions, mostly at jurisdictional level. Behind all of this lies substantive other data output such as from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey and the Longitudinal Survey of Indigenous Children. With this data infrastructure in place there is now a compelling need to sustain it as the primary input to evaluating policy progress. However, there are some inherent flaws in these data and I review these below along with suggestions for improvement or new directions where appropriate.

8.3 Census volatility

Since 1971, the number of individuals identifying as Indigenous in the census has increased by almost 300 per cent. At an average annual growth rate of 4 per cent this is beyond the bounds of natural increase. Also of note has been frequent and substantial variation around this average as well as differential growth by age group. The official (ABS) view has been to attribute this variability to a changing propensity of individuals to identify as Indigenous (Ross 1999). A counter view is that it reflects variable census coverage (Gray 2002). The first suggests behavioural change while the latter alludes more to administrative factors. Either way, it presents a number of dilemmas for evaluation.

First, it raises questions about the comparability of social indicators over time. One option here is to adjust base-year indicators to the level of newly revealed populations using reverse survival techniques (Taylor and Bell 1998); another is to treat census cross-sectional data as panel data by grouping individuals into cohorts and treating the averages within these cohorts as individual observations (Hunter and Gray 1998). However, where there is a large error of census closure, for example across much of urban Australia (Taylor and Biddle 2010), it is not clear whether aggregate change in population characteristics involves an alteration in the circumstances of the original population or whether it merely reflects the particular features of individuals appearing in the population for the first time. All that can be noted is different aggregate status in respect of 'different' populations. However, from 2013 there is an opportunity for more stable analysis of trends using the 5 per cent Statistical Longitudinal Census Database that will bring together data from the 2006 Census with data from the 2011 Census and future censuses. As Indigenous status is not deployed as a linking variable, this also provides an opportunity to examine characteristics associated with reported change in Indigenous status thereby providing much needed insight into unexplained growth in the Indigenous population.

Second, it creates an ever-shifting population base against which rates of events (such as hospitalisation or school enrolments) have to be calibrated. Given that most

indicators of policy interest are rate or ratio measures, questions arise regarding their utility for cross-sectional and trend analysis when the denominators used to measure change in social indicators can vary so much between census counts and where these may differ in unknown ways from numerator data drawn from other sources such as administrative collections. The main problem here is that high and stable Indigenous identification in administrative collections has yet to be achieved with resulting discrepancies between census-based population estimates and administrative data. This is particularly, but not exclusively, so in the southern and eastern States and in major towns and cities.

Finally, it undermines the robustness of population projections. The reason for this is indicated by Table 8.1 that shows the ratios of projected Indigenous populations to actual census year estimates from 1986 onwards.

Table 8.1   Forecast accuracy: ratios of national Indigenous population projections to observed census-based estimates, 1991–2011

Projection source and base year	*Ratio of projection to actual year estimate*				
	1991	*1996*	*2001*	*2006*	*2011*
Gray & Tesfaghiorghis (1986 based)	0.72	0.71	0.66		
ABS low series (1996 based)			0.93	0.91	
ABS high series (1996 based)			1.10	1.26	
ABS low series (2001 based)				0.97	
ABS high series (2001 based)				1.05	
ABS low series (2006 based)					0.87
ABS high series (2006 based)					0.87

Source: Gray & Tesfaghiorghis 1991 and ABS various.

Over the years, projections of the Indigenous population have been one of the more useful products of postcolonial demography especially in determining macro-policy settings. They have been used to stimulate employment policy (Taylor and Hunter, 1998), in regional needs assessment for service delivery (Taylor, 2004), and in driving home the fiscal opportunity-cost message that business as usual in Indigenous affairs is not a rational option due to the weight of population momentum (Taylor, 1997). Over time, it had been hoped that the accuracy of projections would improve but as we have seen the (inherent) instability in census counts undermines this. Nonetheless, projection of Indigenous numbers remains a vital aid to policy development not least because of a capacity to model future age distribution and plan for its consequences (Biddle and Taylor 2012) and there are methods available for refining cohort-component techniques to more accurately

reflect Indigenous demographic processes and determinants. Colleagues at the ANU and University of Queensland are currently working on these.

8.4   Population estimates — fit for purpose?

The idea of generating population statistics that are fit for purpose is considered a central role of the ABS (The Australian Statistician 2005). Clearly, then, in releasing Indigenous population estimates there is an implicit understanding on the part of the ABS that they are 'fit for purpose'. But are they?

The answer to this question is contingent — if the aim is to establish relativities by comparing jurisdictional populations across Australia then the ABS method of estimation is not only appropriate, it is essential in the sense that such comparison requires the application of a consistent methodology where the estimated parts sum to the whole. To that extent, the overall exercise of fiscal equalisation is probably vindicated. If, however, the aim is to determine local levels of need, for example, in terms of service delivery or workforce planning and for local government grants distribution, then current methods are questionable. Significantly, this is often the level at which Indigenous sociality is constructed, a point we shall return to later.

For one thing, the calculation of small area level Indigenous estimates using a top–down pro-rata distribution of undercount parameters that are derived for much higher level geographies does not necessarily provide good estimates at every reduction in scale. Ideally, population modelling should (also) be conducted at the level it is intended to be used (e.g. at shire level). Also, ideally, this should involve the application of local data and intelligence on components of population change. The top–down nature of existing estimation methodology which generates small area estimates from large area parameters is effectively the opposite of this ideal approach.

A second, and related, point is that *standard errors* for small area level population estimates have not been made available to date and so we have no measure of their reliability. In short, because of the nature of the methodology applied, small area Indigenous estimates appear ill-suited for local/regional needs assessment. Even applying state-level standard errors, they emerge as crude ballpark figures that are difficult to interpret over time. Ultimately, the main route to better Indigenous estimates is via improved enumeration. While significant additional resources were provided to the ABS for the 2011 Census to achieve this, (surprisingly) the Post Enumeration Survey estimate of net undercount was still very substantial.

8.5   Mobility and service populations

Census data indicate that Indigenous people are more frequently mobile than the rest of the population over the short term. Ethnographic studies support this finding but they also tell us that formal instruments for measuring mobility are likely to grossly understate the extent of this difference. Much movement is irregular, unpredictable and takes place on back roads, out of sight and out of mind (Taylor 2010). While administrative processes may pick up elements of such movement (for example, Centrelink change of address information) there is an unnerving sense of being inadequately informed. This has several consequences for policy.

First of all, it undermines the accurate measurement of population at individual locations, especially in terms of usual resident numbers. Second, it means that it is difficult to assess the impact of place-based initiatives (such as improvements in housing) on individuals and families since the intended beneficiaries are not necessarily in situ. Finally, it raises questions regarding causality in terms of rates of participation, especially in remote areas. For example, are rates of school attendance low because children are mobile, or are children mobile because they do not attend school (Taylor 2012)?

One way to incorporate the fact of mobility into policy development is to identify and utilise service populations as the primary target group — the hub and spokes model of Northern Territory growth towns provides a practical example of this. However, much more needs to be done to identify service population catchments, not least because these will vary for different services. A major constraint here remains lack of access to geo-coded administrative data sets (often State and Territory controlled). While there are GIS techniques available to process such data, the mechanisms to make use of them are not.

All of this raises fundamental issues of access and equity with regard to the provision of services. For example, if the residence pattern of many Indigenous people is best described as bi-local or even multi-local (Taylor 1998; Taylor and Bell 2004), in which location are services legitimately claimed? Alternatively, should services be replicated to cater for frequent movement between places? If urban areas are net recipients of temporary sojourners from rural areas (as they are), should urban services be augmented to compensate for additional loads? Although this does occur to some extent through the provision of facilities such as hostel accommodation, what of the pressure on housing in town camps and suburban areas that frequently host visitors? At the very least, in planning for service provision, recognition needs to be given to the role that central places fulfil on behalf of adjacent hinterlands. Estimations of population in these catchments can be achieved

using administrative data as long as these are made available; so too can spatio-temporal flows if geo-coded unit record data are accessible.

8.6   Which population, which indicators?

A significant irony is emerging in regard to the collection of social statistics on Indigenous peoples. As we have seen, at no time has there been such a volume and range of data on something called 'the Indigenous population' and yet there remains a dearth of information on the various sociocultural entities that make up that population. As a consequence, in matters that are crucial to the interests of variously constituted Indigenous polities, we are increasingly information rich but invariably knowledge poor. So much so, in fact, that one prominent Aboriginal leader was compelled to observe at a recent conference on the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey:

> The view I have about data is a long way from the current paradigm where data is collected on Indigenous society by governments for their purposes, not to support the objectives that Indigenous people want to determine. I share a pervasive Indigenous aversion to the way data is collected by governments, academics or professional researchers on or about Aboriginal people … despite the wealth of empirical data dished up by countless inquiries, Royal Commissions and research projects over many decades about the social and economic condition of Aboriginal society, little practical benefit seems to come from all this data. Th[e] categories are constructed in the imagination of the Australian nation state. They are not geographic, social or cultural spaces that have relevance to Aboriginal people. (Yu 2011)

Invariably, census, survey and administrative data are only available according to statistical units based on ABS geographic classifications such as the Australian Standard Geographic Classification and the Australian Indigenous Geographic Classification. These rarely, if at all, coincide with the distribution of populations linked by cognatic descent and proprietary rights. Consequently, formal statistical geographies are unlikely to provide for demographies of Indigenous polities that have rights and interests in particular places (Sutton 2003; Tehan *et al*. 2006, p. 3), although innovation in the use of mesh blocks should provide more flexibility here.

In many ways the issue at stake presents an important reflection on the distinction between the officially identified Indigenous 'population', on the one hand, and Indigenous 'peoples' on the other (Taylor 2009; Rowse 2012). The demography of officially identified Indigenous populations is best suited to the provision of citizen rights. What it does not provide for are Indigenous interests in inherent and proprietary rights, in particular over land. Approximately 41 per cent of the Australian continent is currently held under some form of Indigenous land tenure whilst a further 31 per cent has passed the registration test for Native Title. In 2011,

these areas incorporated up to 45 per cent of the Indigenous population. These figures are inevitably vague since, remarkably, there remains no reliable single real-time national authoritative database that can indicate the quantum of land held under Indigenous title or that is subject to some form of legal Indigenous special interest. The fact of Indigenous interest in land is undeniable — in the 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS), for example, two-thirds (62 per cent) of the Indigenous population indicated that they identified with a clan or language group and as many as three quarters (74 per cent) recognised an area as their homeland or traditional country.

Across much of the continent, then, there is a growing discrepancy between the best-intentioned of statistical output frameworks and the actual needs of Indigenous land-holding groups for an ethnographically informed demography suited to their needs for managing the Indigenous estate and its associated constituencies. While a demography of Indigenous 'population' may be well suited to the provision of citizen rights, what it does not provide for are Indigenous interests in inherent and proprietary rights manifest in the many forms of native title settlement and agreement that form the major structural element of public life in contemporary Indigenous society. These structures provide the means by which Indigenous peoples express collective identities and seek to negotiate for their needs and aspirations, including fundamental issues of recognition, inclusion and economic opportunity (Tehan *et al*. 2006, p. 3) and yet we have no data mechanisms to inform or evaluate them. This void is slowly being filled by Indigenous groups themselves and a recent household survey conducted by and for Yawuru Native Title holders in Broome provides an excellent example (Taylor *et al*. 2012).

The fact is, groups such as the Yawuru are now institutional players and they increasingly demand information based on how they themselves view their social and economic world and how they see opportunities and constraints towards the achievement of goals that they define. What they seek from government is just a reminder of gaps in outcomes but also support for capacity building in their compilation and use of customised data as a means of promoting their full and effective participation in local governance and development planning. In the post-land rights – native title era, Indigenous organisations have responsibilities to their own constituents and they require unique data resources to fulfil them.

Significantly, such aspirations are now codified as rights in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and it is not surprising that Indigenous peoples and signatory governments around the world have started to contemplate what exactly their endorsement of the Declaration might mean for the usual practice of government business. Discussion at the UN on this matter continues to focus around Article 42 of the Declaration and the so-called

'implementation gap', where even good intentions by states in the form of legislative and administrative initiatives fail to facilitate the enjoyment of rights (Malezer 2009). I would argue that this extends to the what, how and why of information gathering.

In this regard, it is worth noting that from 1990 to 2005 there were some formal checks and balances on government activity in the area of Indigenous data collection. As a national and regional representative organisation, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) had at least some statutory role in vetting and influencing the Indigenous data collection and analysis activities of the ABS and other government agencies. Thus, the abolition of ATSIC in 2004 involved the extinguishment of an important representative validating environment for statistical data collection and dissemination. With this now gone, the question arises as to who governments should and could engage with in order to ensure Indigenous input and legitimisation for its reporting framework. I am aware that the Productivity Commission consults with 'Indigenous people' in preparing its OID report, although precisely with who and how is less clear. I am also aware that COAG seeks legitimisation and a method for what it is calling participatory data collection at some Remote Service Delivery sites. It is true also that the ABS has Indigenous Engagement Officers and Local Engagement Officers and the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children, NATSISS and similar surveys all have Indigenous expert advice. What is less clear is whether all of this satisfies the intent of the UN Declaration that claims to point the way to better Indigenous policies.

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2007, *ABS Directions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics*, Cat no. 4700.0, ABS, Canberra.

The Australian Statistician 2005, address to National Press Club, Canberra, 9 March 2005.

Biddle, N. and Taylor, J. 2012, 'Demographic consequences of the "Closing the Gap" Indigenous policy in Australia', *Population Research and Policy Review*, vol. 31, no. 4, pp. 571–85.

DANIDA (Danish International Development Agency) 2004, *Tool Kit: Best Practices for Including Indigenous Peoples in Sector Programme Support*, Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Copenhagen.

Gray, A. 2002, 'The future history of Aboriginal families', in G. Briscoe and L. Smith (eds), *The Aboriginal Population Revisited: 70,000 Years to the Present*, Aboriginal History Monograph no. 10, Aboriginal History Inc., Canberra.

—— and Tesfaghiorghis, H. 1991, 'Social indicators of the Aboriginal population of Australia', *CAEPR Discussion Paper no. 18*, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), ANU, Canberra.

Hunter, B. and Gray, M. 1998, 'The relative labour force status of Indigenous people 1986–1996: a cohort analysis', *CAEPR Discussion Paper no. 164*, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

Malezer, L. 2009, Dialogue with States regarding respect for and application of the UN Declaration and follow up on its effectiveness, paper presented at the *International expert group meeting on the role of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in the implementation of article 42 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, 14–16 January.

Ross, K. 1999, *Population Issues, Indigenous Australians*, Cat. no. 4708.0, ABS, Canberra.

Rowse, T. 2012, *Rethinking Social Justice: From 'Peoples' to 'Populations'*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

Rowse T. and Smith, L. 2010, 'The limits of "elimination" in the politics of population', *Australian Historical Studies,* vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 90–106.

SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision) 2011, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2011*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

Sutton, P. 2003, *Native Title in Australia: An Ethnographic Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Taylor, J. 1997, 'The opportunity costs of future Indigenous labour force status', *CAEPR Discussion Paper no. 128*, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

—— 1998, 'Measuring short-term population mobility among Indigenous Australians: Options and implications', *Australian Geographer*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 125–37.

—— 2004, *Social Indicators for Aboriginal Governance: Insights from the Thamarrurr Region, Northern Territory*, ANU E Press, Canberra.

—— 2008, 'Indigenous peoples and indicators of well-being: Australian perspectives on United Nations global frameworks', *Social Indicators Research*, no. 87, pp. 111–26.

—— 2009, 'Indigenous demography and public policy in Australia: Population or peoples?', *Journal of Population Research*, no. 26, pp. 115–30.

—— 2010, 'Beyond the Pale: Measures of mobility in post-colonial Australia', *Law Text Culture*, no. 15, pp. 72–99.

—— 2011, 'Postcolonial transformation of the Australian Indigenous population', *Geographical Research*, vol. 49, no. 3, pp. 286–300.

—— 2012, 'Indigenous mobility and school attendance in remote Australia: Cause or effect?', *International Journal of Educational Research*, no. 54, pp. 31–40.

—— and Bell, M. 1998, 'Making sense of census data: A components analysis of employment change among indigenous Australians', *Journal of the Australian Population Association*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 35–51.

—— —— 2004, 'Continuity and change in Indigenous Australian population mobility', in J. Taylor and M. Bell (eds), *Population Mobility and Indigenous Peoples in Australasia and North America*, Routledge, London and New York.

—— and Biddle, N. 2010, 'Estimating the accuracy of geographic variation in Indigenous population counts', *Australian Geographer*, vol. 41 no. 4, pp. 469–84.

——, Doran, B., Parriman, M. and Yu, E. 2012, 'Statistics for community governance: the Yawuru Indigenous Population Survey of Broome', *CAEPR Working Paper no. 82*, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

—— and Hunter, B. 1998, *The Job Still Ahead: Economic Costs of Continuing Indigenous Employment Disparity*, Office of Public Affairs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Canberra.

Tehan, M., Palmer, L., Langton, M. and Mazel, O. 2006, 'Sharing land and resources: modern agreements and treaties with Indigenous people in settler states', in Langton, M., Mazel, O., Palmer, L., Shain, L.K. and Tehan, M. (eds) *Settling With Indigenous People*, The Federation Press, Sydney.

United Nations 2006, *Report of the Meeting on Indigenous Peoples and Indicators of Well Being*, E/C.19/2006/CRP.3, Ottawa, 22–23 March 2006.

Yu, P. 2011, 'The power of data in Aboriginal hands', paper presented at the Conference *Social Science Perspectives on the 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey,* April 12, ANU, Canberra, Australia.

9 Evaluating Indigenous programs and policies: communicating the outcomes

David Kalisch[1] and Fadwa Al-Yaman[2]

Abstract

Communicating evaluation findings effectively to policymakers is key to improving Indigenous policy and service delivery. This paper begins by discussing the role of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in informing the policy community, service providers and the public with a special focus on its work on Indigenous health and welfare Information. This is followed by a description of its work on the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse — an online resource providing evidence on what works to overcome Indigenous disadvantage across the Council of Australian Governments building blocks. The final section focuses on the challenges of getting input from policymakers and communicating key messages effectively to them and other stakeholders.

9.1 Introduction

This paper will draw upon the experience of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) to provide information about Indigenous health and welfare policies and services.

In this paper we will be discussing:

- the unique and privileged role that the AIHW has been given to report on health and welfare matters

- the focus that the AIHW has placed on health and welfare outcomes for Indigenous people, with attention also to measuring and reporting on the effectiveness of services provided to Indigenous people

---

[1] Director, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

[2] Manager, Social and Indigenous Group, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

- the range of mechanisms used by the AIHW to provide this information to the general community, and key stakeholders, including the policy community and service providers

- the particular role played by the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse — a joint venture of the AIHW and the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), funded by all Australian governments under a national partnership agreement

- our experience with the innovative presentation of information, to better convey key messages for a range of stakeholders.

9.2 The role of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

The AIHW is a major national agency, established under the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987* to provide reliable, regular and relevant information and statistics on Australia's health and welfare. Our aim is to produce authoritative information and statistics to promote better health and wellbeing.

The AIHW is an independent statutory authority, with a management board comprising independent and government members. This governance arrangement supports our role in receiving sensitive data from a range of sources, including all governments, and our objective reporting of information across the health and welfare domains.

Data are the core resource of the Institute. In doing our work, we collaborate closely and have effective data partnerships with many experts from around Australia, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics, governments at all levels, specialist government agencies, including the Productivity Commission, universities, research centres and non-government agencies. Our work includes the establishment of data standards and reporting on data quality, in addition to the reporting of information. There is a focus on the reporting of relevant, comparable data and making data available for a wide range of purposes. Increasingly, the AIHW is undertaking value-added analysis and research that utilises the very rich information holdings we manage, including through expert data linkage and modelling.

Over the past year, the AIHW produced around 150 reports, including detailed information collections on population health, disease occurrence, perinatal data, hospital data, drug and alcohol use and treatment services, mental health services and homelessness and housing services. The AIHW also draws this information together biennially in two separate reports, *Australia's Health* and *Australia's Welfare*, that provide a comprehensive review and compendium of health and

welfare in Australia. We contribute information for national performance reporting, including through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Reform Council, the Report on Government Services and the National Health Performance Authority.

Our robust, transparent reporting of health and welfare information means that:

- the community can understand what its significant contribution to the cost of health services actually buys in terms of health services and welfare services and related outcomes

- health and welfare systems and governments become more accountable to the community, and health and welfare policy becomes better informed and can be tested against outcomes

- clinicians and health and welfare service managers can make better decisions, which will improve the effectiveness, efficiency and outcomes of health and welfare services

- Australia's international reputation for high-quality health and welfare services can be demonstrated.

Within effective governance arrangements, including legislation, robust privacy practices and good relationships with data providers, the AIHW regularly provides researchers with access to its data holdings. An established, well-respected ethics committee process manages requests for sensitive information.

9.3   AIHW's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Welfare work program

Since the initial establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Welfare Unit at the AIHW in 2003, the AIHW Indigenous work has expanded and diversified.

The work of the Social and Indigenous Group covers health, community services and educational data in an integrated manner. In addition, it is an AIHW policy that all reports should contain relevant information on Indigenous Australians if data quality permits.

The AIHW has a very wide ranging work program in this area, including the following:

- Consolidated reporting of the health and welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the on-line Indigenous Observatory is updated regularly,

with a summary overview report produced every 2–3 years (AIHW 2011b). The 2011 observatory, for example, covered topic such as demography, housing, chronic disease, mortality and life expectancy, eye health, access to services and homelessness. The next overview report is expected to be released in 2014. The Indigenous Observatory provides a focal point for improving and using information on Indigenous health and welfare.

- Performance reporting against the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework presents data on some 70 measures canvassing health status and outcomes, determinants of health and health systems performance. This information has been published every two years since 2006 (AIHW 2011a). The national and jurisdictional reports are used to inform policy analyses and planning, and to monitor program implementation.

- The AIHW reports on the prevalence and chronicity of conditions found in children as a result of the Australian Government Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) Child Health Checks Initiative, and on follow-up service delivery. The data have shown high prevalence rates for dental, audiology and skin problems that have needed extensive follow-up and treatments (AIHW and DoHA 2008, 2009; AIHW 2012b). The findings have led to a more targeted approach in the provision of needed services. The creation of dental, audiology and ear, nose and throat data collections has meant that the number of services provided, the extent of follow-up, the types of services provided and changes in health outcomes for these children following service delivery can be monitored.

- The AIHW has worked on improving the quality of information and methodological approaches. One of the major obstacles to collecting accurate information on Indigenous Australians is an under-identification of Indigenous people in many data sets. In order to improve the quality of data at the collection phase, the AIHW has produced the national best practice guidelines for collecting Indigenous status in health data sets (AIHW 2010). Work on assessing the level of under-identification in key data sets is being undertaken by the AIHW, with the resultant correction factors being applied to these data sets to improve monitoring of the closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The two main projects currently under way are, first, assessing the level of under-identification in hospital data through an audit process and, second, using data linkage to assess the level of under-identification in mortality data (AIHW 2012a). Data linkage guidelines specific to linking data on Indigenous Australians were produced in collaboration with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (AIHW and ABS 2012).

- The AIHW has addressed gaps in existing information, with recent attention on enhancing perinatal data and key performance indicators for Indigenous-specific primary health care services.

An example of some of our analytical work is modelling the likely impact of COAG health and other initiatives in closing the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This work, known as the 'trajectories' study, assesses the outcomes of individual health initiatives in order to predict their combined impacts on life expectancy. This draws on scientific evidence of the effectiveness of such initiatives and epidemiological evidence on the relationship between, for example, reductions in smoking rates, disease prevalence, and mortality rates.

Our experience in communicating the outcome from Indigenous policies and services is to first have the evidence that can be reported. The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse is an essential mechanism for collecting, improving and disseminating the evidence.

9.4   The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse

The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse was established by COAG as an online resource to bring together evidence on what works to overcome Indigenous disadvantage. The functions of the Clearinghouse are delivered by the AIHW in collaboration with AIFS.

Purpose

The primary purpose of the Clearinghouse is to make available, in one place, the results of work being carried out to overcome Indigenous disadvantage across the seven COAG building blocks: early childhood, schooling, health, economic participation, healthy homes, safe communities, and governance and leadership that underpin the six COAG targets relevant to closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in health, early childhood, education and employment. The Clearinghouse seeks to provide a rigorous assessment and synthesis of evidence on programs and interventions that have been evaluated and have been shown to be effective. The search strategy for the Clearinghouse focuses on evidence from Australian interventions with a priority on Indigenous-specific research. Programs and interventions in countries with Indigenous populations with some similarity to Australia's, such as New Zealand, Canada and the United States are also within the scope of the Clearinghouse's work, as are programs and interventions across the total populations of those countries.

The Clearinghouse's primary audiences are policy-makers and service providers. Its activities are overseen by a board which provides strategic directions and advice.

The board approves the annual work program. A Scientific Reference Group comprised of academics with subject-matter expertise, provides technical advice. A panel of Indigenous and non-Indigenous subject-matter experts assists the Clearinghouse to assess evidence as well as to write on topics agreed to by the board and nominated by jurisdictions. To assess and label the evidence in selected research and evaluations, the Clearinghouse developed a practical, formal assessment process with guidance from the Scientific Reference Group and Clearinghouse Board. To develop the assessment tool, a variety of existing standards and frameworks were reviewed. The tool has three sections: common issues, methods, and results and conclusions. Subject specialists are commissioned to review identified material, and label the evidence using the tool. The results of the assessments are synthesised and summarised in the assessed collection, along with information on what works, and why.

Key learnings and gaps in the evidence

An annual paper synthesises the evidence, showing key learnings and gaps in the evidence across all Clearinghouse resources and it points to recurring or cross-cutting themes. The analytical framework used to identify gaps is shown in Figure 9.1. The analytical framework includes:

- analyses of themes and key learnings for each building block using material in issues papers and resource sheets, as well as through qualitative analysis of items in the assessed collection

- an outline of the characteristics of the assessed collection, including research type, type of publication, study population, country and location of the research

- identification of gaps in the evidence (AIHW and AIFS 2011, 2012).

Figure 9.1   Analytical framework for the analysis of evidence on what works to overcome Indigenous disadvantage, 2010–11
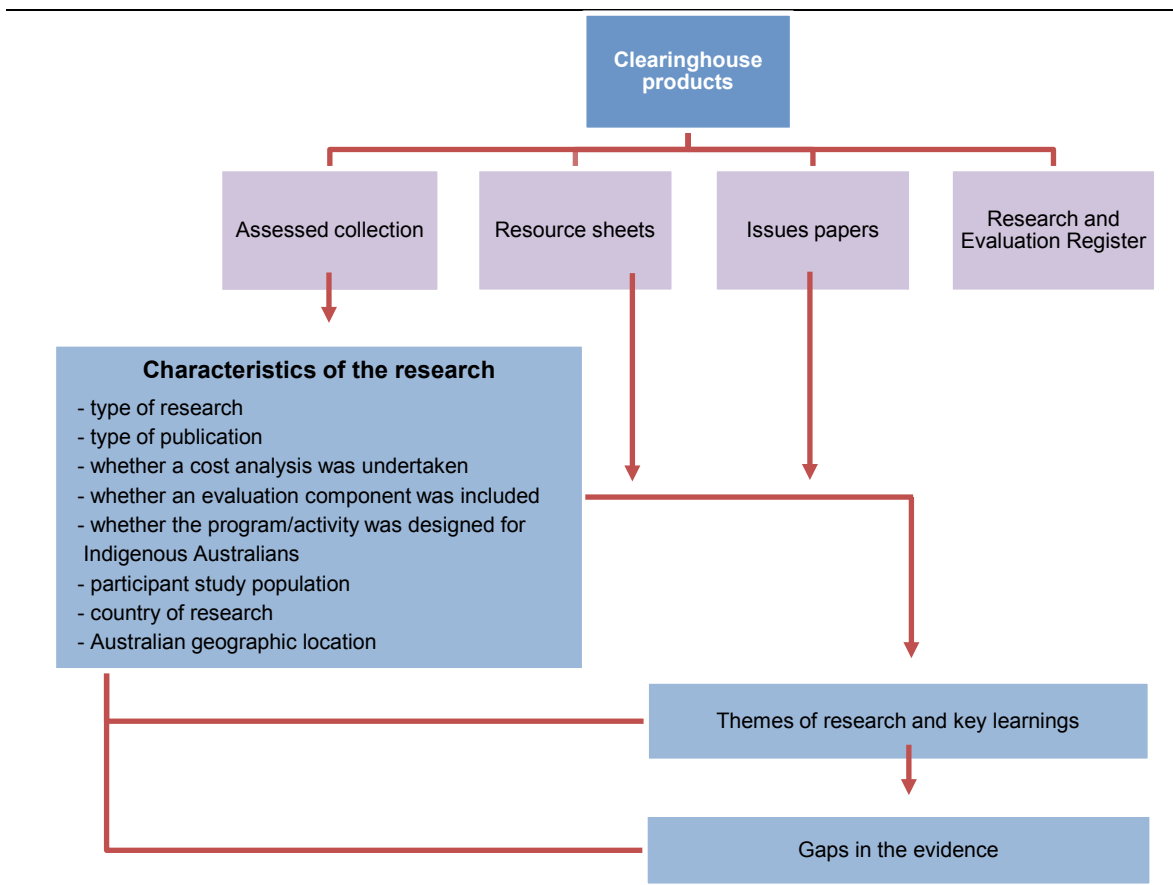
9.5   The Clearinghouse collections

General collection

The general collection is a compilation of material broadly related to the COAG targets and building blocks drawn from AIHW and AIFS library collections. This includes published and unpublished papers, reports and other literature.

There were 4952 items housed in the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse's online general collection. Most items in the general collections were in the health building block, followed by the early childhood and safe community building blocks (Table 9.1).

Table 9.1   General collection by building block

Building block	General collection			
	30 Sep 2011	*31 Dec 2011*	*31 Mar 2012*	*29 Jun 2012*
Early childhood	1427	1422	1454	1471
Economic participation	926	933	943	943
Governance and leadership	183	185	199	203
Health	1776	1791	1819	1843
Healthy homes	589	589	600	610
Safe communities	1415	1422	1453	1459
Schooling	750	759	776	787
Total	**4769**	**4793**	**4899**	**4952**

Note: Items in the general collection are counted against more than one building block, so items add to more than total number of items in the collection.

Assessed collection

The entries in the assessed collection have been reviewed by subject specialists who have completed comprehensive assessments of items in the collection using a tool prepared by the Clearinghouse. Each assessment identifies the type of research and considers the quality and strength of evidence, its adaptability to the Indigenous context and implications for overcoming Indigenous disadvantage.

There were a total of 602 items of evaluations and research in the assessed collection. The COAG building block for schooling contained the highest number of items (140), followed by the health (94) and safe communities building blocks (92). The majority of items in the assessed collection have been assigned to a single building block (518 or 86 per cent). Less than 2 per cent were assigned to three or more building blocks (Table 9.1).

Table 9.2 shows analysis of data in the assessed collection by type of research, and building block. Just over a third of the assessed collection related to studies involving quantitative analysis with a comparison group, with an additional 35.7 per cent involving quantitative analysis without a comparison group. Just over 20 per cent involved qualitative analysis and 10 per cent were literature reviews. This varied by building block, with a higher proportion of quantitative studies in the schooling, early childhood and health building blocks.

Table 9.2   Assessed items by type of research, 30 June 2011

Building block	Quantitative comparison group		Other quantitative		Qualitative		Literature review		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Early childhood	38	43.7	29	33.3	12	13.8	8	9.2	**87**	**100.0**
Schooling	69	49.3	45	32.1	16	11.4	10	7.1	**140**	**100.0**
Health	33	35.1	37	39.4	15	16.0	9	9.6	**94**	**100.0**
Economic participation	28	32.2	40	46.0	15	17.2	4	4.6	**87**	**100.0**
Healthy homes	9	17.6	25	49.0	13	25.5	4	7.8	**51**	**100.0**
Safe communities	23	25.0	28	30.4	22	23.9	19	20.7	**92**	**100.0**
Governance and leadership	7	13.7	11	21.6	29	56.9	4	7.8	**51**	**100.0**
Total	**207**	**34.4**	**215**	**35.7**	**122**	**20.3**	**58**	**9.6**	**602**	**100.0**

Figure 9.2 shows analysis of the assessed items by participating populations, country where the research was carried out and type of study. The highest number of items in the collection involved Indigenous Australian participants (291), followed by non-Indigenous Australians (183). This is an outcome of the hierarchy of research strategy for the Clearinghouse and the lack of sufficient evaluations of Indigenous specific programs. The research strategy for the Clearinghouse was to focus on evaluation of programs delivered to Indigenous Australians followed by evaluations of programs delivered to non-Indigenous Australians if not enough evaluations were found for programs delivered to Indigenous Australians. The same strategy was used for the evaluation of programs in New Zealand, Canada and the United States.

All studies had a mix of quantitative, qualitative research and literature reviews. While most of the assessed studies (83 per cent) had an evaluation component, only 20 per cent had a cost-effectiveness analysis.

Figure 9.2   Assessed items by country and Indigenous status and research type, at 30 June 2011 (per cent)
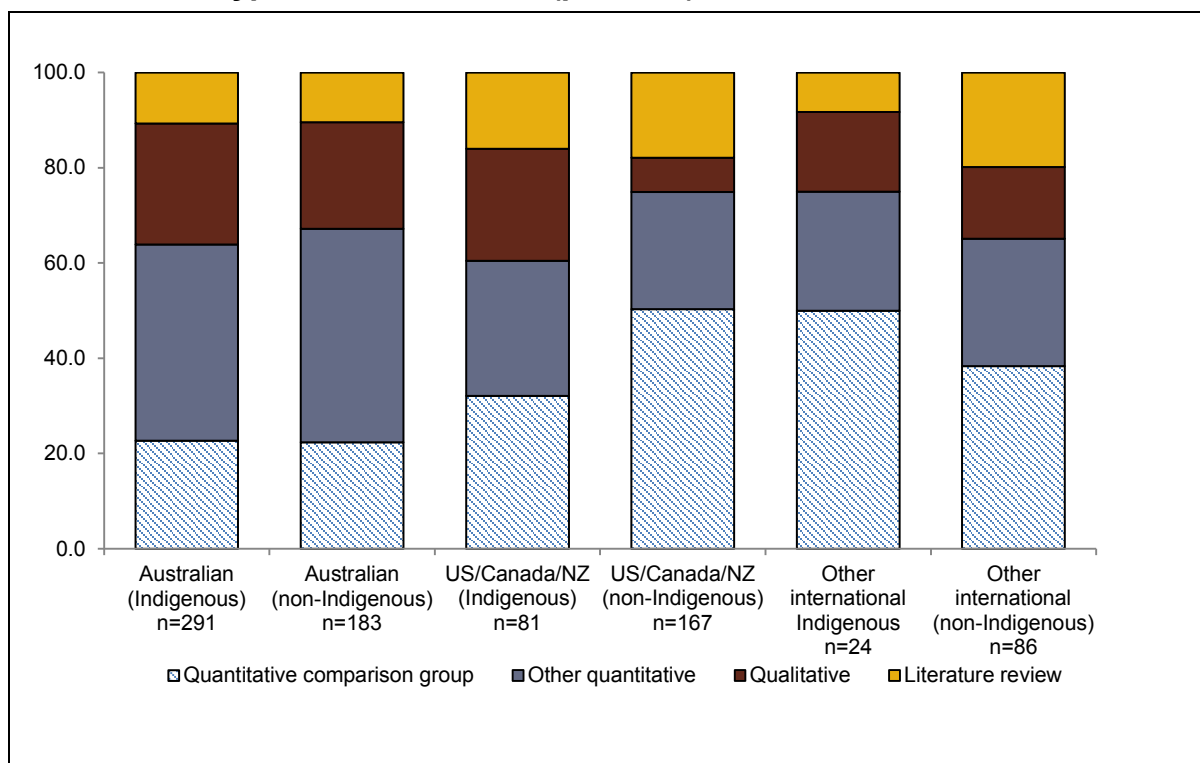
Note: Items have been counted for each population included in the research.

Source: AIHW and AIFS 2012.

During the assessment of evidence on what works to overcome Indigenous disadvantage, it became clear that many programs across all the COAG building blocks were implemented in Indigenous communities. A high proportion of those programs were not rigorously evaluated and it was not possible to identify which programs worked and which did not work. The cost of doing evaluations was often not built into program budgets and timetables, so many programs or interventions had either low-cost, partial or no evaluations.

Some evaluations were disregarded because they were not considered 'high-quality' evaluations. For an evaluation to be judged 'high quality', it must include hypothesis creation and testing, data collection, appraisal of the data quality, data processing and data synthesis, and its findings must have been disseminated.

However, a number of experts argue that high-quality evaluations can still come from observational studies, case studies, field visits, experts and lay knowledge and reports on interventions (often called 'realist synthesis' — see CSDH 2008; Pawson *et al*. 2004). The Clearinghouse is actively considering how to synthesise valuable evidence and findings from a range of studies, reports and assessments which, on normal standards applied to medical research, would not be captured.

Research and Evaluation Register

The Research and Evaluation Register is a list of government commissioned research and evaluations relevant to Indigenous Australians. Its aim is to promote cooperation and to avoid duplication across agencies and jurisdictions.

The Clearinghouse is constantly updating the Research and Evaluation Register, which currently contains 701 items. As shown in Table 9.3, the health building block has the largest number of items (371), followed by safe communities (171) and schooling (160). It should be noted that items can be counted in more than one building block.

Table 9.3   Items on the Research and Evaluation Register, September 2011 to June 2012

	No. of items on the Research and Evaluation Register			
Building block	*30 Sept 2011*	*31 Dec 2011*	*31 Mar 2012*	*30 June 2012*
Early childhood	116	121	122	126
Schooling	147	147	150	160
Health	353	357	361	371
Economic participation	136	136	140	148
Healthy homes	116	116	118	120
Safe communities	154	155	158	171
Governance and leadership	77	77	80	80
Cross cutting	12	12	13	13
Total	**650**	**655**	**662**	**701**

Note: Table does not add to total as items can be counted against more than one building block.

Of the 701 items in the Research and Evaluation Register on 30 June 2012, 271 (39 per cent) were publically released. Those items were analysed by building block and also by topic or theme within each building block. Items were publically available across each of the seven building blocks, with health (80) and safe communities (65) having the most items publically available (Table 9.4).

Table 9.4   Research and Evaluation Register publically released items by building block, 30 June 2012

Building block	Number released	Total on the register (by primary building block)	Per cent
Early childhood	23	53	43.4
Schooling	26	101	25.7
Health	80	280	28.6
Economic participation	29	77	37.7
Healthy homes	19	35	54.3
Safe communities	65	114	57.0
Governance and leadership	18	28	64.3
Cross cutting	11	13	84.6
Total	**271**	**701**	**38.7**

Within each building block, the publically released items were allocated to a number of themes. In the schooling building block, the major theme was education/teaching strategies. In health, it was disease and mortality, while for healthy homes, it was service delivery. The building block for economic participation contained three main themes: employment strategies, workforce participation, and geography, demography and mobility. The safe communities' building block had two clear themes: justice system involvement and child welfare and protection.

Issues papers and resource sheets

Issues papers are comprehensive systematic reviews of topics relevant to the Clearinghouse building blocks that examine Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian and international research. Resource sheets address particular problems, such as anti-tobacco programs or access to early childhood services. The topics of these are chosen by the board after input from jurisdictions. All issues papers are written by subject-matter academics. Resource sheets are written by subject-matter specialists and Clearinghouse staff.

Box 9.1 shows a summary of key strategies that were found to be effective in improving employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians. Figure 9.3 illustrates the significance changes in Indigenous employment between 1994 and 2008.

Figure 9.3   Non-CDEP Indigenous employment by geographic remoteness, age and sex, 1994 and 2008
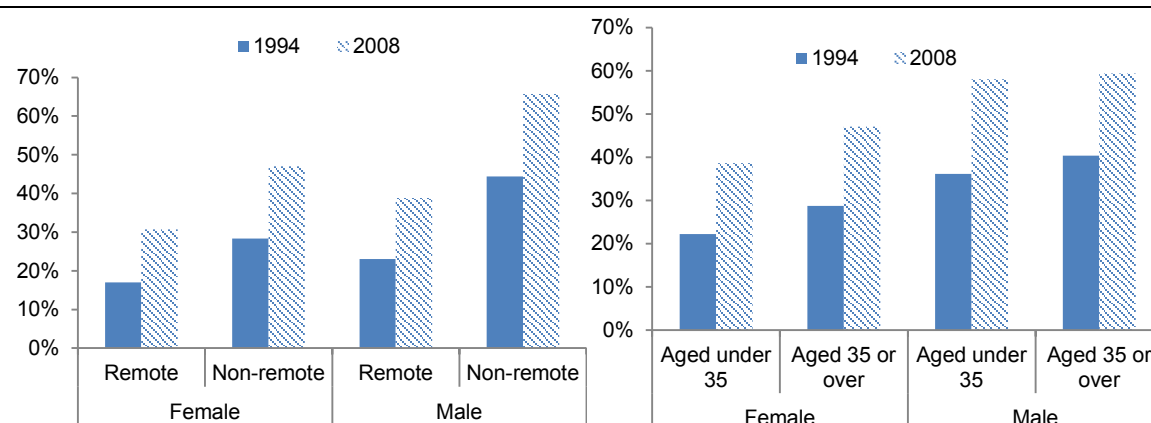
Sources: Gray *et al*. 2012; Gray 2012; NATSIS 1994; NATSISS 2008.

Up until September 2012, the Clearinghouse had published three issues papers and another four had been commissioned. It had also published 17 resource sheets, with an additional 13 at various stages of preparation. Resource sheets and issues papers on early childhood, schooling and health building blocks have accounted for just over 50 per cent of the Clearinghouse publications (Table 9.5).

Table 9.5   Issues papers and resource sheets published and in preparation, September 2012

Type of research	Issues papers	Resource sheets	Total	Percentage
Early childhood	2	4	6	16.2
Schooling	2	4	6	16.2
Health	0	8	8	21.6
Economic participation	1	4	5	13.5
Healthy homes	0	2	2	5.4
Safe communities	1	6	7	18.9
Governance and leadership	1	2	3	8.1
Total	**7**	**30**	**37**	**100**

What works to overcome Indigenous disadvantage: Key learnings and gaps in the evidence

Each year the Clearinghouse produces a report that synthesises the evidence from the assessed collection, the issues papers and resource sheets. The Clearinghouse has been able to identify a number of common principles that are critical if programs and interventions are to work, and some key reasons why programs and interventions do not work. Below are some examples from a number of building blocks.

What works

- Adequate resourcing and planned and comprehensive interventions — for example, a systematic approach with appropriate funding arrested the escalating epidemic of end-stage kidney failure, reduced suffering for Indigenous people and saved resources (Baker *et al*. 2005)

- Community involvement and engagement — for example, in the alcohol and substance abuse programs the key success factors were strong local leadership, strong community-member engagement, appropriate infrastructure and the use of a paid workforce to ensure long-term sustainability (Gray and Wilkes 2010)

- Respect for Indigenous languages and cultures — for example, the school readiness programs were successful because they respected different learning styles in different cultures (Dockett *et al*. 2010)

- Commitment to doing projects with, not for, Indigenous people — for example, the New South Wales Count Me In Too numeracy program (Box 2) found that contextual learning was successful and critical, professional development for teachers was essential, effective relationships were vital and Aboriginal community acceptance was essential for on-going success (Perry and Howard 2003)

- Development of social capital — for example, the Communities for Children initiative highlighted the importance of a collaborative approach to maternal and child health, child-friendly communities, early learning and care, supporting families and parents and working together in partnership (Sorin and Markotsis 2008)

- Recognising underlying social determinants of health and welfare status — for example, the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children demonstrated the influence of financial disadvantage on school readiness (Smart et al. 2008)

- Recognising that issues are often complex and contextual — for example, the relationship between neighbourhood conflict, housing standards, high rental costs and frequent house moves and school attendance (Bridge et al. 2003).

Box 9.2   An excerpt from the Clearinghouse assessed collection on the 'Count Me In Too' Indigenous program

The Count Me In Too Indigenous (CMITI) program was introduced into five primary schools in New South Wales during 2001 and provided an opportunity for teachers, Aboriginal educators, parents and communities to develop a local program of numeracy development. The program was the extended Schedule for Early Number Assessment (SENA), which provided a useful way for listening to Aboriginal children and learning about how they undertake certain mathematical problems. Adapting the SENA and the activities in the program to meet the local needs of Aboriginal children and their communities increased the potential for learning in a meaningful and relevant way.

Those schools who have managed to get their resources and programs organised around the approaches of CMITI have developed enthusiastic and coherent teams of educators. Those who involved their Aboriginal communities have achieved continuing success for their students in terms of learning outcomes.

The evaluation of the CMITI program found that contextual learning was successful and critical, professional development for teachers was essential, effective relationships were vital and Aboriginal community buy-in was essential for ongoing success (Perry and Howard 2003).

What doesn't work

- 'One size fits all' approaches — for example, residential treatment for alcohol and other drugs dependency is generally not more effective than non-residential treatment. However, evidence indicates that residential treatment is more effective for clients with more severe deterioration, less social stability and high relapse risk (Gray and Wilkes 2010).

- Lack of collaboration and poor access to services — for example, successful interventions require the integration of health services to provide continuity of care, community involvement and local leadership in health-care delivery and culturally appropriate mainstream services. These steps help to ensure the suitability and availability of services, which can thereby improve access by Indigenous Australians (Gray and Wilkes 2010; Rowley *et al.* 2000).

- Interventions without local Indigenous community control and culturally appropriate adaptation — for example, evidence indicated external imposition of 'local dry area bans' (where consumption of alcohol is prohibited within a set distance of licensed premises) was ineffective and only served to move the site of public drinking, often to areas where the risk of harm was greater (Gray and Wilkes 2010).

- Short-term, one-off funding, piecemeal interventions, provision of services in isolation and failure to develop Indigenous capacity to provide services (Helme and Lamb 2011; Gray and Wilkes 2010) — for example, a one-off health assessment with community feedback and an increase in health service use was unlikely to produce long-term health benefits and improvements. An ongoing focus on community development and sustained population health intervention are needed (Gracey *et al.* 2006).

9.6   Clearinghouse products—communication strategies

While the Clearinghouse focuses to a considerable extent on collecting, assessing and improving the evidence, equally as important is the relevance of that evidence to policymakers and how results are communicated so that they are understood by the people who need to act on the evidence.

A key challenge for the Clearinghouse is to obtain a better match between the research that government wants and what researchers produce. Edwards (2010) summarised the multiple steps involved in this complex relationship between research use and public policy: what is meant by research use, the forms that it can take, the factors that might affect it, and the relative merits of different research

strategies. One of the suggested mechanisms to ensure that Clearinghouse products are policy relevant is through a forum or workshop involving policy-makers, authors and service providers. This allows early input from all parties to identify how governments can use the research and the key issues from all perspectives.

Box 9.3   An excerpt from the Clearinghouse resource sheet 'Pathways for Indigenous school leavers to undertake training or gain employment'

What works

Enhancing the potential productivity of the Indigenous workforce by facilitating training and education is the policy most likely to be effective. Accordingly, it is important to first overcome barriers to Indigenous participation in education and training. The recognition of diverse and distinct cultural and social life experiences of Indigenous school-leavers is crucial.

There are good theoretical reasons to expect that Indigenous input is imperative for all activities aimed at increasing indigenous participation in programs and hence their effect. This principle holds for schools, university/VET sectors and labour market programs. The evidence on outcomes is consistent with the benefits of Indigenous participation in program design, but the existing evaluations are largely descriptive.

Among labour market programs, wage subsidy programs are consistently identified as having the best outcomes for Indigenous job seekers (Hunter 2010).

Many of the communication strategies that the AIHW uses more generally across its range of products have been adopted by the Clearinghouse; for example, free access to information, crisp presentation of information and drawing out of key themes and messages for a range of audiences, through a range of communication approaches.

All Clearinghouse products are published on-line and are accompanied by media releases highlighting key messages. They all have a simple summary message, using the headings: 'What we know', 'What works', 'What doesn't work' and 'What we don't know' (Box 9.3 illustrates the 'What works' section of Resource sheet no. 2). This has been an important branding for the Clearinghouse.

During the first two years of its operation, Clearinghouse staff publicised its role, functions and expected outputs through jurisdiction visits and at conferences.

In 2012, the Clearinghouse instigated a series of public seminars to make key messages more accessible by providing a forum for discussion among academics, policy-makers, Clearinghouse staff and other interested parties. The Clearinghouse seminars are thematic, and are conducted in different capital cities across Australia. The seminar sessions include a panel of publication authors, a government

representative and a member of the Clearinghouse staff. The first of these seminar series focused on two topics: 'Increasing Indigenous employment rates' (Gray *et al*. 2012) and 'Strategies to enhance employment of Indigenous ex-offenders after release from correctional institutions' (Graffam and Shinkfield 2012). Over 140 people attended the seminar in Canberra, which included representatives from government departments (Commonwealth and Australian Capital Territory) as well as participants from non-government organisations. Two additional seminars on the same topics, held in Adelaide and Brisbane, were also well attended.

Clearinghouse staff and authors are also encouraged to present key findings at conferences and relevant forums as well as having Clearinghouse booths at these forums. The Clearinghouse has a quarterly newsletter and continues to promote subscriptions to e-newsletters at presentations and conferences. Currently, there are 4111 subscribers to e-newsletter. The Clearinghouse continues to assist the public with their enquiries through the Helpdesk (email and telephone).

One key question in this type of work is how to maximise the impact of Clearinghouse evidence on policy development. This is a complex question. Decision-making is a complex process and evidence is not the only factor contributing to policy-making.

One of the continuing key challenges for the Clearinghouse is to ensure that government departments provide the Clearinghouse Research and Evaluation Register with relevant research and evaluations, noting that this is generally not an issue with academic and independent research. As noted above, an additional key challenge is how to ensure that policy-makers can better explain what sort of evidence they need to make policy and how they can be assisted to use the evidence, understanding its limitations. An ongoing challenge for the Clearinghouse remains consideration of the best way for research results to be disseminated and communicated to the policy community, as well to Indigenous people and the general community.

9.7   Conclusions

This paper describes the focus that the AIHW has placed on health and welfare outcomes for Indigenous Australians, concentrating on the measurement of the effectiveness of services provided to Indigenous people. The mechanisms used by the AIHW to provide this information to the general community and key stakeholders, including the policy community and service providers, are also described.

The paper emphasises the particular role played by the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, that is a joint venture of the AIHW and AIFS, funded by all Australian governments under a national partnership agreement.

The broader AIHW experience with innovative presentation of information is a work in progress. It necessarily includes consideration of the range of information needs and information preferences across the wide stakeholder audience. The Clearinghouse has been able to benefit from the innovative approaches adopted across the AIHW.

References

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2010, *National Best Practice Guidelines for Collecting Indigenous Status in Health Data Sets*, Cat. no. IHW 29, AIHW, Canberra.

—— 2011a, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2010: Detailed Analyses*, Cat. no. IHW 53, AIHW, Canberra.

—— 2011b, *The Health and Welfare Of Australia's Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander People, an Overview Report*, Cat no. IHW 42, AIHW, Canberra.

—— 2012a, *An Enhanced Mortality Database for Estimating Indigenous Life Expectancy: A Feasibility Study*, Cat no. IHW 75, AIHW, Canberra.

—— 2012b, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Child Health Check Initiative: Follow-up Services for Oral and Ear Health*, final report, August 2007 – June 2012. Cat. no. DEN 223. AIHW, Canberra.

—— and Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012, *National Best Practice Guidelines for Data Linkage Activities Relating to Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander People*, AIHW Cat. no. 74, AIHW, Canberra.

—— and AIFS (Australian Institute of Family Studies) 2011, 2012, *What Works to Overcome Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Learnings and Gaps in the Evidence*, produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, AIHW, Canberra and AIFS, Melbourne.

—— and Department of Health and Ageing 2008, *Progress of the Northern Territory Emergency Response Child Health Check Initiative: Preliminary Results from the Child Health Check and Follow-up Data Collections*, Cat. no. IHW 25, AIHW, Canberra.

—— —— 2009, *Progress of the Northern Territory Emergency Response Child Health Check Initiative: Update on Results from the Child Health Check and Follow-up Data Collections*, Cat. no. IHW 28, AIHW, Canberra.

Baker, P., Hoy, W. and Thomas, R. 2005, 'Cost-effectiveness analysis of a kidney and cardiovascular disease treatment program in an Australian Aboriginal population', *Advances in Chronic Kidney Disease*, vol. 12, issue 1, pp. 22–31.

Bridge, C., Flatau, P., Whelan, S., Wood, G. and Yates, J. 2003, *Housing Assistance and Non-shelter Outcomes: Final Report*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne.

CSDH (Commission on Social Determinants of Health) 2008, *Closing the Gap in a Generation, Health Equity through Action on the Social Determinants of Health*, Final report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health, World Health Organisation, Geneva.

Dockett, S., Perry, B. and Kearney, E. 2010, *School Readiness: What does it Mean for Indigenous Children, Families, Schools and Communities?* Issues Paper No. 2 produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, Canberra, AIHW, Canberra and AIFS, Melbourne.

Edwards, M. 2010, 'In search of useful research: demand and supply challenges for policy makers', *Public Administration Today*, issue 24, pp. 56–64.

Gracey, M., Bridge, E., Martin, D., Jones, T., Spargo, R.M. and Shephard, M. 2006, 'An Aboriginal-driven program to prevent, control and manage nutrition-related "lifestyle" diseases, including diabetes', *Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 178–88.

Graffam, J. and Shinkfield, A. 2012, *Strategies to Enhance Employment of Indigenous Ex-offenders after Release from Correctional Institutions*, Resource sheet no. 12, produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, AIHW, Canberra and AIFS, Melbourne.

Gray, D. and Wilkes, T. 2010, *Reducing Alcohol and other Drug Related Harm*, Resource sheet no. 3, produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, AIHW, Canberra and AIFS, Melbourne.

Gray M. 2012, 'What works to increase Indigenous employment?', Closing the Gap Clearinghouse seminar presentation, 19 March 2012, Canberra.

Gray, M. Hunter, B. and Lohoar S. 2012, *Increasing Indigenous Employment Rates*, Issues Paper no. 3, produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, AIHW, Canberra and AIFS, Melbourne.

Helme, S. and Lamb, S. 2011, *Closing the School Completion Gap for Indigenous Students*, Resource sheet no. 6, produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, AIHW, Canberra and AIFS, Melbourne.

Hunter, B. 2010, *Pathways for Indigenous School Leavers to Undertake Training or Gain Employment*, Resource sheet no. 2, produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, AIHW, Canberra and AIFS, Melbourne.

Pawson, R., Greenhalgh, P., Harvey G. and Walshe K. 2004, *Realist Synthesis: An Introduction*, ESRC Research Methods Programme Papers no. 2, University of Manchester, United Kingdom.

Perry, B. and Howard, P. 2003, *Report on the Count Me In Too Indigenous Project during 2002*, New South Wales Department of Education and Training, Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate, Sydney, NSW.

Rowley, K.G., Daniel, M., Skinner, K., Skinner, M., White, G.A. and O'Dea, K. 2000, 'Effectiveness of a community-directed "healthy lifestyle" program in a remote Australian Aboriginal community', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 136–44.

Smart, D., Sanson, A., Baxter, J., Edwards, B. and Hayes, A. 2008, *Home-to-School Transitions for Financially Disadvantaged Children: Final Report*, The Smith Family, Sydney.

Sorin, R. and Markotsis, J. 2008, *Building a Solid Foundation for School: A Communities Approach*, Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, Perth.

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

10   Better Indigenous policies: an Aotearoa New Zealand perspective on the role of evaluation

Helen Moewaka Barnes[1]

Abstract

Policy evaluation, particularly government-funded evaluation, tends to focus on high-level indicators or on those charged with implementing specific programs rather than on systems of transmission and the mix of policies and strategies across government. Māori providers come under particular scrutiny through evaluation. This has, however provided an opportunity for the development of 'by Māori, for Māori' evaluation, with the Kaupapa Māori paradigm providing a significant space for a wide range of Māori individuals and organisations to work from. What these approaches have achieved is the support and reinforcement of policies, such as Whanau Ora, which are premised on the right of and need for Māori to be involved through collaborative and consultative processes at all stages: from policy design to implementation to evaluation.

10.1   Introduction

The Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the 1840 agreement between the tribes of New Zealand and the Crown provides a foundation for relationships, encompassing issues of ownership, control, equity, involvement and participation. The Treaty, developed in part as a response to concerns over Māori[2] health and wellbeing (Durie 1994, pp. 83–4; Health Promotion Forum 2002), is the overarching point of difference between policy and evaluation in Aotearoa New Zealand and in other contexts. Although subject to changing political and public positioning, the Treaty influences social policy and service provision and, in some cases, is included in social legislation (James 1997).

---

[1]   Associate Professor and Director, Whariki Research Group, SHORE & Whariki Research Centre, School of Public Health, Massey University.

[2]   The Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Partnership, participation and protection have been identified as primary principles of the Treaty (Durie 1994) but definitions of these terms are diverse. However, tino rangatiratanga as guaranteed in Article Two of the Treaty encompasses the right to exercise Māori world views, authority and control as normal and legitimate processes and practices. Tino rangatiratanga relates to policy evaluation in terms of the development and nature of policy, how it is implemented and evaluated and what benefits accrue to what groups. Article Three of the Treaty supports equity and the need to provide resources and evaluate outcomes for Māori (Moewaka Barnes 2009), evoking the more vague principles of partnership, participation and protection.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, policy and evaluation have also been subject to international influences, particularly economic considerations and market forces. Political agendas strongly influence decisions and policy-making bodies and related systems are rarely scrutinised in relation to their overall approach to Māori, including the ways in which policies interact, and may even be at odds in what they aim to achieve. It is more common to focus on the implementation of policy through individual program evaluations. As well as changing political climates and government agendas (Durie 1995), evaluation has also had to grapple with addressing Treaty of Waitangi imperatives and Māori suspicion of research (Smith 1996a). Assuming a direct and consistent link between evaluation findings and policy would, therefore, be naive. However, significant context specific contributions have emerged, with varying degrees of influence.

Considerable scrutiny of Māori providers, through evaluation, provided an opportunity for the development of 'by Māori, for Māori' evaluation, with Kaupapa Māori theories and praxis providing a significant space to work from. These approaches have had significant impacts in relation to program development and implementation and evaluation practice, particularly at the level of program evaluation. This paper provides an overview of policy and evaluation shifts and developments, including Māori evaluation approaches, followed by a discussion of the relationship between evaluation and policy.

10.2   Overview of policy and evaluation

Establishing Crown governance

As part of establishing governance, the Crown passed the English Acts Act in New Zealand in 1854. This early example of public policy made all English laws applicable in New Zealand (Durie 1994). Other early strategies and policies in

relation to British governance and new settlers revolved around land acquisition and paternalistic protection (Te Ara 2012). The period from the 1860s to 1920s was one of conflict and compromise, with forced land sales policies leading to war between the Crown and Māori in parts of the North Island (Belich 1988; Te Ara 2012; Walker 2004). Following this, various governance and policy arrangements grappled with relationships between Māori and the Crown, conducted under the shadow of an on and off again assimilationist policy and a move towards providing for Māori within the government system (Te Ara 2012). Depression, war and urbanisation shaped the period from 1930 to 1960, with Māori Affairs Department policy being to 'ease the path of Māori into urban life' (Te Ara 2012, p. 4).

Māori renaissance and development

The period from the 1970s to the end of the century has been coined the 'Māori renaissance', shaped by growing calls for restitution and agency/tino rangatiratanga (Walker 1990). Māori–Crown relationships shifted somewhat from needs based towards rights based, influenced by national and international Indigenous activism (Lightfoot 2010). In the 1970s families 'occupied a high priority in policy setting' (Blaiklock et al. 2002, p. 10). Key to this period was the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal through the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, giving the tribunal the right to consider Māori claims of Treaty breaches through government actions and to make recommendations. In 1983 the tribunal recommended that an outfall planned to discharge sewage and waste near a traditional fishing ground should not proceed as it breached the Treaty. Following meetings with iwi (tribal) representatives and after initially announcing that the recommendations would be ignored, the recommendations were accepted:

> This was the first time the Government had changed policy in response to a Tribunal recommendation. (Hague 1989, p. 16)

During the 'Decade of Māori Development' from 1984–1994 (Durie 1995), budgetary imperatives of economic policy drove social policy (Workman 1995). When Labour was elected in 1984 they followed Treasury advice for substantial reform (Blaiklock et al. 2002) and:

> … reshaped the public sector in accordance with the demands of managerialism, public choice and agency theories … (resulting in a) … new managerial public sector environment ... (Gauld 2003, pp. 203–4)

The Treaty of Waitangi Amendment Act followed in 1985, which:

> … extended the jurisdiction of the Tribunal retrospectively to include consideration of unlawful confiscation of Māori land and resources from as far back as 1840, the year of the Treaty's signing. The significance of this Act in the New Zealand political

environment cannot be underestimated. It was passed against the background of over one hundred years of complete neglect on the part of the government for the rights guaranteed to Māori under the Treaty. Furthermore, the decision to allow the Tribunal to review all acts of the Crown from as far back as 1840 effectively opened up the whole of New Zealand's history to scrutiny. This invited a multitude of claims by Māori, starting a legal and constitutional revolution that has continued until today. (Catalinac 2004, p. 6)

Social and economic policy shifted away from families, paralleling a decline in the proportion of children in the total population (Blaiklock et al. 2002). Liberalisation of the economy was rapid and state-owned enterprises became privatised (Blaiklock *et al*. 2002). The 1990 incoming National Government continued with the market-oriented agenda, applying it to social policy (Gauld 2003), and framing social assistance as meeting basic needs (Blaiklock et al. 2002). The 1990s was a time of ongoing reform of various social and economic sectors (Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare 2000). The Royal Commission on Social Policy provided something of a counterpoint and critique, with Barnes and Harris (2011, p. 5) arguing that it 'broadened the issue of what could be considered as social policy'. However, Easton criticised the reports for their sparse coverage of poverty (Easton, cited in Barnes and Harris 2011). Despite the Treaty of Waitangi, tino rangatiratanga, iwi development, economic self-reliance, social equity and cultural advancement being identified as central to the philosophy of the Decade of Māori Development (Durie 1995), the Royal Commission on Social Policy reported in 1988 that the Treaty did:

> … not have a secure place in New Zealand's Statues and Constitutional practices. Inequalities between Māori and non-Māori in work, education, income levels, home ownership and health reflect the lack of regard for the treaty in the development of social policies ... (Royal Commission on Social Policy, cited in Workman 1995, p. 5)

The deregulation and devolution approaches of 1984–94 saw restructured ministries having a greater focus on policy advice (Durie 1995), with the separation of policy from operations across the public sector (James 1997). Prior to the late 1980s, advisory roles within the state in relation to Māori or the Treaty has been negligible (James 1997). In 1989, two interim bodies had replaced the Department of Māori Affairs. Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK) took over from these bodies in 1992 'to provide policy advice that promotes Māori economic development, and to liaise with and monitor the performance of government departments and agencies to ensure the adequacy of services provided to Māori' (National Party 2008, p. 1).

However, the State Services Commission (1999, p. 2) noted that:

> … very few departments actually monitor, review or evaluate the extent to which the policy outputs they produce contribute to government strategic priorities.

The growth of Māori providers and evaluation

Workman (1995, p. 7) observed that 'To a large extent, Māori policy has been relegated to addressing social disparity and disadvantage'. There was, however, an impetus for Māori solutions and a growing understanding and acceptance that a one size fits all approach was not likely to be effective for Māori (Gauld 2004). The 1993 health reforms in particular increased competition with a funder-purchaser-provider split, but they also presented an opportunity for Māori providers and approaches (James 1997; Kerr and Moewaka Barnes 2012). The stated aim of these changes was to more effectively target resources and improve Māori health (Te Puni Kōkiri 1999b). The 1996 election of a National-led coalition (first election under the mixed-member proportional (MMP) system) saw the market-led delivery of social services (Blaiklock *et al*. 2002). Many Māori providers took up opportunities to gain funding to deliver programs and services for Māori. The number of Māori providers contracted to deliver health services was particularly notable, with an increase from under 20 in 1993 to over 220 in 1997 (Te Puni Kōkiri 1999b); many Māori providers embedded these services within wider social service provision. Māori service providers and evaluators were able to conduct successful projects, working collaboratively not only with Māori but also with a broad range of stakeholders (e.g. Cram 1997; Moewaka Barnes 2000). Although many positive outcomes were reported in relation to service delivery at the community level, having no policy function this fell short of the philosophy of tino rangatiratanga (Durie 1995). Further critiques of the state were that it took a sectoral rather than holistic and integrated approach and that their intentions were suspect:

> Māori suspected that they were implicitly being cast as agents of the Crown and that the disastrous effects of economic and state restructuring in terms of Māori unemployment were being masked by a semblance of economic recovery that simply did not extend to Māori households. Was Māori development intended to create a facade of positive recovery in the face of increasing disparities in unemployment, incomes and whanau (family) stress? Often it seemed so. (Durie 1995, p. 5)

The deregulatory state approach and economic reforms apparent at the time led to questions about Crown–Māori relationships; specifically, whether the devolved governance groups were Treaty partners and how Māori were to interact with, and participate in, these new reforms (Durie 1995). Another concern at the time related to the effects of urbanisation on Māori, particularly raising the notion of Māori alienated from iwi structures (Durie 1995) and from Māori culture in general. This discussion continues to the present day, with questions of 'authenticity', cultural connectedness and representation (Borell 2005; Moewaka Barnes 2008, 2010). The establishment of Māori Urban Authorities, initially in West Auckland (1984), then South Auckland (1985), provided a voice and represented the interests of urban Māori (Keiha and Moon 2008). In the 1990s these issues had risen to broad public

consciousness in relation to Treaty settlements; how, for example, fisheries claims could be negotiated and settled on behalf of all Māori (Durie 1995) and challenges about the nature of iwi and the status of urban authorities (Keiha and Moon 2008).

As the reform process slowed in the mid-1990s (Blaiklock et al. 2002) the idea that outputs were the responsibility of departments with ministers responsible for outcomes, led to a lack of attention to the impacts of policy on society (State Services Commission 1999). There was bureaucratic and political reticence about increasing the focus on outcomes, with concerns that this could detract from performance management systems (State Services Commission 1999). The State Services Commission (1999) argued that policy agencies were responsible for policy advice and that conducting policy reviews and linking outputs and outcomes was part of their quality performance criteria. Evaluation was also described as providing an important way of linking outputs to outcomes (State Services Commission 1999).

As contracted service provision increased, so too did public sector interest in evaluation; this interest continued into the next century (Duignan 2002). Although social science was given little credibility, evaluation increasingly developed as a separate field of social research with a focus on government funded programs (Duignan 1997; Kerr and Moewaka Barnes 2012; Lunt 2003). Saville-Smith describes the growth of evaluation demand, arising from a need for credible evidence of effectiveness, as 'an activity critical to transparent, accountable, effective and responsive government' (Saville-Smith 2003, p. 17). However, with a strong focus on evaluating contracted services, it could be argued that it was also about accountability to the state through the evaluation of providers, with Māori providers being subject to considerable evaluation. While there were positives, there was a risk of disillusionment if evaluation capacity was not embedded across the social policy sector (Duignan 2002). As well as gaps in capability within the public service, a lack of competent evaluators was noted (State Services Commission 1999).

Some Māori evaluation capacity was developed within the state sector and a small number of Māori evaluation contractors worked directly with ministries. Considerable growth occurred through research groups within many of the major tertiary institutes that were able to grow Māori capacity through evaluation contracts; both non-Māori and Māori led, as well as partnership arrangements. Māori service delivery and evaluation practice drew on a range of Māori concepts and some were specific to particular iwi. Initially introduced in education in the 1990s, Kaupapa Māori theory became widely drawn on. Kaupapa Māori evaluation involved an analysis of cultural, political and social contexts and was predicated on by Māori, for Māori approaches (Smith 1996b). In the mid- to late-1990s, issues of

non-Māori capacity and capability had become increasingly discussed. In particular, non-Māori competencies in working with Māori were emerging as an area in need of development.

Questions of capacity and competency

The Labour coalition led government elected in 1999 put an 'emphasis in public policy on the importance of social development, reducing inequalities and cross-sectoral policy-making' (Gauld et al. 2006, p. 284) and a whole-of-government approach (Humpage 2005). Their campaign platform, 'Closing the Gaps' between Māori and non-Māori (Te Ara 2012) was followed by a strategy of capacity building as part of general social policy (Humpage 2005). Māori organisations were funded and supported to assess and address capacity, including their strategies, systems and structures (Humpage 2005).

Capacity and capability building continued to occur in the evaluation sector. The Social Policy Evaluation and Research (SPEaR) Committee was established by government in 2001, with one role being to promote best practice across government (SPEaR 2008). A number of organisations began to take on issues around non-Māori research and evaluation practice; some were considered inappropriate and even damaging. This led to debates around whether non-Māori should conduct evaluations of Māori programs. Cram et al. (no date, p. 5) describe some of the concerns:

> Apart from problems created by research questions structured in terms foreign to the community it is the point at which the researcher is representing the community in their results that is problematic. Such representation is created within the researcher's culture and this (alternative construction) is likely to be given priority over the community's construction.

Various bodies developed guidelines to limit damage, increase participation and guide research and evaluation processes in ways more appropriate for Māori (for example, Health Research Council 1998; Ministry of Social Development 2004; Te Puni Kōkiri 1999a). As well as benefitting agencies and improving non-Māori practice, suggested benefits for Māori included more equitable arrangements and increased usefulness of research and evaluation to Māori (Health Research Council 2006; Moewaka Barnes 2003).

From rights to needs

After Closing the Gaps came under attack by Brash (2004), the then leader of the National Party, as 'race-based' rather than needs based (Te Ara 2012), it was

subject to a 'political backlash' (Humpage 2005, p. 53), which saw Māori framed predominantly as a people with needs, rather than rights (O'Sullivan 2008). In a climate of considerable media coverage, opinion polls showing increased National Party popularity and increasing criticism of Māori 'special privileges', the government backtracked on its policy and sought out largely Māori, but also other (for example, Pacific Islander) 'race-based privilege' (Moewaka Barnes, McCreanor and Huakau 2008). Despite a previous emphasis on evidence-based social policy (St John and Dale 2012), the government provided little defence of their strategies, but took up what appeared to be a popular cause and largely agreed with Brash (Moewaka Barnes, McCreanor and Huakau 2008). Ignoring evidence that a one size fits all approach had frequently failed Māori, cultural imperatives as well as rights were put aside in the invalid assumption that needs could be uniformly addressed across cultures (O'Sullivan 2008). From 2004, needs became a dominating discourse and TPK adopted a Māori Potential approach (Te Ara 2012).

Changes to Closing the Gaps led to confusion over the capacity-building strategy. Although TPK's role was to monitor the effectiveness of Closing the Gaps, it was not clear who had been in charge and whether capacity building was dropped along with Closing the Gaps. TPK was not commissioned to develop an evaluation framework for capacity building until 2002; however, most investment was in relatively small-scale local activities and services (Humpage 2005). Humpage (2005) suggests the confusion in policy and responsibility for policy was due to the 'on the run' nature of the development of capacity building.

Focus on practice

Within this challenging environment, Māori providers continued to deliver programs and, despite around two decades of considerable focus, concerns continued about best practice within non-Māori and mainstream services. A case study evaluation of a 2007 Kaupapa Māori Participatory Action Research project found that:

> … service providers, policy makers, planners, funders and politicians were more in control of what happened in many programmes delivered to Māori, than Māori were. Further, that despite their best efforts, many Pākehā working to provide services to Māori had little idea of how to do that appropriately. It was encouraging to see that during the action research process, some underwent painful revelations of their own culturally determined blind spots, assumptions and prejudices and then were able to move past these to learn how to work more effectively with Māori. (Kerr-Brown 2011, pp. 18–19)

The participatory processes of this and other collaborative evaluations contributed to and supported initiatives at local and community levels (Kerr et al. 2010).

However, these approaches require time. A growing emphasis on quick turnaround from contract start to reporting had implications, not only for methods but also for who was prepared and able to work in this way (Nunns 2009). Short-term projects also present challenges in relation to the Kaupapa Māori approaches described below and to many of the principles and practices outlined in various best practice guidelines.

In 2008, SPEaR developed guidelines primarily for government agency officials, but with relevance to social policy research and evaluation more broadly. Building on principles of respect, integrity, responsiveness, competency and reciprocity the guidelines were located within a partnership approach. This was in order to reflect the government context whereby the majority culture determines the topic, but the methods and processes need to suit a range of interests (SPEaR 2008).

Commonly, best practice and ethics are developed within dominant paradigms and adapted for appropriateness and responsiveness to Māori and other ethnicities or cultural groups. Culture is rarely examined except when addressing issues of working with 'other' cultures; the underlying assumption being that these guides are non-cultural and universal (Moewaka Barnes et al. 2009). This led to a suggestion that, in order to pursue Māori advancement, non-Māori development needed to occur; one strategy being that researchers and evaluators explicitly examine and understand their own culture, world views and practices before embarking on understanding or working with other cultures (Moewaka Barnes 2008). Māori had been doing this for over 160 years.

It is notable therefore that the SPEaR guidelines used principles developed at the Best Practice Māori Guidelines Hui (SPEaR Bulletin 2007) and applied them more generically. The result was 'complex and demanding material' (Roorda and Peace 2009, p. 87) particularly in relation to working with Māori and Pacific peoples. In relation to the guidelines, Roorda and Peace (2009) argue that evaluators often fall short of best practice: Māori participation is limited by predetermined evaluation parameters; resources may be inadequate to meet recommended Māori participation and engagement levels; and evaluators may not carry out some of the recommended activities or be held to account for these shortcomings.

Recent developments

In the current climate, Gluckman (2011, p. 15) suggests that there may be risks when contracts are overly ambitious for the funding offered 'rather than defining the project by its objectives and then costing for quality'. He argues this might result in cheaper 'consultancy' research or research that is unable to inform policy

options because it does not reduce uncertainty. As well as quick turnaround short-term projects (Nunns 2009), from observing the field (particularly GETS: Government Electronic Tenders Service) there is an apparent increase in evaluations with narrow or even predetermined parameters with less iwi and Māori community engagement required. An observed tendency to describe the required research or evaluation through micro-level questions rather than by objectives reinforces Gluckman's concerns.

Whanau Ora (broadly referring to family wellbeing) provides some departure from this, having gained political support as part of the Māori Party's coalition deal with National. The Whanau Ora Taskforce was established (2009–2010) signalling an intended shift of health and welfare policies and programs for Māori away from individuals towards whanau (Kiro, von Randow and Sporle 2010). Whanau Ora is intended, in part, to provide improved support to Māori whanau in need (Whanau Ora Taskforce 2009), particularly through phase 1, a targeted strategy funding the integration of service delivery to whanau (Tahana and Collins 2012a). Multiple provider collectives are currently funded through TPK, with a significant action research component running alongside delivery. The second phase focuses on empowerment. The future of the scheme will 'hang on its results' (Davison 2012, p. 1); however, the attacks have already begun (Tahana and Collins 2012b; Winston Peters 2012).

10.3   Evaluation approaches and Māori

Māori models, theories and methodologies

Māori evaluation developed in parallel with Māori models of wellbeing. Early influential models include *Te Wheke* (Pere 1988), which conceptualises the tentacles of the octopus as dimensions of wellbeing and the body as whanau unity. The intertwining of the tentacles reflects the interconnectedness of each dimension. *Nga Pou Mana* describes four supports as the foundation for social policies and wellbeing: Family; cultural heritage; physical environment; and turangawaewae (Royal Commission on Social Policy, 1989, cited in Durie 1994). *Te Whare Tapa Wha* (Durie 1994) conceptualises wellbeing as the four walls of a whare (house): Taha wairua, taha tinana, taha hinengaro and taha whanau (spirit, body, mind and family).

There are multiple descriptions and definitions of Māori evaluation theories, approaches and methods. They include culturally responsible evaluation, culturally appropriate evaluation, culturally sensitive evaluation, Māori-relevant evaluation,

Māori-focused evaluation, Māori centred evaluation, Kaupapa Māori theory, Māori evaluation tools, Māori frameworks, Māori paradigms, and Indigenous protocols for evaluation.

In a climate of increasing research and evaluation involving Māori and debates around practice and philosophy, Kaupapa Māori was drawn on by a range of theorists and practitioners; other international indigenous evaluation philosophies and practices also contributed to shared learnings (Kawakami et al. 2007). Cram et al. (no date) and Cram (2009) outline aspects of Kaupapa Māori methodology and tikanga, including cultural values and researcher guidelines, covering: A respect for people; he kanohi kitea (importance of meeting with people face to face); titiro, whakarongo…korero (look and listen to develop understanding from which to speak); manaaki ki te tangata (collaboration and reciprocity); kia tupato (be politically astute and culturally safe); kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata (don't trample the mana of the people); and kia ngakau mahaki (be humble in your approach). Below are some points likely to characterise Kaupapa Māori evaluation and Māori evaluation more broadly:

- It is controlled and owned by Māori.

- It is conducted for the benefit of Māori (although it may benefit others).

- It is carried out within a Māori world view, which is likely to question the dominant culture and norms.

- It aims to make a positive difference for Māori (Moewaka Barnes 2000; Smith 1999).

Evaluation increasingly became something Māori collaborated in rather than had done to them; it became a shared journey, a hikoi (Moewaka Barnes 2009). Relationships and processes are a key part of evaluation in general and are often discussed in relation to Māori evaluation. Whakapapa (linkages, including genealogical links), identity, accountabilities, trust, reciprocity, participation, power-sharing arrangements and the need for flexibility and reflection are common themes. Either in parallel with, or explicitly drawing on, developments in Kaupapa Māori theory and practice, the effective application of a range of frameworks and concepts contributed to Māori engagement, acceptance and use of evaluation. Some of these are described below.

Whakapapa is a fundamental aspect of a Māori world view (Rangihau, cited in Smith 1996a) and a way of thinking, learning, storing and debating knowledge (Smith 1987, cited in Smith 1996a). This includes where researchers are placed through whanau, location and organisational affiliation (e.g. university) and what

position and accountabilities evaluators work within (Moewaka Barnes and Stanley 1999).

Whanau was used by Kathie Irwin as an embracing concept for her research study on first year Māori secondary teachers. This concept she described as 'aroha, co-operation, collective responsibility'; she wanted to work within these relationships (Irwin 1994). Smith (1996a) described whanau as providing a support structure that was significant 'as a way of organising and supervising research'.

Key to these approaches are ethics and ethical relationships; with *tikanga* being a Māori frame for exploring these relational processes. Ethics and power in evaluation are complex; they cannot be dealt with solely in terms of relatively straightforward questions common to many ethics committee forms and processes, but are inextricably linked to relationships (Moewaka Barnes et al. 2009).

Methods and Māori

Although Kaupapa Māori research and evaluation has characteristics based on Māori world views and aspirations (Smith 1996a), practitioners draw on a range of theories, methodologies and methods. Feminist critiques of research, grounded theory and critical theory are some of the more closely aligned paradigms. Utilisation focused, formative evaluation and community action provide useful approaches alongside Māori capacity building and development (Kerr and Moewaka Barnes 2012). Māori concerns about power relationships, ownership and the use of research and evaluation have also seen alignments with participatory action research (PAR), with variations of the term Kaupapa Māori Action Research used in a number of evaluations. However, in an attempt to define or describe Māori and other Indigenous approaches, the focus often falls on what is seen as specific and distinct from non-indigenous approaches.

> PASE (Policy Analysis and System Evaluation Department at the Kamehameha Schools and Kohala Centre) suggests that Hawaiian-focused evaluation could be defined as 'frameworks, measures, and procedures that most fairly represent the experiences of Hawaiian peoples and that yield information most useful to them.' The challenge would then become identifying what — concretely and specifically — is unique to the Hawaiian experience, history, and culture that would make good evaluation practice within the Hawaiian community distinct from good evaluation in any other community. (PASE 2003)

In some framings the imperative to be distinct, unique and 'authentic' situates quantitative methods as less Māori and less acceptable to Māori. This is, in part, because numerical traditions have become relegated and seen as aligned with positivistic western science practices (Moewaka Barnes 2006). In line with early

feminist theory, qualitative methods can be seen as giving voice to people and as resonating with descriptions of Māori culture as oral, holistic and relationship-based (Moewaka Barnes 2006). For example, kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) is sometimes described as appropriate in contrast to telephone or postal data collection methods, which may be seen as inappropriate for Māori generally. However, quantitative data may have a greater influence in some policy settings and, if the evaluation intention is to be influential across a range of settings, then methods and approaches need to suit the purpose for which they are being used. For this reason many argue that there is no standardised or defined set of methods or tools that make up Māori evaluation (Kerr-Brown 2011; Moewaka Barnes 2006; Moewaka Barnes et al. 2011).

Evaluation and monitoring: data and approaches

Quantitative approaches are widely used in policy monitoring approaches. The examination of many policies and reforms related to, for example, families, youth, poverty, unemployment and housing either explicitly or implicitly address impacts on Māori, with Māori over-represented in negative statistics and having a relatively youthful population (Blaiklock et al. 2002; Blakely, Tobias and Atkinson 2008; Moewaka Barnes et al. 2012). Disparities in health have been the focus of some monitoring and policy research and evaluation; for example, cohort studies examining inequalities in mortality during and after restructuring of the New Zealand economy (Blakely, Tobias and Atkinson 2008) found disparities in mortality increased between income groups (with Māori over-represented in lower income groups). However, drawing causal links with the reforms was difficult. Blaiklock et al. (2002) examined impacts on the wellbeing of children as a result of social and economic reforms since the mid-1980s, finding widening inequality between ethnic and income groups, with some advances made when the reform process slowed in the mid-1990s. They argue that the sweeping reforms were not systematically monitored by government.

Responsibility for monitoring and evaluation lies within departments, from agencies charged with across-department functions such as SPEaR (Social Policy Research and Evaluation Committee)and TPK (policy advice and monitoring in relation to Māori) and from external evaluation and monitoring, particularly contracted studies of outcomes and program effectiveness. Given that the social ministries; namely, 'Social Development, Building and Housing, Justice, Education, Health, Corrections and Te Puni Kōkiri, amongst others have a marked commonality and overlap in terms of both problems and solutions' (Gluckman 2011, p. 10), evaluation looking at the mix of policies and strategies across ministries could provide a more integrated approach to considering the relationship between policy

and outcomes. This, along with an examination of the ways policies are developed and transmitted, could contribute contextual and broader evidence to complement evaluations of program implementation, effectiveness and outcomes. Another suggestion is that, rather than focusing on the implementation of programs or interventions, more evaluation could examine both individual and collective contributions of initiatives to an overall policy or strategic priority (Wehipeihana and Davidson 2010; State Services Commission 1999).

In addition to providing only one part of the picture through focusing on individual interventions if evaluation only concerns itself with the specific objectives of those interventions, the ability to examine effectiveness in relation to overall strategic directions may be compromised. For example, if the Working For Families policy, which provides tax credits against paid employment is evaluated against limited criteria it might ignore larger questions and strategic intentions in relation to all children living in poverty (St John and Dale 2012).

Issues with data quality for Māori have been raised, including inadequate sample sizes and under-reporting by Māori ethnicity (Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare 2000). Te Puni Kōkiri (Parliamentary Library 2000, p. 1) found that 'variable quality and ad-hoc reporting of the relevant statistics in the past' meant that it would be difficult to track some trends. Some steps have been taken to improve data collection and analysis and presentation. Towards the end of the 1990s and in the early 2000s there were a number of official reports, including reports on Māori, that went 'some way towards addressing the need for statistically disaggregated information' (Blaiklock et al. 2002, pp. 6–7). Later in the decade a series of discussion papers, funded by the Ministry of Health, reviewed the quality of ethnicity data and the impacts on measuring health disparities. Changes to official ethnicity data policies and practices and developments in ethnicity definitions were discussed; the census ethnicity question changed several times and there were issues around the introduction of a 'New Zealander' code following the 2006 Census (Cormack and Harris 2009).

Usefulness of evaluation

A number of circumstances impact on the usefulness of evaluation and its ability to provide evidence of effectiveness. Programs may not always be at a point where evaluation is useful, particularly in relation to outcome/impact requirements (Nunns 2009), and the methods required to provide the type of evaluation evidence preferred by stakeholders may not be feasible (Nunns 2009). Evaluations may not produce definitive answers and causality is difficult to establish in complex and dynamic social settings. However, limitations and difficulties should not stop

evaluation from being attempted (State Services Commission 1999). Although limitations need to be acknowledged, reasonable arguments of effectiveness may provide the information needed on which to base decisions (State Services Commission 1999). Insufficient quality or certainty should not stop decisions from being made, nor should decisions be made in the face of evidence (Gluckman 2011).

Evaluation planned for at the outset can force explicit statements about the outcomes ministers wish to achieve (State Services Commission 1999). Gluckman (2011) echoes this with a call for more consideration to be given to impacts and effectiveness when designing policies and programs. Gluckman (2011, p. 9) argues that chief executives need to identify the type of information required and 'have systems in place to ensure unbiased advice in a "co-production" model'. It could be argued, however, that a lack of bias is difficult, if not impossible, and that it may be more important to have a range of sources of evidence and to understand the biases, limitations and strengths of each. Funder and practitioner world views and agendas influence all stages of evaluation, from the information sought, to methods, processes, analysis and interpretation (Moewaka Barnes 2003). The way in which practitioners frame findings affects the findings' interpretation and acceptability to different audiences. A Treaty of Waitangi framing, for example, monitors disparities as a way of assessing Crown performance in relation to equitable outcomes for Māori and non-Māori and as signatories to various international conventions (Cormack and Harris 2009, p. 7).

Evaluation criteria and evidence

Durie (2006) argues that measures also need to reflect Māori world views, acknowledging that this presents challenges:

> ... the evaluation of Māori health projects using Māori criteria will present problems to most health bodies and researchers who lack adequate understanding of whenua, whanaungatanga and mauri. It will fall to Māori authorities to determine whether a given project has relevance to Māori people. How does it relate to the land? Does it strengthen whanaungatanga? Will it nurture the mauri? There are many factors that can be used to gauge the effectiveness and value of a community health project. If the project purports to be relevant to Māori people, then Māori criteria must be used. (Durie 1985)

However, there are difficulties in determining what Māori criteria are, who defines them and how they relate practically to the program that is the focus of the evaluation and to state policies and agendas. It may be that the funder is not interested or not seen as interested in less tangible aspects of a project or in 'evidence' that is outside their knowledge system. Ministries may also be reporting

to ministers with different agendas and who want brief, succinct evidence of effectiveness with a perceived degree of certainty rather than complexity. However, if no attempt is made to present these aspects then the richness of what has happened will be invisible (Moewaka Barnes 2000). The funders and others will not have the opportunity to consider these factors or to see them as valid approaches and Māori will not have the opportunity to build evidence.

Evaluation enables strategies to be tested in a planned way and can, over time, build new knowledge about what may or may not work and under what conditions. The issue of what constitutes evidence is complex: different groups and individuals operate within different world views and with differing values, needs and agendas all contributing to what constitutes evidence. Rather than trying to describe programs in terms that are accepted and largely legitimated in non-Māori research, evaluations within a Māori world view might, for example, show how a program led to strengthening marae (gathering places based on Māori infrastructures and protocols) and iwi structures and why this is evidence of effectiveness (Moewaka Barnes et al. 1998). Usually, it is necessary to demonstrate effectiveness across a range of criteria or to show how Māori world views might link to other more accepted forms of evidence. In the above example this can be done by linking marae and iwi structures to notions of capacity building and community development. The difficulty here is about what gets lost in translation; evidence in non-Māori terms does not encompass the full depth and understanding of Māori evidence when it is taken out of a Māori world view and context.

In the research and evaluation field published literature holds a higher level of legitimacy than non-peer reviewed outputs. Although an important quality control mechanism (Gluckman 2011), this may put Māori and other Indigenous groups at a disadvantage in terms of contributing to building and sharing evidence.

> Māori were busy doing evaluation and had little time or inclination to write about what we were doing, for an academic audience — and writing for that audience is what creates legitimacy in the academy. (Kerr-Brown 2011, p. 16)

An explicit aim of a number of evaluations is to build 'the evidence base and academic credibility of research and evaluation approaches that fully involve Māori communities in evaluating service provision and generating ideas for improvement' (Kerr-Brown 2011, p. 81). This may involve activities outside refereed journal publications, including meetings with providers, funders, communities and other stakeholders as well as written reports and presentations for various audiences. However, peer-reviewed papers reach further audiences, offer opportunities for international dialogue and are a key way of providing legitimacy for evaluation approaches and findings. They are also one avenue for influencing policy decisions; however, influencing policy through evidence is not a straightforward matter.

10.4 Influencing policy

The rapid rate of policy change can leave policy analysts with limited time to access evidence and for evaluators to contribute to policy and the implementation of policy (Nunns 2009). Gauld (2003) describes the parliamentary system in New Zealand as facilitating 'fast law'. Combined with an adversarial, three-year electoral cycle, this 'means policy is often driven by party ideology rather than evidence or demonstrated need' (Gauld 2003, p. 202). In addition, mismatches between electoral and budgetary cycles may impact on the ability to secure program funding (Nunns 2009).

Evaluation findings can be overshadowed by more immediate demands (State Services Commission 1999). Catalinac (2004, p. 6) suggests that the 'prominence of an item on the agenda' is influenced by the government's political climate and public receptivity. Kingdon (cited in Catalinac 2004) found that academic specialists are more hidden than visible and, as such, tend to have a role in the process of generating alternatives and narrowing down options, rather than in setting government agendas.

Single loop models portraying relationships between policy and evaluation as cyclical, fail to grapple with the complex and multiple ways that evaluation can interact with policy (Gluckman 2011) and with program design and delivery (McKegg, cited in Nunns 2009). Although a decisionist model acknowledges that science can assist with implementation processes, the ability to inform a range of policy options is largely ignored (Gluckman 2011). The technocratic model is a more linear approach, with evidence determining policy goals; strategies are then devised based on public acceptability. Both rely on trust in science, the belief that it produces facts and the separation of advice and policy judgement. Gluckman (2011) argues that there has been an increase in working more iteratively — the 'co-production' model — with a move to more negotiated relationships between policy makers, advisors and society. However, the history of policy making, including recent history, suggests that all three models and variations operate at different times and in different ways; for example, it could be argued that the turnaround on Closing the Gaps was about political ideology and perceptions of public acceptability rather than scientific advice. At other times political ideology may drive policy, sometimes finding itself stalled by public opposition.

Although the Treaty of Waitangi and related Māori rights are central to public policy, considerable shifts occur with changing national and international climates. Māori–Crown relationships are subject to political will (Maaka and Fleras, cited in O'Sullivan 2008), perceptions of international scrutiny and Indigenous people's movements, including international learnings and linkages (Lightfoot 2010).

Humpage (2005, p. 59) describes 'selective incorporation of indigenous thinking into policy' and a failure to devolve decision making power to enable Māori to make decisions about Māori communities.

Some suggest that a better understanding of policy processes might enable researchers to be more effective (Carroll, Blewden and Witten cited in Moewaka Barnes et al. 2011) and provide more policy relevant research (Social Sciences Reference Group 2005). However, evaluation is only one of many potential influences on policy formation, and funders, communities and providers can have different ideas of what they want from evaluation. Māori providers may want to focus on what is needed to run the best possible program, while funders may want to know if they received value for money and if they are purchasing the best strategies. Māori may also want to influence agendas rather than provide information that meets identified needs in relation to others' agendas (Moewaka Barnes et al. 2011). If the evaluators cannot negotiate these expectations at the outset, the evaluation runs the risk of not meeting the funder's requirements or the findings being rejected by the program provider. It is therefore important to understand and address different agendas and information needs, while still maintaining the feasibility and credibility of the evaluation.

Social impact evaluations can be politically embarrassing (State Services Commission 1999); the findings may not be politically palatable or may point to a lack of success. For a range of reasons, not all programs demonstrate effectiveness, from initial assumptions the program is based on, to resourcing, design, implementation and what happens when the program competes with complex and entrenched issues. As Gluckman (2011) argues in relation to research about society and human behaviour, evaluation in complex contexts rarely produces absolute answers. It can, however 'elucidate interactions and reduce uncertainties' (Gluckman 2011, p. 7). Evaluators need to respond to these complexities, in terms of evaluation design, processes and findings and in relationships and communication with stakeholders. For Māori programs, the scrutiny related to being Māori means that these issues can require delicate navigation.

An emphasis on outcomes, rather than process, can hinder collaborative relationships between government and Māori (Humpage 2005, p. 61). There is also considerable reliance on reporting at the end of a contract rather than on integrating ongoing advice into policy to inform future directions. This means that opportunities to apply evidence learned from one context or multiple contexts over the years are limited. Resourcing needed to do this is not always considered:

> There is increasing managerial resistance to informal arrangements that rely on the goodwill of scientists to meet the costs of providing advice out of local funding. (Gluckman 2011, p. 12)

For Māori evaluators, strategies to inform policies at the state level do not necessarily involve direct relationships with state agencies. Providers may have their own budget and decide how the information will be used. Tensions about representing evaluation information in forms other than those agreed at the outset might also arise; for Māori this is often tied up with issues of ownership, negative experiences and the suspicions of research and state agendas described earlier. The connections may be through working with Māori organisations that have decision-making roles and responsibilities locally as well as the ability to influence agendas at a national level (Moewaka Barnes et al. 2011). Working in collaboration with Māori providers, communities and other stakeholders can impact on the acceptability and promotion of particular policies and strategies and contribute to the capability and drive of these groups to input into policies at local and national levels.

Describing state points of contact as unclear, a lack of consistency and difficulties in identifying and accessing the breadth of research available, Gluckman (2011) suggests that people charged with knowledge translation roles may be required in departments. He points to the United Kingdom as an example of 'the most advanced use of scientific advice … Here in every department of State other than the Treasury there is now a Departmental Science Advisor … very senior, many being Fellows of the Royal Society' (Gluckman 2011, pp. 13–14). One role of the Chief Science Advisor in the United Kingdom is to encourage a semi-formal science and engineering community within government. Gluckman (2011, p. 12) further argues that 'a structured community of science advisors … would create a clear point of contact' for interactions between agencies and externally. However, there may be both benefits and drawbacks to such approaches. Knowledge transfer can assist in uptake of evidence, but it can also involve the limitation of knowledge and be subject to issues of knowledge avoidance, albeit that, as Gluckman (2011, p. 5) argues:

> Researchers, like all others, have their own beliefs and values; however, science has processes to minimise the ability of these human factors to bias the conclusions reached.

For Māori, a more structured system may mean a more closed system with less space to develop and advance diverse scientific paradigms — unless issues of diverse contexts, power and hierarchies of knowledge are explicitly addressed.

10.5 Discussion

International contexts have strongly shaped Aotearoa New Zealand policy and evaluation environments; however, internal contexts such as the Treaty of Waitangi

and the development of partnership, Kaupapa Māori and related approaches have contributed local challenges and solutions. Local developments have, in turn, contributed internationally. In relation to the role of evaluation in policy development and implementation, the Treaty provides an overarching framework of rights and a number of associated principles in relation to practice. However, these operate within rapidly changing political and social environments, where competing voices, interests and agendas lead to complex relationships between policy and evaluation. A more complex understanding of the relationship between evaluation and policy is suggested, in line with the development of less linear and more iterative processes.

Rather than dealing only with ministries and state policy makers, Māori evaluators also work with Māori organisations and others with local decision-making roles. Working with Māori communities and providers can have direct benefits in terms of increased service effectiveness, as well as contributing to state agendas and to an important ingredient in policy development and implementation — public acceptability.

Overlaps in both the problems and solutions encountered by social ministries along with a lack of the systematic integration of knowledge into policy development have led to ideas for improving knowledge uptake at the state level. These include increased knowledge translation roles within ministries and more structured and systematic arrangements across sectors. However, power imbalances and assumed cultural norms mean that Māori approaches and knowledge systems may not be equally heard or validated. Issues include the development and constitution of evidence, the interpretation of information and the biases and selectivity that may occur when translating knowledge from one paradigm to another.

Monitoring and evaluation at the macro level in particular has met with challenges in relation to the consistency and quality of data. An ongoing commitment to consistent quality data and sufficient sample sizes for Māori is needed. However, this should not privilege one methodology or method over another. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are needed, depending on the context and feasibility of approaches. As well as the ability to access data from routinely available datasets, we need to validate the development of criteria using Māori world views and ensure that interpretation of data also provides for Māori voices and rights, using the Treaty of Waitangi as an overarching framework.

The Aotearoa New Zealand evaluation sector has demonstrated a considerable interest in best practice, both in the development of methods and methodologies and in research practice in relation to Māori. Kaupapa Māori in particular has been widely drawn on and provides a space for Māori practitioners to theorise, debate

and practice Māori evaluation approaches. These developments have contributed to the ongoing successes of Māori organisations in the development and delivery of services and interventions. However, a current climate of quick turnaround, short-term projects with narrow parameters carries potential threats to the capacity and capability of the sector, as well as to the quality and depth of evaluation.

Māori initiatives work within broader determinants and in the context of multiple policies and strategies. The focus on what we do well — program evaluation at the level of implementation — has not been met with equal development in evaluating the mix of initiatives that contribute to overall strategic goals, or in evaluating overall policies in relation to Māori; particularly where policies may overlap or even compete with each other. Reliance on program monitoring and evaluation provides only one part of the picture. Without scrutiny of the processes of policy development and transmission through governance systems the risk is that responsibility and blame for apparent failure or lack of success will be placed on Māori providers and participants and we will be no closer to better Indigenous policies.

References

Barnes, J. and Harris, P. 2011, 'Still kicking? The Royal Commission on Social Policy, 20 years on', *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand,* vol. 37, pp. 1–13.

Belich, J. 1988, *The New Zealand Wars*, Penguin, Auckland.

Blaiklock, A., Kiro, C., Belgrave, M., Low, W., Davenport, E. and Hassall, I. 2002, *When the Invisible Hand Rocks the Cradle: New Zealand Children in a Time of Change*, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence.

Blakely, T., Tobias, M. and Atkinson, J. 2008, 'Inequalities in mortality during and after restructuring of the New Zealand economy: repeated cohort studies', *British Medical Journal*, vol. 336, pp. 371–5.

Borell, B. 2005, Living in the city ain't so bad: cultural diversity of South Auckland Rangatahi, thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of a Masters of Philosophy in Psychology, Massey University, Auckland.

Brash, D. 2004, 'Nationhood', address by Don Brash, Leader of the National Party to the Orewa Rotary Club, 27 January , http://www.national.org.nz/files/orewarotaryclub_27jan.pdf (accessed 15 October 2012).

Catalinac, A. 2004, 'The establishment and subsequent expansion of the Waitangi Tribunal: the politics of agenda setting', *Political Science,* vol. 56, pp. 5–22.

Cormack, D. and Harris, R. 2009, *Issues in monitoring Māori health and ethnic disparities: an update*, Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare, Wellington.

Cram, F. 1997, 'Developing partnerships in research: Pakeha researchers and Māori research', *Sites,* vol. 35, pp. 44–63.

—— 2009, 'Maintaining indigenous voices', *The Handbook of Social Research Ethics*, edited by Mertens D. and Ginsberg P., Sage (Los Angeles) pp. 308–22.

—— McCreanor, T., Smith, L., Nairn, R. and Johnstone W, no date, *Māori-Pakeha teamwork in Māori health research*, University of Auckland, Auckland.

Davison, I. 2012, 'Families Commission in for major shake up', *New Zealand Herald*, 29 May.

Duignan, P. 1997, 'Evaluating health promotion: the strategic evaluation framework', doctoral thesis, University of Waikato, New Zealand.

—— 2002, 'Building social policy evaluation capacity', *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand,* vol. 19, pp. 179–94.

Durie, M. 1985, 'The evaluation of Māori health initiatives', paper read at ANZSERCH Conference — Health Politics and Change, Auckland.

—— 1994, *Whaiora: Māori Health Development*, Oxford University Press, Auckland.

—— 1995, *Principles for the Development of Māori Policy*, Department of Māori Studies, Massey University, Wellington.

—— 2006, 'Measuring Māori wellbeing', *Measuring wellbeing of communities, The Genuine Progress Index, Massey University, Takapuwahia Marae*, Porirua, 19 May.

Gauld, R. 2003, 'One country, four systems: comparing changing health policies in New Zealand', *International Political Science Review,* vol. 24, pp. 199–218.

—— 2004, 'One step forward, one step back? Restructuring, evolving policy, and information management and technology in the New Zealand health sector', *Government Information Quarterly,* vol. 21, pp. 125–42.

——, Bloomfield, A., Kiro, C., Lavis, J. and Ross S. 2006, 'Conceptions and uses of public health ideas by New Zealand government policymakers: report on a five-agency survey', *Public Health,* vol. 120, pp. 283–9.

Gluckman, P. 2011, *Towards Better Use of Evidence in Policy Formation: A Discussion Paper*, Office of the Prime Minister's Science Advisory Committee, Wellington.

Hague, K. 1989, 'Recent moves by the state', *Honouring the Treaty: An Introduction for Pakeha to the Treaty of Waitangi*, Yensen, H., Hague, K. and McCreanor, T. (eds), Penguin Books, Auckland.

Health Promotion Forum 2002, *TUHA-NZ: A Treaty Understanding of Hauora in Aotearoa — New Zealand* 2002, available from http://www.hpforum.org.nz/Tuha-nz.pdf, (accessed 4 March 2011).

Health Research Council 1998, *Guidelines for Researchers on Health Research Involving Māori 1998*, Health Research Council of New Zealand, Auckland.

—— 2006, *HRC Research Portfolio Strategy: Rangahau Hauora Māori Portfolio Strategy*, Auckland.

Humpage, L. 2005, 'Experimenting with a "whole of government" approach', *Policy Studies,* vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 47–66.

Irwin, K. 1994, 'Māori research methods and processes: an exploration', *Sites,* vol. 28, pp. 25–43.

James, B. 1997, *Social Policy in Aotearoa New Zealand: A Critical Introduction*, by Christine Cheyne, Mike O'Brien and Michael Belgrave [Book review], *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand,* p. 9, www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/journals-and-magazines/social-policy-journal/spj09.

Kawakami, A., Aton, K., Cram, F., Lai, M. and Porima L. 2007, 'Improving the practice of evaluation through indigenous values and methods: decolonizing evaluation practice — returning the gaze from Hawai'i and Aotearoa', *Hulili: Multidisciplinary Research on Hawaiian Well-being,* vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 319–48.

Keiha, P. and Moon, P. 2008, 'The emergence and evolution of urban Māori authorities: a response to Māori urbanisation', *Te Kaharoa,* vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1–17.

Kerr-Brown, S. 2011, Searching for good evaluation: a hikoi, thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy, Massey University.

Kerr, S. and Moewaka Barnes, H. 2012, 'Planning and Evaluation: a model for Aotearoa New Zealand', *Promoting Health in Aotearoa New Zealand*, Signal L. and Ratima M. (eds), in press.

——, Penney, L., Moewaka Barnes, M. and McCreanor, T. 2010, 'Kaupapa Māori action research to improve heart disease services in Aotearoa, New Zealand', *Ethnicity and Health,* vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 15–31.

Kiro, C., von Randow, M. and Sporle, A. 2010, *Trends in Wellbeing for Māori households/families, 1981–2006*, Ngä Pae o te Märamatanga.

Lightfoot, S. 2010, 'Emerging international indigenous rights norms and over-compliance in New Zealand and Canada', *Political Science*, vol. 62, no. 1, pp. 84–104.

Lunt, N. 2003, 'Knowledge for policy: the emergence of evaluation research within New Zealand', *Evaluating Policy and Practice. A New Zealand Reader*, Lunt N., Davidson C. and McKegg K. (eds), Pearson Education, Auckland, pp. 4–20.

Ministry of Social Development 2004, *Nga Ara Tohutohu Rangahau Māori: Guidelines for Research and Evaluation with Māori*, Wellington.

Moewaka Barnes, H. 2000, 'Kaupapa Māori: explaining the ordinary', *Pacific Health Dialog*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 13–16.

—— 2003, 'Māori and evaluation: some issues to consider', *Evaluating Policy and Practice: A New Zealand Reader*, Lunt, N., Davidson, C. and McKegg, K. (eds), Pearson, Auckland, pp. 146–50.

—— 2006, 'Transforming science: how our structures limit innovation', *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, vol. 29, pp. 1–16.

—— 2008, Arguing for the spirit in the language of the mind: A Māori practitioner's view of research and science, doctoral thesis, Massey University, Auckland.

—— 2009, *The Evaluation Hikoi: A Māori Overview of Programme Evaluation*, Te Ropu Whariki, http://www.shore.ac.nz/publications/Māori%20Evaluation%20 Manual%2009.pdf (accessed 20 May 2011).

—— 2010, *Sexual Coercion, Resilience and Young Māori: A Scoping Review*, Whariki Research Group, SHORE and Whariki Research Centre, Massey University, Auckland.

——, Borell, B., Edwards, S. and McCreanor, T. 2009, 'Epistemological domination: social science research ethics in Aotearoa', *Handbook of Social Research Ethics*, Mertens, D. and Ginsberg, P. (eds), Sage, Los Angeles, pp. 442–57.

——, Henwood, W., Kerr, S., McManus, V. and McCreanor, T. 2011, 'Knowledge transfer and indigenous research', *Knowledge Translation in Context: Indigenous, Policy, and Community Settings*, Banister, E., Leadbeater, B. and Marshall, A. (eds), University of Toronto Press, Toronto.

——, McCreanor, T. & Huakau, J. 2008, *Maori and the New Zealand Values Survey: the importance of research relationships*, Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online, vol. 3, issue 2, pp. 135-147.

——, Moewaka Barnes, A., Baxter, J., Crengle, S., Pihama, L., Ratima, M. and Robson, B. 2012, *Hapu Ora*, Whariki Research Group, SHORE and Whariki Research Centre, Massey University, Auckland.

—— and Stanley, P. 1999, 'Kia Mau te Mana', *Community Action to Prevent Alcohol Problems*, WHO Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen.

——, Tunks, M., Dacey, B. and Hallmond, H. 1998, *Te Pataka o Te Tai Tokerau Outcome Evaluation Report*, Whariki Research Group, Alcohol & Public Health Research Unit, University of Auckland, Auckland.

National Party 2008, *Policy 2008: Māori Affairs Policy* 2008, www.national.org.nz.

Nunns, H. 2009, 'Responding to the demand for quicker evaluation findings', *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, vol. 34, pp. 89–99.

O'Sullivan, D. 2008, 'The Treaty of Waitangi in Contemporary New Zealand Politics', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 317–31.

Parliamentary Library 2000, *Gaps between ethnic groups: some key statistics, Background note,* Wellington.

PASE 2003, *Evaluation Hui: Toward Guidelines for Culturally Responsible Evaluation and Research,* Policy Analysis & System Evaluation, Honolulu, Hawai'i, http://www.ksbe.edu/pase/pdf/EvaluationHui/InfoBrief.pdf.

Pere, R. 1988, 'Te Wheke: Whaia Te Maramatanga Me Te Aroha', *Women and Education in Aotearoa*, Middleton, S. (ed.), Allen & Unwin, Wellington.

Roorda, M. and Peace, R. 2009, 'Challenges to implementing good practice guidelines for evaluation with Māori: a Pakeha perspective', *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, vol. 34, pp. 73–88.

Saville-Smith, K. 2003, 'Power and politics: the shaping of evaluation research in New Zealand', *Evaluating Policy and Practice. A New Zealand Reader*, Lunt, N., Davidson, C. and McKegg, K. (eds), Pearson Education, Auckland, pp. 16–20.

Smith, L. 1996a, 'Kaupapa Māori health research', *Hui Whakapiripiri: A Hui to Discuss Strategic Directions for Māori Health Research*, Te Ropu Rangahau a Eru Pomare, University of Otago, Wellington School of Medicine, Wellington.

—— 1996b, *Kaupapa Māori Research*, Department of Education, University of Auckland, Auckland.

—— 1999, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Zed, London.

Social Sciences Reference Group 2005, *Coming of Age, Social Science Research and its Contribution to Wealth and Well-being in New Zealand, 2006–2016*, Ministry of Research Science and Technology, Wellington.

SPEaR 2008, *SPEaR Good Practice Guidelines*, Wellington.

SPEaR Bulletin 2007, Report on SPEaR Best Practice Māori Guidelines Hui 2007, ANZEA, November.

St John, S. and Dale, C. 2012, 'Evidence-based evaluation working for families', *Policy Quarterly,* vol. 8, no. 1, February.

State Services Commission 1999, *Looping the Loop — Evaluating Outcomes and Other Risky Feats*, Wellington.

Tahana, Y. and Collins, S. 2012a, 'Whanau Ora: future of scheme hangs on results, says leader', *New Zealand Herald*, 16 August.

——, —— 2012b, 'Whanau Ora: urgent review follows abuse of scheme, *New Zealand Herald*, 13 August, http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10826513 (accessed 20 November 2012).

Te Ara 2012, Nga take Māori — government policy and Māori, *Te Ara: The encyclopedia of New Zealand*, http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/nga-take-Māori-government-policy-and-Māori/1 (accessed 15 October 2012).

Te Puni Kōkiri 1999a, *Evaluation for Māori: Guidelines for Government Agencies*, Aroturuki me te Arotakenga Monitoring and Evaluation Branch, Te Puni Kōkiri, Wellington.

—— 1999b, *Māori in the New Zealand Economy*, Te Puni Kōkiri, Wellington.

Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare 2000, *Counting for Nothing: Understanding the Issues in Monitoring for Disparities*, Social Policy Journal of New Zealand, vol. 14, pp. 1–16.

Walker, R. 1990, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End*, Penguin, Auckland.

—— 2004, *Ka whawhai tonu matou, Struggle without End*, Penguin, Auckland.

Wehipeihana, N. and Davidson, J. 2010, 'Strategic policy evaluation: answering macro-level cross project questions', ANZEA Regional Symposium, Wellington, 5 May.

Whanau Ora Taskforce 2009, *Whänau Ora: A whänau-centred approach to Mäori wellbeing*, Whanau Ora Taskforce, Wellington.

Winston P. 2012, *Whanau Ora provides a drug dealing paradise*. Press Release: New Zealand First Party, 15 November 2012,

http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA1211/S00270/whanau-ora-provides-a-drug-dealing-paradise.htm (accessed 20 November 2012).

Workman, K. 1995, Māori policy development in a mainstream environment, AIC conference, 'Māori policy development', Wellington, April.

11 Is evaluation a tool for social justice? Reconciliation? Control? — Reflections on the Canadian experience in Indigenous affairs

Frances Abele[1]

Abstract

Relations between Canadian public governments and Indigenous peoples are complex. First Nations, Inuit and Métis are all constitutionally recognised, but each of these major constitutional groups has a distinct relationship with the Crown (and federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments in right of the Crown). This history includes a particular history of policy and program development, delivery and evaluation. In addition, there are programs of general application that affect First Nations, Inuit and Métis as they do other citizens of Canada; programs that are available to all of the constitutional Aboriginal groups; and programs that are particular to each. It is difficult to generalise about the usefulness of evaluations across all these situations. Instead, my paper offers a general description of how the evaluation function is organised, and some good and bad examples of how policy and program evaluation has been used in Canada, in historical context and in the light of an overview of the specific political, economic and social circumstances that the programs are meant to address.

11.1 Introduction

Indigenous people in Canada have distinctive constitutional rights and a special relationship with both the state and the rest of Canadian society. Each nation and people has its own language, culture and history. In many cases, Indigenous people receive programs and services from branches of the state that are different from those that serve other Canadians. Thus, while there is a high and growing degree of

1 Professor of Public Policy and Administration, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.

residential integration, economic collaboration and intermarriage, in some senses Indigenous people still live in a country apart. This paper begins with an explanation of this situation, then provides some basic information about Indigenous peoples' socioeconomic position with some historical context. With this information in hand, it considers how well or how poorly they have been served by policy and program evaluation as this is practised in Canada.

For reasons of space, simplification is necessary. I discuss program evaluation as it is practised in one department with major responsibilities for Indigenous people (the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development). The next section considers the external audit function as it is interpreted and practised by the Office of the Auditor-General of Canada, since the mandate of this office leads to public reports that have implications for matters other than fiscal probity. Finally, I will describe and comment on the ways in which *policy* evaluation has contributed to changes in relations between Indigenous peoples and the rest of Canadian society, focusing primarily on the 1992–96 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). All of this discussion recognises that program and policy evaluation has had a role to play in Indigenous peoples' decades long struggles for social justice and for a suitable practical relationship with the Crown and Canadian society.

11.2   Who are the Indigenous people of Canada?

Before European settlement in the seventeenth century, the lands and waters now called Canada were home to between 40 and 60 Indigenous nations and peoples.[2] One Indigenous people, the Beothuk, were entirely annihilated by European settler diseases and violence, but all of the other nations and peoples survive. They are the Dene, Haida, Inuit, Cree, Innu, Mohawk, Siksika, among many others. Each group shares a common language, history and sense of identity. Original (pre-contact) political systems and regimes of territorial control varied considerably, involving both large and small mainly sedentary semiagricultural societies, as well as variously organised band societies living primarily from hunting, fishing and gathering. There were both maritime and land-based peoples and substantial transcontinental trading networks. Political forms were correspondingly diverse,

---

2   RCAP 1996, *Volume 1* offers an extended discussion of these matters. I use the phrase 'nations and peoples' to respect the choices of Indigenous collectivities in Canada today, who have chosen one or the other of these English expressions to describe themselves. The terms have of course different implications and connotations in international and domestic law. I follow the usage of the RCAP in considering these terms to be primarily political and sociological, rather than ethnic, designations.

including various forms of hierarchical societies, directly democratic band societies, federations and other forms of alliances.

Contemporary political forms do not match the original nations and peoples and their territories. With contact came substantial displacement, disorganisation and reorganisation, so that today Indigenous political organisation is complex indeed. It is important to understand something of this complexity, because the constitutional and political organisation of Indigenous people in Canada affects their eligibility for programs and services and, of course, many other aspects of their daily lives.

Today fewer than 5 per cent of the Canadian population are Indigenous people. Just over half of them live in Canadian cities, and fewer than a quarter live on 'reserves' — lands set aside for First Nations under the treaties. Geographic distribution is relevant as well. Canada shares with Australia an extremely uneven population distribution and a high degree of concentration. Most of the Canadian population lives within 500 kilometres of the border with the United States. In that southern band of territory, Indigenous people are a small minority. In the northern two-thirds of the country, however, the demographic situation, and the political dynamics, are different: Indigenous people are the majority or a large minority in every northern region. For example, considering just the three northern territories, Indigenous people are one-quarter of the population of Yukon, half the population of the Northwest Territories, and 85 per cent of the population of Nunavut.

Constitutional status and representation

Section 35 of the *Constitution Act 1982* identifies three groups of Indigenous peoples: 'the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada'.[3] These large categories reflect the Canada-wide groupings that formed during the great rising of the Indigenous rights movement that began in Canada, as in Australia and New Zealand, in the years after the Second World War. The categories also correspond to Canada-wide Indigenous advocacy organisations. The first constitutional group, there termed 'Indian' (famously a European misnomer resulting from geographical

---

[3] In this paper I use the common international term 'Indigenous'. This term is used in Canada, but more frequently the synonym 'Aboriginal' appears, especially in official government documents. The full clause of the Constitution Act reads:

35. (1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed. (2) In this Act, 'Aboriginal Peoples of Canada' includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. (3) For greater certainty, in subsection (1) 'treaty rights' includes rights that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired. (4) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the aboriginal and treaty rights referred to in subsection (1) are guaranteed equally to male and female persons.

confusion) include some who refer to themselves now as First Nations and most are represented by the Assembly of First Nations. As the name of this organisation suggests, members are drawn from many historic nations and peoples. Many but not all are descendents of peoples who negotiated the historic treaties with European emissaries; many but not all are subject to an oppressive piece of race-based legislation called the Indian Act. Status under the Indian Act has a number of important implications for public service, with the federal government assuming responsibility for health, social programs, education, and several other matters that are for Canadians as a whole exclusive provincial responsibilities.[4]

The second constitutionally recognised group are Inuit, formerly known as Eskimos, who live in the Arctic regions of Canada in four provinces and territories: Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. The Inuit territories in Canada are collectively known as Inuit Nunangat. Inuit were never subject to the terms of the Indian Act, but since a 1936 Supreme Court reference they have had a formal collective relationship with the federal government. The federal government has responsibility for delivery of many province-like services to Inuit, though these tend to be organised differently from programs for First Nations. Inuit are represented at the federal level by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, a federation of regional organisations.

Métis are a distinct people descended from early nineteenth century marriages among Indigenous peoples in the western prairies and migrants from, mainly, Scotland and France. They have a common heritage and language (Michif), and now live in all parts of Canada. Métis were never subject to the Indian Act and have had on the whole the least intimate collective relationship with the Crown and governments in right of the Crown. The peak organisation representing Métis is called the Métis National Council.

There is also a fourth national representative organisation, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, which aims to represent Off-Reserve, Non-Status and Status Indians, Southern Inuit and Métis Aboriginal Peoples living in urban, rural remote and isolated areas throughout Canada.

Although each constitutional group, women and men, is represented by a Canada-wide advocacy organisation, there are in addition two Canada-wide women's

---

4 See Abele 2007. In this report, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples is quoted:

Today the Indian Act is the repository of the struggle between Indian peoples and colonial and later Canadian policy-makers for control of Indian peoples' destiny within Canada. The marks of that struggle can be seen in almost every one of its provisions. *(RCAP 1996, Final Report*, vol. 1, ch. 9, p. 258.)

organisations, the Native Women's Association of Canada and Pauktuutit — the Inuit Women's Association.

Although there is some representative overlap, in practice each organisation has a clear constituency with some competition for funding but minimal competition for members, who are free to select the organisation with which they affiliate.

Treaties, status under the Indian Act, and evaluability

Three periods of treaty-making in Canada, and a mid-twentieth century hiatus, have created substantial variety in the relationships between Indigenous peoples and the Crown. The first treaties were negotiated by peoples living in the eastern part of Canada with British and French authorities before the formation of Canada in 1867. In the eyes of the Indigenous signatories, these were 'peace and friendship' treaties, a means of avoiding conflict and establishing diplomatic relations. After Confederation in 1867, the Dominion government (now referred to as the federal government) began negotiating the so-called 'numbered' treaties (numbered 1 through 11) to secure control of Indigenous territory for settlement and development of the new country of Canada. Given the timing and the violent 'Indian wars' that had been waged and continued to be waged in the United States during the nineteenth century, it is fair to say that Canadian treaty-making was orderly and, while certainly coercive, relatively non-violent. This has resulted in treaties that are held to be legitimate by the Indigenous parties, even while they have objected to the Crown's failure to live up to the provisions. Treaty-making paused after 1923, when the weight of numbers of settlers and the successful agricultural settlement of the prairies obviated the need for it. When treaty-making was halted, a good portion of Canada remained subject to uncertain jurisdiction, though this fact was not acknowledged by Canadian governments until a key Supreme Court of Canada decision in 1972.[5] Negotiation concerning Indigenous land rights resumed again with the advent of comprehensive claims negotiations after 1975. Since then, 16 of these claims agreements, known as modern treaties, have been negotiated.[6]

For the Indigenous parties, the treaties are fundamental constitutional documents, framing all other aspects of their collective and individual relationships with Canadian society. Successive Canadian governments have respected the treaties

---

[5] *Calder v. British Columbia (Attorney General)* [1973] S.C.R. 313, [1973] 4 W.W.R. For the first time, Canadian law acknowledged that Aboriginal title to land existed prior to the colonisation. For a map showing the extent of land covered by treaty after 1923, see http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/maps/historical/indiantreaties/historicaltreaties.

[6] A convenient summary with more background information appears at http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100032291/1100100032292.

unevenly, to say the least, and at intervals have attempted to substitute policy discretion for treaty obligation. This has led to legal action (as in the current law suit launched by the Inuit of Nunavut against the federal government for failure to comply with the terms of the 1992 Nunavut Agreement). In 1991, the Indian Specific Claims Commission was established, replaced in 2008 by the Specific Claims Tribunal. Each body was empowered to review cases brought by Indigenous parties to treaties concerning non-compliance or mismanagement of federal treaty responsibilities.[7]

For the pre-Confederation treaties and the numbered treaties, however, a key determinant of whether and what federal services will be provided is status under the Indian Act. All such federal programs are subject to internal audit and program evaluation. The modern treaties remove Indian Act jurisdiction, affirm Indigenous control of specified lands, and establish jurisdictions and service delivery responsibilities. They create positive obligations on the part of Canadian governments in right of the Crown, and on the Indigenous authorities who are parties to the treaty. Specific provisions vary substantially, too much so for a summary to suffice in a paper of this length. It is pertinent, though, that federal compliance with the terms of the modern treaties has been reviewed by the Office of the Auditor-General of Canada.

11.3   Social and economic conditions of Indigenous peoples

On the whole, social, economic and health conditions for Indigenous people in Canada are worse than those for the general population, although some measures show recent improvement. There is also a substantial gap among Indigenous groups. The bullet points below provide a snapshot; please refer to the tables in Appendix A for details and references.

- Life expectancy is lower for all groups of Indigenous people, but much worse for Inuit. For the general population in Canada, life expectancy at birth in 2017 was projected at 78.7 years for men and 83.3 years for women. The projected 2017 life expectancy figures for First Nations are 73.3 years for men and 78.4 for women. For Métis, these figures are 74.1 for men and 79.7 for women, while for Inuit, the figures are 63.9 for men and 72.9 for women.

- Suicide is a scourge, especially among young people. Suicide is approximately three times more prevalent among the general Indigenous population than among

---

[7]   See   http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100030306/1100100030307   for   the   official description.

the general non-Indigenous population. Among Indigenous groups, Inuit and First Nations communities are most affected. Suicide rates are five to seven times higher for First Nations youth than for non-Indigenous youth. In its recent report, Health Canada compared First Nations and Canadian suicide rates from 1989–1993 for ages 0–14 years and 15–24 years and found that the suicide rate for young First Nations men was extremely high. The suicide among First Nations men aged 15–24 years was 126 per 100,000, compared to 24 per 100,000 for Canadian men of the same age group. The rate for young First Nations women was 35 per 100,000, while it was only 5 per 100,000 for Canadian women. Suicide rates among Inuit are among the highest in the world, currently about 11 times the national average. Overwhelmingly, the people who commit suicide are young men.[8]

Although data are incomplete and there may be variance due to reporting practices, it appears that the suicide rates among Indigenous people (and the general Canadian population) are getting worse. In 1988, the overall suicide rate for Indigenous people was 40.4 per 100,000 compared with an average Canadian national rate over the 1970–1980 period of 14.1 per 100,0000.

- Other forms of violence affect Indigenous people disproportionately. In 2009, about 37 per cent of Indigenous people aged 15 and over living in the provinces reported having been a victim of at least one offence. In comparison, 26 per cent of non-Indigenous people reported having been victimised over the same period. Indigenous people are also more likely than non-Indigenous people to be the victim of non-spousal violence (12 per cent compared to 5 per cent). Indigenous people were much more likely to report being a victim of spousal violence: 10 per cent for Indigenous people compared to 6 per cent for non-Indigenous people.

- There are pronounced regional differences. For example, in 2000-01, northern Indigenous people were more likely than southern Indigenous people to be obese, to smoke daily and to have infrequent physical activity but they were less likely to report a number of chronic health conditions.

- School attendance and educational attainment is improving for some groups. In the early 1960s, only 4 per cent of on-reserve Indian students remained in school through Grade 12. By the 1990s, the proportion of on-reserve children who remained in school had increased to close to 54 per cent. In 1986, about 26 per cent of the off-reserve Aboriginal people had less than Grade 12, compared to 18 per cent of non-Aboriginal people. For the on-reserve population, this was 44.7 per cent. For the same period, the proportion of the general population with a university degree ranged from 6 per cent to 11 per cent in urban areas, while for

---

8   See Hicks 2009 for an extended discussion.

Aboriginal people the proportion was less than 3 per cent. In 1986, only 20 per cent of Inuit ad completed secondary school and 54 per cent had less than Grade 9 education.

- Labour force participation and employment is lower for all groups of Indigenous people, but the gap is narrowing. For Indigenous people as a whole, labour force participation increased from 57 per cent in 1991 to 63 per cent in 2006, while for the labour force as a whole participation declined over this period by about 1 point. There was a more striking change in unemployment rates. For all Indigenous groups, the unemployment rate was 24 per cent in 1991, dropping to 14 per cent in 2006; for all Canadians in the labour force, the rate declined from 10 per cent to 6 per cent during the same period. The gap in employment income, however, increased slightly, from $10 070 in 2001 to $11 563 in 2006.

11.4 The end of high politics, evaluation and the neo-liberal turn

The broad and nearly global ideological change referred to as 'the neo-liberal turn' has had important consequences in Canada for governance, and thus for policy and program evaluation, in Indigenous affairs as in many other areas. Most obviously, the shift in governance practices changed the manner in which services were delivered and legitimised new practices associated with accountability for the expenditure of public funds.[9]

In Canada, as in Australia and New Zealand, the years immediately after the Second World War brought many changes to relations between Indigenous peoples and the rest of their societies. There were revisions to the Indian Act (1951 and 1985), decoupling of the federal franchise from Indian status (1960), the decisive defeat of the assimilationist perspective on Aboriginal–Canada relations expressed in the White Paper of 1969, evolutions in jurisprudence and policy mandating the comprehensive claims negotiation process (beginning in 1973), gradual efforts to redress Crown treaty violations through the specific claims process (1982 and subsequently), constitutional recognition of 'existing aboriginal and treaty rights' (1982), federal recognition of the inherent right of self-government (1995), and numerous changes to policy and legislation mitigating some effects of the Indian

---

[9] Use of the term 'neo-liberalism' to refer to the global changes towards markets and away from Keynesian economic solutions, along with a broad basket of changes to arrangements for social provision, has been rightly criticised as too vague and heterogeneous a category to be useful. My meaning here is a relatively narrow one, as described above, but I do mean to connect these changes to international transformations of the state–society relationship.

Act, including processes for exit from the jurisdiction of the Act.[10] These changes amounted to a revolution in Indigenous–Canada relations. They represent major achievements of the multifaceted Indigenous movement that began to be organised after the Second World War. This movement faced many barriers, but it also found popular support in changes in elite and public opinion in Canada growing out of the global revulsion against race-based policies and ethnic discrimination following the horrors of the war.

The period between the mid-1970s and early 1990s has been called the period of 'high politics' in Indigenous affairs in Canada (Abele and Graham 1989). These years were marked by a shift in federal policy that recognised Indigenous land rights and a role for Indigenous advocacy organisations. For several years, these peak organisations were involved with federal and provincial executive authorities in high-level constitutional negotiations leading up to the patriation of the Canadian Constitution in 1982. The momentum carried forward for another 10 years until finally, with the collapse of one last attempt to amend the Constitution Act in 1992, peak negotiations between Indigenous leaders and Canadian politicians ended.[11] The 1992–96 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, a massive policy evaluation initiative, was one consequence of this sequence of events. It will be discussed below.

Below the level of high politics, other changes were underway. Starting in the 1950s, Indigenous people began moving from the countryside to the cities, leaving reserves and their traditional territories. The result is that now over half the Aboriginal population live in small and large Canadian cities. This demographic

---

[10] Summaries appear in Ponting, R. and Gibbins, R. 1980, *Out of Irrelevance: A Socio-Political Introduction to Indian Affairs in Canada*, Butterworths, Toronto; Abele, F. 1996, 'Understanding what happened here: the political economy of Indigenous Peoples', in Clement, W. (ed.), *Understanding Canada: Building on the New Political Economy*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Kingston and Montreal, p. 118; Abele, F., Graham, K. and Maslove, A. 1999, 'Negotiating Canada: thirty years of change in Aboriginal policy', in Pal, L. (ed.), *How Ottawa Spends 1999-2000*, Oxford University Press, Toronto, p. 251; Murphy, M. 2005, 'Relational self-determination and federal reform', in Murphy, M. (ed.), *Canada: The State of the Federation 2003: Reconfiguring Aboriginal-State Relations*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Kingston and Montreal, p. 3.

[11] Sec. 35 of the Constitution Act (1982) entrenched 'existing aboriginal and treaty rights'. Section 35 has shaped subsequent jurisprudence and has led to major changes in public policy, notably the formal recognition in federal policy of Aboriginal peoples' inherent right to self-government. The patriated constitution also mandated, in Section 37, a series of First Ministers' Conferences on Aboriginal Constitutional Matters to define the practical meaning of 'existing aboriginal and treaty rights'. These conferences concluded in 1987 with no consensus on this key point, and subsequently the Charlottetown Accord failed in a Canada-wide referendum in 1992. The Accord would have transformed the federation, among other things reserving a seat at the table of executive federalism for Aboriginal people.

change began to have pronounced effect just as a major sea change, often referred to as the 'neo-liberal turn', in Canadian politics began.

Although changes in governance began to be talked about in the 1980s, major neo-liberal changes began in Canada in 1993 under the Liberal government then led by Jean Chrétien. The changes have accelerated and deepened under successive Conservative governments led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper since 2006.[12] In the early 1990s, Jean Chrétien and his Minister of Finance, Paul Martin, confronted a large public debt and a growing annual deficit, as well as increasingly uneasy international lenders. They developed a coordinated approach that ultimately transformed federal shared-cost programs in the areas of health and education (to limit previously very flexible federal financial commitments) and initiated a program review that led to the transfer of programs and responsibilities to other orders of government and to non-governmental organisations.[13] These changes were accompanied by the introduction of new protocols for public service, more direct contact between public servants and the public, and support for innovation.[14] For Indigenous people, the focus on partnership, downloading, and contracting out created an opportunity. They began to form service delivery organisations that they were able to design, staff and control, taking over services that had previously been administered by federal departments.

Over nearly a decade, these organisations developed and grew, gradually creating a service provision sector largely outside of government. Though the organisations were subject to federal control through reporting requirements and evaluations, as they developed both experience and established constituencies, these became somewhat routinised. Some of the organisations developed strong capacities for providing policy advice. Others developed ambitious programs of research and community development. The 1990s Liberal version of the neo-liberal turn in Canada had what many saw as negative effects, such as decreased levels of social

[12] See Greenspon, E. and Wilson-Smith, A. 1996, *Double Vision: The Inside Story of the Liberals in Power*, Doubleday, Toronto; Maslove, A. 1996, 'The Canada health and social transfer: forcing issues', in Swimmer, G. (ed.), *How Ottawa Spends 1996–97: Life Under the Knife*, Carleton University Press, Ottawa; Maslove. A. and Moore, K. 1997, 'From red books to blue books: repairing Ottawa's fiscal house', in Swimmer, G. (ed.), *How Ottawa Spends 1997–98: Seeing Red: A Liberal Report Card*, Carleton University Press, Ottawa; Macdonald, Mark R. 2000, 'Re-learning our ABCs? the new governance of Aboriginal economic development', in Pal, Leslie A. (ed.), *How Ottawa Spends 2000-2001: Past Imperfect, Future Tense*, Oxford University Press, Don Mills.

[13] Discussed in more detail in Abele 2006 and Abele 2013 forthcoming. For a close contemporary analysis of the change in federal policy, see Greenspon and Wilson-Smith 1996.

[14] Macdonald, *supra* note 12 provides a very clear account of what these changes meant in practice to economic development programs for Aboriginal people.

spending and increased fragmentation of the federation. Arguably, it also had some positive consequences in creating the room for the development of a new bureaucratic architecture of improved service provision, by Indigenous people, for Indigenous people.[15]

Another characteristic of this period has been a shift in federal thinking about social policy away from universal programs of national application and towards more place-based programming, even for programs of national reach. Although the shift to place-based social policy was to some extent an international trend, much of the impetus for this approach comes from purely Canadian circumstances, such as the sheer size and diversity of the country and the ever-present need to respond to demands from within the province of Quebec for greater provincial discretion (a matter that reached some urgency with the near success of a referendum on separation in 1995). For Indigenous peoples' programming, the place-based approach had a number of advantages, as it admitted of greater local discretion and control, particularly in such new programs as the Urban Aboriginal Strategy — a federal funding program that aimed to increase the range and effectiveness of urban Indigenous organisations in addressing problems and opportunities for Indigenous people in Canadian cities.[16] The place-based approach also promises, at least, to allow for sensitivity to local circumstances and thereby to open the prospect for more useful evaluations.

Although the Urban Aboriginal Strategy has so far survived along with a formal commitment to place-based policy making, much of the new program architecture that I have been describing is in the process of being dismantled by the Conservative government that has been in power since 2006, and in a majority since 2011. It is hard to know how to label this change. Core funding has been eliminated for all of the new organisations that focused on research and analysis, such as the National Aboriginal Health Organization and the national Centre for First Nations Governance, which focused on analysis of Indigenous health issues and improving governance in First Nations communities, respectively. At the same time, specific programs built upon collaborative delivery in such areas as employment and health promotion have seen their funding cut. Accountability has become a major theme, embodied in an extremely wide-ranging piece of legislation, the 2006 Federal Accountability Act. This omnibus law changed many areas of federal activity, including the evaluation and audit functions.[17] The focus of this Act is on fiscal

---

[15] This is a subjective impression; sadly, there has not yet been a comprehensive analysis of service provision in this period. But see Abele 2004 for more detail.

[16] The program is described, and its geographical reach explained, at http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/map/ofi/uas/mps/uas-html-eng.asp.

[17] Changes in this regard are explained at http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/faa-lfi/fs-fi/16/12fs-fi-eng.asp.

probity, the responsibilities of senior officials, and internal audit, but it is also accompanied by policy authority to enable 'the development of best practices and ensuring consistency in discipline across the core public administration, through the Deputy Ministers Advisory Committee on the Management of Compliance'.

As I write, very wide-ranging changes are being implemented in most areas of Canadian public affairs. The changes most pertinent here concern changes to various institutions devoted to collecting evidence and information necessary for policy development (such as abolition of the mandatory long form census) and to diminishing the number and changing the character of 'third sector' or para-public institutions, mainly but not exclusively through funding cuts.

The remainder of this paper discusses three kinds of evaluation that have been important in Indigenous administration in Canada: departmental program evaluations, the value-for-money audits of the Office of the Auditor-General, and large-scale policy evaluations undertaken by task forces and royal commissions. In each case, an example has been chosen for purposes of illustration.

11.5   Program evaluation

Program evaluation is an integral, mandatory function in all departments of the Canadian federal government. For present purposes, I have chosen to describe the function in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC). This is far from the only department that has responsibilities to Indigenous peoples — other important ones include Health, and Natural Resources — but AANDC is the only federal department for which Indigenous peoples' affairs form the main focus of its mandate.

The Audit and Evaluation Sector of AANDC conducts audits, evaluations, management practices reviews or audits and other special studies of departmental programs and initiatives.[18] The Department states that its goals are to ensure the appropriate use of human and financial resources, to ensure that programs and services delivered by AANDC are relevant, efficient and effective, and to 'provide stakeholders with an evidence-based, neutral assessment of the value for money'. As many of the Department's responsibilities have been devolved to First Nations authorities, evaluations frequently involve service providers and authorities who do their work under various forms of contract to the Department.

---

[18] All of the factual information in this section, and all direct quotations, are drawn from the departmental website, http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100011247/1100100011248.

The mandate of AANDC derives from the Canadian Constitution, the Indian Act, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Act[19], territorial acts, treaties, comprehensive claims and self–government agreements as well as various other statutes affecting Aboriginal people and the North. The mandate for the Department's audit and evaluation function, in turn, is governed by three policies:

(1)   The departmental management, resources and results structures provide the framework for the systematic collection and analysis of performance information.

(2)   The service-wide Financial Administration Act requires that there be an evaluation of all ongoing grants and contributions programs every five years.

(3)   The Directive on the Evaluation Function mandates a risk-based approach for determining methodologies, the level of effort, and the appropriate level of resources required to conduct each evaluation.

AANDC is required to develop five-year evaluation plans. Each five-year plan must be updated and approved by the Evaluation, Performance Measurement and Review Committee (EPMRC), chaired by the deputy minister. The EPMRC includes external members to ensure 'rigour and objectivity' in the oversight of AANDC audit and evaluation reports. Evaluations have been timed not only to fulfil the five-year cycle requirements, but also to provide sufficient time (six months to one year in advance of program continuation) for program managers and decisionmakers to consider evaluation findings for policy or program design renewal. To give an idea of the level of activity: there are 48 evaluations scheduled to occur between 2012-13 and 2016-17.

Evaluations are the responsibility of the Evaluation, Performance Measurement and Review Branch. Staff from this office consult with the program managers in developing terms of reference, which are approved by the program assistant deputy minister. All reports related to the evaluation are shared with the designated program contact who has responsibility for ensuring timely consultation with other program officials, including regional staff. There is an iterative process for validation and revision. A management response and action plan based on the recommendations is submitted to the Evaluation Branch for approval. Should the program be unable to accept and/or implement the recommendations, an explanation is provided in the management response and action plan with a justification provided for any alternative course of action. All this information is included in the final report, which once approved by the branch will be submitted to

---

[19] This is the older name of the department. The name was changed to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada in 2007, but there has been no change in legislation.

AANDC's Access to Information Privacy Unit and Communications Branch, a necessary step that must precede posting of the material on the departmental website.

There are disappointingly few independent academic studies of the evaluation function and its impact on Indigenous communities. A small but interesting literature comments on the uses of evaluation overall; a selection of this literature appears in the references section included with my report. There have been two substantial, recent studies of the impact of federal program evaluation in Indigenous communities and my comments here will rely on these.

Bradford and Chouinard examined the role of evaluation in improving the effectiveness of two large federal social policy initiatives, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy and Action for Neighbourhood Change. Each of these programs was understood to be in a sense experimental, and intended to unfold in a way that would permit 'learning by doing' in the spirit of place-based policy and program development. (Only the Urban Aboriginal Strategy was directed specifically to Indigenous people.)

Bradford and Chouinard endorse the value of evaluation in promoting collaborative learning by doing, but their conclusions from the two case studies emphasise the difficulties of realising this goal in the context of a federally funded venture. The authors see a need for evaluation frameworks 'that are philosophically consistent with a community development approach and sensitive to the incremental and longer-term nature of comprehensive community regeneration processes' (Bradford and Chouinard 2010, p. 69). This study displays very effectively the tensions that are inherent in evaluation in many contexts, between the need for control and oversight, on the one hand, and the potential for the project to contribute to community control and empowerment on the other (Bradford and Chouinard 2010, pp. 69–70):[20]

> First, evaluation methodologies need to respect the learning ethos of the pilot initiatives and to recognise increased local actor engagement as a powerful learning opportunity at the program, individual and community levels … Resources must be allocated for convening the dialogue necessary for resident involvement in interpreting and assessing change.
>
> Second, strategies are needed to reconcile the government call for tangible, measurable results with the reality of incremental, bottom-up change associated with complex community initiatives. This tension is particularly evident in the kind of short-term pilot projects we have examined … Without the time to experience policy effects or concrete impacts of interventions, it becomes exceedingly difficult for governments to measure change or demonstrate progress. Yet, the less tangible, process-oriented

---

[20] The quotation has been edited lightly for greater clarity in this context.

outcomes seeded by such pilots can build the community's capacity for change and establish a social context for long-term success.

A further concern arises from the reliance on third-party evaluators to ensure more 'impartiality in behaviour and process' leading to what are considered more 'valid and objective' findings. While a more traditional evaluator role … may be required in certain instances, it often compromises the goal of an engaged and participatory process. Given the importance of learning and capacity building within the pilot initiatives, there is a need for evaluators to be more directly involved as partners, collaborators, coaches, and educators …

Finally, there is a need for evaluation methodologies that are sensitive to variations in pilot project or local program contexts, and responsive to the particular, historically evolved concerns of communities. Both the UAS and ANC aimed for such resident-led, local embedding. Yet such aspirations must be supported by evaluation approaches with strong communication structures, breaking down both departmental and cultural silos to bring stakeholders together in an authentic and ongoing conversation about progress and results.

Shepherd and Persad (2009) explore the complexities of evaluating federal place-based programs not in Canadian cities, but in First Nations communities. They identify a range of challenges, from the negative local residue of many decades of colonialism and undemocratic administration to the reality that the programs that are now in place to be evaluated share some of the characteristics of the period of maximum external control. In particular, First Nations face an inherent challenge in assuming control of federal programs: 'that top-down departmentally driven programs with accompanying terms and conditions have not worked to address persistent local problems, such as making education relevant to local circumstances'(Shepherd and Persad 2009, p. 10). Adding these conditions to the multiple demands on small First Nations governments in the context of the reality that unlike any other local governments in Canada they must deal intimately with a large federal bureaucracy radically decreases the chances that evaluations will actually prove to be useful to them. Shepherd and Persad offer a number of ameliorative recommendations. Like Bradford and Chouinard, they stress the importance of affording evaluators time to work with community members so that they can understand the purpose of the evaluation and the extent to which they may influence its progress.

Though the specific circumstances that they have analysed are quite different, the findings of these independent studies converge on a key point: the opportunity presented by evaluations to contribute to community development and community capacity-building, and the difficulty of reconciling this goal with the mandated objectives of program managers to ensure accountability to the central administration.

11.6 Policy implementation audits: Office of the Auditor General

The Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG) is one of (and the most venerable of) several federally funded, independent bodies that report to Parliament and to the public. Its official mandate is to provide 'the objective, fact-based information that Parliament needs to fulfill one of its most important roles: holding the federal government accountable for its stewardship of public funds'. It may comment on *policy implementation*, but does not have the responsibility to comment on the *merits* of policies. Operating as an adequately staffed independent office of Parliament, OAG produces evaluations that are characteristically thorough and blunt. They are always public and always reviewed by parliamentary standing committees.[21]

The ambit of the OAG is wide, including federal departments and agencies, most Crown corporations, other federal organisations and similar parts of the territorial governments of Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and Yukon. Since 1995, the OAG has had the mandate to monitor environmental and sustainable development performance of these bodies.

The OAG reports to Parliament on an annual cycle. Audits are conducted by teams of staff who typically have access to a reference committee of outside topic experts, as well as sufficient funds to travel as required. Staff in the departments being evaluated provide a written response to a draft report. The OAG tends to analyse public expenditure thematically, rather than program by program. For example, the 2012 Annual Report (due to be released on October 23 2012) will have seven thematic chapters. Chapter 2 is entitled 'Grant and Contribution Program Reforms', and it will deal with 'whether the government has adequately implemented its [2008] action plan … to streamline the administrative and reporting burden on grant and contribution recipients … [and] the role played by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat … [and] activities to implement the reforms in five federal organizations' (OAG 2012).

For present purposes, it is important that the OAG has conducted important assessments of federal compliance with the terms of modern treaties. The reports on these matters have been useful to academic analysis and to Indigenous organisations seeking to improve federal responsiveness to their concerns.

---

[21] Over the years there has been some controversy about the role of this office, and in particular about possible infringement on political or policy decisionmaking. See Sutherland 1986; Malloy 2004.

If the audit conducted by the OAG provides cross-cutting analyses that are useful to parliamentarians and members of the public, they remain focused on dimensions of policy implementation. A final form of evaluation that has proven to be useful in the Canadian context is the form of policy evaluation — and indeed reconsideration — that is the perquisite of a royal commission.

11.7 Policy evaluation: the case of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

Perhaps more than most countries governed in the Westminster tradition, Canada has had resort to commissions of inquiry to resolve knotty and persistent problems of public policy. A series of commissions from the mid-twentieth century have had a significant effect on politics, legislation and national tensions. The (Massey) Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences reported in 1951, making recommendations that led to the establishment of the Canada Council and other longstanding cultural institutions. The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, reporting in 1967, led to a number of profound changes in Canadian public institutions, including official bilingualism, multiculturalism, and measures to improve the representation of francophones — and increase the use of the French language — in all public institutions. The (Bird) Commission on the Status of Women (1970) responded to increasing social pressure to advance women's equality.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) can be seen as a policy commission in this long tradition. The RCAP was announced in the midst of an acute crisis in Indigenous–Canada relations, following on the collapse of constitutional negotiations and after a dangerous confrontation over Mohawk lands at Kanesatake, near Oka, in summer 1990 (York and Pindera 1991; Simpson and Ladner 2010). The Royal Commission was given a very broad mandate to addressed fundamental questions about the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Crown. Commission staff conducted or commissioned research costing nearly $10 million, while hearings were held in 110 Canadian communities. The Commission's five-volume final report, released in 1ate 1996, addressed a wide range of contemporary problems and historic injustices. It offered a reinterpretation of Canadian history that supported a new vision of the future of Canada–Aboriginal relations based on 'nation-to-nation' negotiations animated by four principles: mutual recognition, mutual respect, sharing, and mutual responsibility (RCAP 1996, vol. 1, ch. 16). Various sections of the Commission's report dealt with matters of federal and provincial responsibility, and proposed reforms to the federation that

would create space for a third order of Indigenous government. Virtually the full range of federal policies affecting Indigenous peoples were examined.

The federal cabinet responded to the report of the RCAP within a year, in a policy statement entitled *Gathering Strength.* Avoiding direct endorsement of the more consequential recommendations related to jurisdiction and political realignment, the policy document picked up on the nation-to-nation paradigm to focus on 'partnership' as a framework for addressing longstanding problems. The Commission's documentation of past wrongs received a response in the form of a statement of responsibility, while new institutions were mandated that would enable communities to deal with past trauma, and restructure the relationship of Indigenous peoples and nations to the Canadian economy. These included measures directed towards children and youth and institutions to improve labour market performance and access to capital in support of economic self-sufficiency. *Gathering Strength* provided the policy authority for the creation of new 'councils' for policy deliberation in a number of specific policy areas concerning health, children's programs, and labour market and economic development (Delic and Abele 2010). In short, *Gathering Strength* introduced a new governance paradigm in federal programs directed towards Indigenous peoples.

A number of scholars have attempted to assess the impacts of royal commissions in Canadian political life (Inwood and Johns; Jenson 1994), and several studies focus exclusively on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Marlene Brant Castellano, one of the directors of research at the Commission, has published explanations of the Commission's approach to traditional knowledge and its efforts to overcome well-established epistemological boundaries (2002 (2000)). Other academics who worked on the Commission (including the present author) have sought to interpret its process and to understand its impact. Many others are critical of the Commission for the constitutional vision that it promotes (Anderson and Denis 2003; Ladner 2001; Brant Castellano 2002 (2000)), but to my knowledge no scholars have systematically assessed the Commission's immediate and longer term impact. There seems to be a general consensus that it has affected both public policy and the direction of scholarship.

11.8   In conclusion — and for discussion

Canadian experience includes at least three forms of evaluation that have had an important role in Indigenous–Canada relations. Classical departmental program evaluations are used extensively. From the departmental perspective, their overriding purpose is to ensure that funds are being effectively and wisely expended in the pursuit of program goals. A persistent view, present strongly in the evaluation

community, is that this purpose is insufficiently ambitious, since evaluations of programs delivered in Indigenous communities, in particular, could and should also contribute to community development and capacity building. In the context of the historical relations between the state and particularly those peoples who have been governed under the Indian Act, meeting both of these goals is a tall order. It would be fair to observe, I believe, that for those who are subject to departmental evaluations, the element of control is paramount.

A second form of evaluation is practised by the Parliamentary Office of the Auditor-General. This office may consider policy implementation only, but it rarely is constrained by particular program guidelines. Instead, the OAG investigates federal performance in a range of important cross-departmental areas, providing essential evaluations of overall execution and impact. In this way the office is able to contribute to knowledge about the impact of overall federal actions, even while it audits in the service of probity.

Canadians have made great use of a third form of evaluation. Commissions of inquiry have been used at key junctures for wide-ranging policy investigations and reconsiderations. Necessarily, most of the significant commissions of inquiry in Canadian experience have evaluated past practices even while they have worked to forge a new vision for the future. The commissions typically have broad mandates and adequate budgets, enabling them to draw a large number of citizens into the discussion. Commissions, though, are entirely ad hoc; they appear only when the government perceives a need to remove a difficult issue from 'ordinary politics'. Commission reports, however, are always public and they tend to endure. Longer term impacts may be expected.

Each of these forms of policy and program evaluation would appear to have a different potential for contributing to social justice or social reconciliation — notably, the greater the evaluation institution's distance from executive power, the more scope for this there would appear to be. In the case of regular departmental evaluations, though, the potential is still there, however constrained by the need for expenditure control and accountability.

References

Abele, F. 2004, *Aboriginal Peoples and a New Social Architecture for Canada's 21st Century*, Canadian Policy Research Networks, Ottawa, http://www.cprn.com/.

Abele, F. 2006, 'Between respect and control: traditional indigenous knowledge in Canadian public policy', in Orsini, M. and Smith, M. (eds.), *Critical Policy Studies: Contemporary Canadian Approaches*, UBC Press, Vancouver.

Abele, F. 2007, *Like An Ill-Fitting Boot: Government, Governance and Management Systems in the Contemporary Indian Act*, National Centre on First Nations Governance.

Abele, F. and Graham, K. 1989, 'High politics is not enough: services for Aboriginal peoples in Alberta and Ontario', in David Hawkes (ed.), *Defining the Responsibilities: Federal and Provincial Governments and Aboriginal Peoples*, Carleton University Press, Ottawa.

Aboriginal Healing Foundation 2003, *An Interim Evaluation Report of Aboriginal Healing Foundation Program Activity*, Kishk Anaquot Health Research, Ottawa.

Anderson, C. and Denis, C. 2003, 'Urban natives and the nation: before and after the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples', *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie*, 40:4, pp. 373–90.

Belanger, Yale D. 2012, 'Housing and Aboriginal People in urban centres: a quantitative evaluation', *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, 2.1, pp. 4–25.

Bradford, N. and Chouinard. J.A. 2010. 'Learning through Evaluation? Reflections on Two Federal Community Building Initiatives' *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation,* vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 55–77.

Brant Castellano, M. 2000 (2002), 'Updating Aboriginal traditional knowledge', in Hall, B., Sefa Dei, J. and Golden Rosenberg, D. (eds), *Indigenous Knowledge in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of Our World*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.

Cherubini, L. 2012, 'Post-secondary Aboriginal educational policy in Ontario: policy and practical implications', *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, 2.1, pp. 42–55.

Chouinard, Jill A. and Cousins, Bradley J. 2007, 'Culturally competent evaluation for Aboriginal communities: a review of the empirical literature', *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation*, 4.8, pp. 40–57.

Delic, S. and Abele, F. 2010, 'Aboriginal workers and the recession', in Doern, G. Bruce and Stoney, C. (eds), *How Ottawa Spends 2009-2010*, Oxford University Press, Toronto, p. 163.

Glor, Eleanor D. 1987, 'Impacts of a prenatal program for native women', *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 78.1, pp. 249–54.

Health Canada 1998, *Community Action Resources for Inuit, Métis and First Nations: Evaluation*, rep. Ottawa.

Hicks, J. 2009, 'Towards more effective, evidence-based suicide prevention in Nunavut', in Abele F., Courchene, Thomas J., Seidle, F. Leslie and St-Hilaire, F. (eds), *Northern Exposure: Peoples, Powers and Prospects in Canada's North*, Institute for Research on Public Policy, Montreal.

Indian and Northern Affairs 2008, *Evaluation of the 1996 On-Reserve Housing Policy*, CIDM # 1304024, Ottawa.

Inwood, G. and Johns C. (eds), *Commissions of Inquiry and Policy Change: A Comparative Analysis*, under review at University of Toronto Press.

Jenson, J. 1994, 'Commissioning ideas: representation and royal commissions', in Phillips, Susan D. (ed.), *How Ottawa Spends 1994–5: Making Change*, Carleton University Press, Ottawa.

Johnston, Andrea L.K. 2008, 'Using technology to enhance Aboriginal evaluations', *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 23.2, pp. 51–72.

Kenny, C. 2004, *A Holistic Framework for Aboriginal Policy Research*, working paper, Status of Women Canada, Ottawa.

Ladner, K. 2001, 'Visions of neocolonialism? Renewing the relationship with Aboriginal peoples', *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 21, pp. 105–35.

Lane, P. Jr., Bopp, M., Bopp, J. and Julian Norris, J. 2002, *Mapping the Healing Journey*, rep. no. APC 21 CA., Aboriginal Corrections Policy Unit, Ottawa.

Lavoie, Josée G., Forget, E. and O'Neil, J.D. 2007, 'Why equity in financing First Nations on-reserve health services matters: findings from the 2005 National Evaluation of the Health Transfer Policy', *Health Policy*, 2.4, pp. 79–96.

Malloy, J. 2004, 'An auditor's best friend? Standing committees on public accounts', *Canadian Public Administration*, 47:2, pp. 165–83.

Matsuba, M. Kyle, Elder, Gavin J., Petrucci, F. and Marleau, T. 2008, 'Employment training for at-risk youth: a program evaluation focusing on changes in psychological well-being', *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 37.1, pp. 15–26.

McKenzie, B. 1997, 'Developing First Nations child welfare standards: using evaluation research within a participatory framework', *The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 12.1, pp. 133–48.

Murray, N. and Murray, D. 2010, *Improving Health Outcomes for Aboriginal People: A Year in Review*, Fraser Health, rep. Surrey.

Neu, D. 2000, 'Accounting and accountability relations: colonization, genocide and Canada's First Nations', *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 13.3, pp. 268–88.

OAG (Office of the Auditor General of Canada) 2012, *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons*, Ottawa.

Public Safety Canada 2010, *2009–2010 Evaluation of the First Nations Policing Program*, rep. Ottawa.

Quantz, D. and Thurston, W. 2006, 'Representation strategies in public participation in health policy: the Aboriginal Community Health Council', *Health Policy*, 75.3, pp. 243–50.

Raham, H. 2010, 'Policy levers for improving outcomes for off-reserve students, working paper, *Colloquium on Improving the Educational Outcomes of Aboriginal People Living Off-Reserve*, Kelowna.

RCAP 1996, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, vols 1–5, Canada Communication Group, Ottawa.

Richmond, Chantelle A.M. and Ross, N.A. 2008, 'Social support, material circumstance and health behaviour: influences on health in First Nation and Inuit communities of Canada', *Social Science & Medicine*, 67.9, pp. 1423–33.

Shepherd, R. and Persad, K. 2009, *Place-Based Evaluation in a First Nations Context: Something Old, Nothing New, Often Borrowed, and Frequently Blue*, Government of Canada's Horizons Policy Canada, Ottawa.

Simpson, L. and Ladner, K. 2010, *This Is An Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades*, Arbeiter Ring, Winnipeg.

Smith, D., Varcoe, C. and Edwards, N. 2005, 'Turning around the intergenerational impact of residential schools on Aboriginal people: implications for health policy and practice', *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*, 37.4, pp. 38–60.

Sutherland, S. 1986, 'The politics of audit: the federal Office of the Auditor General in comparative perspective', *Canadian Public Administration*, 29.1, pp. 118–48.

Thomas, W. and Bellefeuille, G. 2006, 'An evidence-based formative evaluation of a cross cultural Aboriginal mental health program in Canada', *Advances in Mental Health*, 5.3, pp. 202–15.

York, G. and Pindera, L. 1991, *People of the Pines: The Warriors and the Legacy of Oka*, Little Brown, Boston.

11.A Reflections on the Canadian Experience

A brief summary of socio-economic outcomes for Aboriginal peoples, 1951 – present [1]

In this appendix the terms 'Aboriginal,' 'non-Aboriginal' and 'Indian' are used, in conformity with the practices of Statistics Canada.

Where cells are empty, there is no data available.

The socioeconomic outcomes summarized in the following five tables, pertain to health, education, economic participation, family and community functioning of Aboriginal people, and, when possible, of First Nations, Inuit and Métis, separately.

The tables contain mostly numbers for the most recent time period (last decade or so) while the tables' notes contain some information on earlier time period (from 1960s and on). Different sources were used to fill in the existing information and they are indicated in notes of each table. The empty cells in the tables indicate that the comparative information was not available/not found yet.

Gaps reported in the tables indicate the difference between total Aboriginal and total non-Aboriginal (Aboriginal minus non-Aboriginal). Gaps for individual groups (that is, First Nations, Inuit and Métis) can easily be calculated by subtracting the values (where available) of individual groups from those of the total non-Aboriginal group. I have removed the minus signs from the gaps because they seem to be confusing; my intent was to highlight that in such instances Aboriginals were reportedly doing better than non-Aboriginals (for example, table 1 shows that greater proportion of non-Aboriginal than of Aboriginal population in the North reported having one or more chronic health condition, although the gap has narrowed considerably from 2001 to 2006).

---

[1] The author wishes to thank Senada Delic for assembling the data displayed in this appendix.

Table A.1   **Health outcomes for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population**

Health indicators	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Self-reported health (excellent or very good)					
These numbers refer to the proportions (%) of population self-reporting excellent or very good health					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	–	–	–
Total non-Aboriginal[a]	–	–	–	–	62.0
Gap	–	–	–	–	–
First Nations (on-reserve)[b]	–	–	–	–	39.9
Inuit[c]	–	–	–	56.0	50.0
Métis[d]	–	–	–	58.0	58.0
Chronic health condition(s)					
These numbers refer to the proportions (%) of population reporting having one or more chronic health conditions (or disability in the case of First Nations) diagnosed by a health professional					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	–	–	–
Total non-Aboriginal	–	–	–	–	–
Gap	–	–	–	–	–
First Nations (on-reserve)[e]	–	–	–	–	28.5
Inuit[f]	–	–	–	34.0	44.0
Métis[g]	–	–	–	54.0	54.0
Northern Aboriginal[h]	–	–	–	48.5	57.3
Northern non-Aboriginal[h]	–	–	–	61.6	62.2
Gap	–	–	–	**13.1**	**4.9**
Southern Aboriginal[h]	–	–	–	68.0	72.3
Southern non-Aboriginal[h]	–	–	–	66.4	69.7
Gap	–	–	–	**1.6**	**2.6**
Obese					
These numbers refer to the proportions (%) of population with Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30.0 or more, calculated using survey data on individuals' height and weight					
Total Aboriginal[i]	–	–	–	24.7	–
Total non-Aboriginal[j]	–	–	–	14.0	–
Gap	–	–	–	**10.7**	–
First Nations	–	–	–	–	–
Inuit	–	–	–	–	–
Métis	–	–	–	–	–
Northern Aboriginal[h]	–	–	–	20.2	25.4
Northern non-Aboriginal[h]	–	–	–	18.5	21.1
Gap	–	–	–	**1.7**	**4.3**
Southern Aboriginal[h]	–	–	–	22.7	25.3
Southern non-Aboriginal[h]	–	–	–	12.3	15.6
Gap	–	–	–	**10.4**	**9.7**

Continued next page

Table A.1   (Continued)

Health indicators	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Alcohol use (regular drinking)					
These numbers refer to the proportions (%) of population who reported consuming alcohol at least once a month in the year prior to the survey					
First Nations (on-reserve)[k]	—	—	—	65.6	—
Non-Aboriginal[k]	—	—	—	79.3	—
Northern Aboriginal[h]	—	—	—	44.4	51.6
Northern non-Aboriginal[h]	—	—	—	65.3	66.8
Gap	—	—	—	**20.9**	**15.2**
Southern Aboriginal[h]	—	—	—	54.3	56.7
Southern non-Aboriginal[h]	—	—	—	61.0	64.3
Gap	—	—	—	**6.7**	**7.6**
Alcohol abuse (heavy drinking)					
These numbers refer to the proportions (%) of population who reported consuming five or more alcoholic drinks on one occasion once a month or more often in the year prior to the survey					
First Nations (on-reserve)[m]	—	3.0	—	16.0	—
Non-Aboriginal[n]	7.7	—	—	7.9	—
Northern Aboriginal[h]	—	—	—	17.7	22.9
Northern non-Aboriginal[h]	—	—	—	36.1	38.5
Gap	—	—	—	**18.4**	**15.6**
Southern Aboriginal[h]	—	—	—	24.1	26.9
Southern non-Aboriginal[h]	—	—	—	45.8	43.0
Gap	—	—	—	**21.7**	**16.1**
Daily smoking					
These numbers refer to the proportions (%) of population who reported smoking cigarettes on a daily basis					
First Nations (on-reserve)[o]	—	—	—	46.0	—
Total Aboriginal (off-reserve)[p]	—	—	—	41.5	—
Total non-Aboriginal[q]	—	—	—	22.1	17.0
Inuit[r]	—	—	—	58.0	58.0
Métis[s]	—	—	—	37.0	31.0
Northern Aboriginal[h]	—	—	—	52.5	50.2
Northern non-Aboriginal[h]	—	—	—	29.9	23.5
Gap	—	—	—	**22.6**	**26.7**
South Aboriginal[h]	—	—	—	45.4	36.2
South non-Aboriginal[h]	—	—	—	22.4	17.6
Gap	—	—	—	**23.0**	**18.6**

Health indicators	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Infrequent physical activity[h]					
These numbers refer to the proportions (%) of population whose monthly average physical activity that lasted for at least 15 minutes was less than four times per week during the three months preceding the survey					
Northern Aboriginal	–	–	–	28.3	29.2
Northern non-Aboriginal	–	–	–	19.2	18.5
Gap	–	–	–	**9.1**	**10.7**
South Aboriginal	–	–	–	21.1	19.0
South non-Aboriginal	–	–	–	21.6	18.0
Gap	–	–	–	**0.5**	**1.0**
Household income and poor health[t]					
These numbers refer to the proportion (%) of population reporting fair or poor health by household income					
Low income families with fair/poor health					
Total Aboriginal (off-reserve)	–	–	–	34.0	–
Total non-Aboriginal	–	–	–	25.0	–
Gap	–	–	–	**9.0**	–
First Nations	–	–	–	–	–
Inuit	–	–	–	–	–
Métis	–	–	–	–	–
Middle income families with fair/poor health					
Total Aboriginal (off-reserve)	–	–	–	26.0	–
Total non-Aboriginal	–	–	–	16.0	–
Gap	–	–	–	**10.0**	–
First Nations	–	–	–	–	–
Inuit	–	–	–	–	–
Métis	–	–	–	–	–
High income families with fair/poor health					
Total Aboriginal (off-reserve)	–	–	–	14.0	–
Total non-Aboriginal	–	–	–	9.0	–
Gap	–	–	–	**5.0**	–
First Nations	–	–	–	–	–
Inuit	–	–	–	–	–
Métis	–	–	–	–	–
Life expectancy (years)[u]					
These numbers refer to the projected years of life expectancy of a population group					
Non-Aboriginal men	–	–	–	77.0	–
Inuit men	–	–	–	62.6	–
Gap	–	–	–	**14.4**	–

Continued next page

Table A.1 (Continued)

Health indicator	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Non-Aboriginal women	–	–	–	82.2	–
Inuit women	–	–	–	71.7	–
Gap	–	–	–	**10.5**	–
Non-Aboriginal men	–	–	–	77.0	–
Métis men	–	–	–	71.9	–
Gap	–	–	–	**5.1**	–
Non-Aboriginal women	–	–	–	82.2	–
Métis women	–	–	–	77.7	–
Gap	–	–	–	**4.5**	–
Non-Aboriginal men	–	73.6	–	77.0	–
First Nations men	–	66.9	–	71.1	–
Gap	–	**6.7**	–	**5.9**	–
Non-Aboriginal women	–	80.3	–	82.2	–
First Nations women	–	74.0	–	76.7	–
Gap	–	**6.3**	–	**5.5**	–

[a] This information is derived from the 2005 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) and is taken from Jenz, Soto and Turner (2009), p.9.

[b] This information is derived from the 2002/2003 First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RLHS) taken from Health Canada (2009a), p.11. A comparative figure for total Canadian population in this report is 57.6 per cent and is derived from the 2003 CCHS.

[c] This information is derived from the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) and is taken from Tait (2008), p.10.

[d] This information is derived from the APS and is taken from Jenz, Soto and Turner (2009), p.9.

[e] This information is derived from the 2002/2003 RLHS and it pertains to the prevalence of disability (a chronic health condition limiting activity) among First Nations on-reserve. A comparative figure derived from the 2003 CCHS is 25.8 per cent for the total Canadian population, as reported in Health Canada (2009a), p.14.

[f] This information is derived from the APS and is taken from Tait (2008), p.13.

[g] This information is derived from the APS and is taken from Jenz, Soto and Turner (2009), p.10.

[h] This information derived from the CCHS (2000/2001 and 2005/2006) and is taken from Lix et al. (2009), p.4.

[i] This information is derived from the 2001 APS and is taken from Reading and Wien (2009), p.28.

[j] This information is derived from the 2000/2001 CCHS and is taken from Reading and Wien (2009), p.28.

[k] This information is derived from the 2002/2003 RLHS and is taken from Health Canada, 2009, p.22.

[l] This information is taken from Health Canada, 2009, p.22.

[m] The information for 1991 is taken from Barsh (1993), p.27; the information for 2001 is derived from the 2002/2003 RLHS and is taken from Health Canada, 2009, p.22.

[n] The information for 1986 is taken from Barsh (1993), p.28; the information for 2001 is derived from the 2002/2003 RLHS and is taken from Health Canada, 2009, p.22.

[o] This information is derived from the 2002/2003 RLHS and is taken from Reading and Wien (2009), p.7.

[p] This information is derived from the 2001 APS and is taken from Reading and Wien (2009), p.7.

[q] This information is derived from the 2000/2001 and 2005 CCHS and is taken from Reading and Wien (2009), p.7 and from Tait (2008), p.14.

[r] This information was derived from the APS and was taken from Tait (2008), p. 14.

[s] This information was derived from the APS and was taken from Jenz, Soto and Turner (2009), p. 17.

[t] The information on low, middle, and high income families with poor health was taken from Reading and Wien (2009), p.11. Incidence of low income refers to the percentage of economic families or unattached individuals who spend 20 per cent more than average on food, shelter and clothing.

[u] The information for 1991 is taken from Barsh (1993), p.15; the information for 2001 is taken from Statistics Canada (2005), p. 20.

Additional notes for table 1

For the general population in Canada, life expectancy at birth in 2017 was projected at 78.7 years for men and 83.3 years for women. The projected 2017 life expectancy figures for First Nations are 73.3 years for men and 78.4 for women. For Métis, these figures are 74.1 for men and 79.7 for women and for Inuit, the figures are 63.9 for men and 72.9 for women (Statistics Canada 2005, p.20).

Suicide is approximately three times more prevalent among the Aboriginal population than among the general non-Aboriginal population. Among Aboriginal groups, Inuit and First Nations communities are most affected. Suicide rates are 5 to 7 times higher for First Nations youth than for non-Aboriginal youth. In its recent report, Health Canada compared First Nations and Canadian suicide rates for 1989–1993 time period for ages 0–14 and 15–24 years and found that the suicide rate for young First Nations men are extremely high. The suicide among First Nations men between the ages of 15–24 years was 126 per 100,000, compared to 24 per 100,000 for Canadian men of the same age group. The rate for young First Nations women was 35 per 100,000 versus only 5 per 100,000 for Canadian women. Suicide rates among Inuit are among the highest in the world, currently about 11 times the national average (Health Canada 2012).

In 1988, the overall suicide rate for Aboriginal people was 40.4 per 100,000 compared with an average Canadian national rate over the 1970–1980 period of 14.1 per 100,000 (Barsh 1993).

In 2009, about 37 per cent of Aboriginal people aged 15 and over living in the provinces reported having been a victim of at least one offence. In comparison, 26 per cent of non-Aboriginal people reported having been victimized over the same period. Aboriginal people are also more likely than non-Aboriginal people to be the victim of non-spousal violence (12 per cent compared to 5). Aboriginal people were much more likely to report being a victim of spousal violence, 10 per cent for Aboriginal people compared to 6 per cent for non-Aboriginal people (Perreault 2011).

In 2000–2001, northern Aboriginal people were more likely than southern Aboriginal people to be obese, to smoke daily and to have infrequent physical activity but they were less likely to report a number of chronic health conditions. The tendency to report risk factors increased by 2005–2006 and the difference in prevalence of chronic diseases was less pronounced (Lix et al. 2009).

Table A.2   Educational attainment outcomes for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population[a]

Educational attainment[b]	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
These numbers refer to the proportions (%) of population (age 15+) with the listed highest level of education					
Less than high school education					
Total Aboriginal	26.0	–	51.0	48.0	43.7
Non-Aboriginal	18.0	–	23.0	30.1	23.1
Gap	**8.0**	–	**28.0**	**17.9**	**20.6**
First Nations	–	–	–	50.6	48.4
First Nations (on-reserve)	44.7	–	–	–	–
Inuit	54.0	–	–	57.7	60.7
Métis	–	–	–	42.2	34.6
High school diploma					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	14.0	9.9	21.8
Non-Aboriginal	–	–	19.0	14.2	25.6
Gap	–	–	**5.0**	**4.3**	**3.8**
First Nations	–	–	–	9.0	19.9
Inuit	20.0	–	–	6.2	13.5
Métis	–	–	–	11.9	25.6
Some post-secondary schooling					
First Nations	21.5	–	–	–	–
Inuit	13.0	–	–	–	–
Non-Aboriginal	31.9	–	–	–	–
Trade certificate or diploma					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	–	12.1	11.4
Non-Aboriginal	–	–	–	10.8	10.8
Gap	–	–	–	**1.3**	**0.6**
First Nations	–	–	–	11.5	10.4
Inuit	–	–	–	11.1	9.5
Métis	–	–	–	13.6	13.1
College certificate or diploma					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	18.0	11.6	14.5
Non-Aboriginal	–	–	29.0	15.1	17.4
Gap	–	–	**11.0**	**3.5**	**2.9**
First Nations	–	–	–	10.7	13.2
Inuit	–	–	–	9.5	12.0
Métis	–	–	–	13.4	16.9
University certificate or diploma					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	–	1.4	2.8
Non-Aboriginal	–	–	–	2.6	4.5
Gap	–	–	–	**1.2**	**1.7**

Continued next page

Educational attainment[b]	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
First Nations	–	–	–	1.4	2.9
Inuit	–	–	–	0.8	1.5
Métis	–	–	–	1.4	2.7
University degree					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	3.0	3.4	4.1
Non-Aboriginal	–	–	15.0	10.8	11.9
Gap	–	–	**12.0**	**7.4**	**7.8**
First Nations	–	–	–	3.2	3.7
Inuit	–	–	–	1.6	2.0
Métis	–	–	–	4.0	5.0
Graduate diploma or degree					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	–	1.0	1.7
Non-Aboriginal	–	–	–	5.0	6.7
Gap	–	–	–	**4.0**	**5.0**
First Nations	–	–	–	1.0	1.5
Inuit	–	–	–	0.3	0.7
Métis	–	–	–	1.3	2.0

From 1986 to 1996 (Hull, 2000)[c]

These numbers refer to the proportions (%) of population (age 15+) with the highest level of education, categorized into four categories; less than a high school diploma; a high school diploma; some postsecondary; and completed post-secondary

	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Less than high school diploma					
Non-Aboriginal people	44.0	38.0	34.0	–	–
Registered Indians	72.0	62.0	56.0	–	–
Other Aboriginal people	51.0	44.0	41.0	–	–
Gap (non-Aboriginal to Registered Indians)	**22.0**	**24.0**	**22.0**	–	–
Gap (non-Aboriginal to Other Aboriginal people)	**7.0**	**6.0**	**7.0**	–	–
Completed high school diploma					
Non-Aboriginal people	13.0	15.0	14.0	–	–
Registered Indians	5.0	7.0	7.0	–	–
Other Aboriginal people	13.0	13.0	12.0	–	–
Gap (non-Aboriginal to Registered Indians)	**8.0**	**8.0**	**7.0**	–	–
Gap (non-Aboriginal to other Aboriginal people)	**at par**	**2.0**	**2.0**	–	–
Some post-secondary education					
Non-Aboriginal people	16.0	16.0	16.0	–	–
Registered Indians	12.0	15.0	16.0	–	–
Other Aboriginal people	13.0	17.0	17.0	–	–
Gap (non-Aboriginal to Registered Indians)	**4.0**	**1.0**	**at par**	–	–
Gap (non-Aboriginal to other Aboriginal people)	**3.0**	**1.0**	**1.0**	–	–

Table A.2 (Continued)

Educational attainment[b]	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Completed post-secondary education					
Non-Aboriginal people	27.0	32.0	35.0	–	–
Registered Indians	11.0	17.0	20.0	–	–
Other Aboriginal people	9.0	27.0	29.0	–	–
Gap (non-Aboriginal to Registered Indians)	**16.0**	**15.0**	**15.0**	–	–
Gap (non-Aboriginal to other Aboriginal people)	**18.0**	**5.0**	**6.0**	–	–

a Population 15 years and over for Census 2001 and Census 2006. Because of the changes in questions, the comparisons between the 2006 and 2001 are only possible for university degrees. The information from Census 1996 is not comparable because it pertains to the population group aged 20–29 years.

b The 2006 information was derived from Statistics Canada (2010). The 2001 information was taken from Reading and Wien (2009). The 1996 information was taken from Tait (1999). The 1986 information was taken from Barsh (1993).

c This information on highest level of schooling is based on data from Census 1986, Census 1991, and Census 1996 and is taken from Hull (2000), p.4–6. Completed postsecondary education may include any completed credential such as a certificate, diploma or degree.

Additional notes for table 2

In the early 1960s, only 4 per cent of Indian students on-reserve remained in school through Grade 12. By 1990s, the proportion of on-reserve children who remain in school has increased to close to 54 per cent. In 1986, about 26 per cent of the off-reserve Aboriginal people had less than Grade 12, compared to 18 per cent of non-Aboriginal people. For the on-reserve population, this proportion was 44.7 per cent. For the same time period, the proportion of the general population with a university degree ranged 6 per cent to 11 per cent in urban areas while for Aboriginal people, the proportion was less than 3 per cent. In 1986, only 20 per cent of Inuit had completed secondary school and 54 per cent had less than Grade 9 education. The number of Indian students enrolled in university programmes and other post-secondary institutions increased from 60 students in 1960–1961 to 21,442 in 1990–1991. This comprised an increase of 4.6 per cent, which was larger than the 3.1 per cent increase for the general population (Barsh 1993).

Urban Aboriginal people (comparison over 20 year period)

Over the 1981–2001 period, school attendance rates among young Aboriginal people increased substantially in some CMAs. In 1981, the school attendance was in the 30 per cent to 46 per cent range while in 2001 the attendance ranged from just under 50 per cent to 66 per cent. The improvement, however, was not noticed in all CMAs. Between 1981 and 2001, the gap in school attendance between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth narrowed in some CMAs, such as Montréal, Sudbury and

Winnipeg, but widened in others, such as Toronto, Regina, Calgary and Vancouver (McMullen 2005).

Between 1981 and 2001, in some CMAs (such as Toronto, Sudbury, Winnipeg, Regina, and Calgary) the share of Aboriginal male youth who had not completed high school declined by 20 to 28 percentage points. There were also some smaller decreases in Montréal, Ottawa–Hull, Thunder Bay, Saskatoon, Edmonton and Vancouver (McMullen 2005).

Urban Aboriginal people in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (an assessment of literacy skills)

In 2003, the proportions of First Nations adults aged 16 and over who scored below Level 3 (minimum level deemed necessary for copping in information-driven society) was about 72 in urban Manitoba and 70 per cent in urban Saskatchewan. The proportions of Métis who scored below Level 3 were 54 per cent and 56 per cent for the two urban areas, respectively. The proportions of non-Aboriginal populations who scored below Level 3 were 44 per cent in urban Manitoba and 37 per cent in urban Saskatchewan. The proportions of people who scored at Level 1 (very limited abilities to locate, understand and use information) were also large among Aboriginal people (between 30 per cent and 35 per cent for First nations People and between 19 per cent and 20 per cent for Metis) compared to proportions of non-Aboriginal people, between 12 per cent and 18 per cent (Bougie 2008).

Table A.3   **Economic participation outcomes for total Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population (population aged 15 years and over)**

Economic participation	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Labour Force[a]					
Participation rate					
Total Aboriginal	–	57.4	58.7	61.4	63.0
Non-Aboriginal	66.0	68.0	65.5	66.5	66.9
Participation rate gap	**–**	**10.6**	**6.8**	**5.1**	**3.9**
First Nations	60.3	–	–	57.3	58.8
Inuit	55.6	–	–	62.5	61.3
Métis	–	–	–	69.0	70.1
On-reserve	–	–	–	52.0	–
Large urban centres	–	–	–	66.0	–
Unemployment rate					
Total Aboriginal	–	24.5	24.0	19.1	14.8
Non-Aboriginal	–	10.2	10.1	7.1	6.3
Unemployment rate gap	**–**	**14.3**	**13.9**	**12.0**	**8.5**

Continued next page

Table A.3 (Continued)

Economic participation	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
First Nations	–	–	–	22.2	18.0
Inuit	–	–	–	22.2	20.3
Métis	–	–	–	14.0	10.0
On-reserve	–	–	–	28.0	–
Large urban centres	–	–	–	14.0	–
Employment rate					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	–	49.7	53.7
Non-Aboriginal	51.1	–	–	61.8	62.7
Employment rate gap	–	–	–	**12.1**	**9.0**
First Nations	37.3	–	–	44.6	48.2
Inuit	32.6	–	–	48.6	48.9
Métis	–	–	–	59.4	63.1
Income[b]					
Average employment income ($)					
Full-time, full-year workers					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	–	33,416	39,942
Total non-Aboriginal	–	–	–	43,486	51,505
Gap	–	–	–	**10,070**	**11,563**
First Nations	–	–	–	32,176	37,356
Inuit	–	–	–	36,152	45,514
Métis	–	–	–	34,778	42,373
Median employment income ($)					
Full-time, full-year workers					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	–	–	34,940
Total non-Aboriginal	–	–	–	–	41,592
Gap	–	–	–	–	**6,652**
First Nations	–	–	–	–	32,533
Inuit	–	–	–	–	40,829
Métis	–	–	–	–	37,273
Average income ($)	–	–	–	–	–
First Nations	13,021	–	–	–	–
Inuit	11,867	–	–	–	–
Non-Aboriginal	18.733	–	–	–	–
Median employment income ($)[c] *All workers*					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	12,003	16,036	18,962
Total non-Aboriginal	–	–	21,431	25,081	27,097
Gap	–	–	**9,428**	**9,045**	**8,135**

[a] 2006 information from Statistics Canada (2011a). 2001 information from Statistics Canada (2011), Mendelson (2004) and Reading and Wien (2009). The 1996 and 1991 information from Mendelson (2004). The 1986 information was taken from Barsh (1993).

[b] 2006 information derived from Statistics Canada (2010). The 2001 and 1996 information from Reading and Wien (2009) and Wilson and Macdonald (2010). 1986 information from Barsh (1993).

[c] The summary of median employment income gap (for all workers) reported in the last row suggests that 'if the rate of diminishment of the income gap between 1996 and 2006 continues, it will take 63 years for the Aboriginal population to catch up to the rest of Canada' (Wilson & Macdonald 2010, p. 8).

Additional notes for table 3

The closing of the employment income gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people aged 25–44 who hold a university degree occurred in 2006 for the first time. This gain at the university degree level was not observed for the 45–64 age group category (Wilson & Macdonald 2010).

Inuit (comparison over 20 year period)

Over the 1981–2001 period, labour force participation rates consistently increased among Inuit women and consistently decreased among non-Inuit men. The result in 2001 was that the labour force participation gap between Inuit and non-Inuit was negligible (Senecal 2007).

Over the 1981–2001 period, the gap in unemployment rates between Inuit and non-Inuit increased, especially for men. In 2001, the unemployment rate for Inuit men was more than three times higher than that of non-Inuit men and for women it was three times the rate of non-Inuit women (Senecal 2007).

Urban Aboriginal people (comparison over 20 year period)

Over the period from 1981 to 2001, the largest gains in employment rates occurred in Winnipeg, Edmonton and Sudbury (Siggner & Costa 2005).

Over the 1981–2001, there was a 281 per cent growth in Aboriginal employment-income earners, earning $40,000 or more a year. However, there was also even larger growth of earners making less than $15,000 a year. Overall, for the 20 year period, the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal median employment income narrowed in most CMAs (McMullen 2005).

Over the period from 1981 to 2001, employment incomes of Aboriginal people increased in CMAs from Ottawa-Hull to Regina while in other CMAs (Montreal, Saskatoon, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver) employment incomes of Aboriginal people dropped. It is notable that over the 1980–2000 period, the gap in median employment income between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people closed substantially because employment incomes of non-Aboriginal people declined in most of the CMAs and grew very little in the rest of the CMAs over that period of time. In Winnipeg, for example, in 1980 an Aboriginal person received $56 for every $100 that non-Aboriginal person received; by year 2000, an Aboriginal person received $68 for every $100 than a non-Aboriginal person received. The CMAs from Saskatoon west to Vancouver were the exceptions as the change in the gap in those CMAs was minimal (Siggner & Costa 2005).

Earlier

Over the period from 1965 to 1985, Aboriginal peoples' per capita income increased from 20 per cent to 50 per cent of Canada's national per capita income and their average family income increased to 76 per cent of the average family income of non-Aboriginal Canadians. In 1985, only 7 per cent of Aboriginal families had incomes over $60,000, compared to 15 per cent of all Canadian families. First Nations living on-reserve had only 54 per cent of the average family income of other Canadians. About 51 per cent of the First Nations workers living on-reserve earned less than $5,000, compared to 28 per cent of the general population. Median income of the off-reserve Aboriginal men in 1985 was $9,800, which was less than half of the median income of non-Aboriginal men, $20,800, while the median income of Aboriginal women living off-reserve ($7,200) was close to 67 per cent of the median income of Canadian women (Barsh 1993).

In 1985, the unemployment rates of young Aboriginal workers (aged 15–24 years) were much higher from that of their non-Aboriginal counterparts: 31.6 per cent for First nations and 35.7 per cent for Inuit, compared to 16.4 per cent for non-Aboriginal workers. Similarly, for prime age workers (aged 25 years and over) the unemployment rate was 18.8 per cent and 21.4 per cent for First nations and for Inuit respectively, compared to 8.7 per cent unemployment rate for non-Aboriginal workers (Barsh 1993).

During the 1980s, the proportion of Aboriginal people receiving government transfer payments increased significantly. In 1991, 46 per cent of First Nations people living on-reserve relied on transfer payments for their basic needs (Barsh 1993).

Table A.4 Family functioning indicators for total Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population[a]

Family functioning indicators	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Divorced[b]					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	–	–	7.6
Total non-Aboriginal	–	–	–	–	8.1
Gap	–	–	–	–	**0.5**
First Nations	–	–	–	–	6.9
Inuit	–	–	–	–	3.0
Métis	–	–	–	–	8.9
Lone parent[c]					
These numbers refer to the proportions (%) of children aged 14 years and under living with lone parent					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	–	–	35.0
Total non-Aboriginal	13.0	–	–	17.0	17.0
Gap	–	–	–	–	**18.0**
First Nations	–	–	–	–	37.0
On-reserve	24.0	–	–	–	33.0
Off-reserve	30.0	–	–	–	41.0
Inuit	19.0	–	–	–	26.0
Métis	–	–	–	31.0	31.0
Government transfer payments recipients[d]					
These numbers refer to government transfer payments as a percentage (%) of total income					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	–	20.8	18.1
Total non-Aboriginal	–	–	–	11.5	10.9
Gap	–	–	–	**9.3**	**7.2**
First Nations	–	–	–	24.3	21.8
Inuit	–	–	–	20.3	17.7
Métis	–	–	–	15.7	13.8
Low income cut-off (LICO) before and after tax[e]					
These numbers refer to the proportions (%) of population below Statistics Canada's low income cut-off, before and after tax					
LICO before-tax					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	–	31.2	25.0
Total non-Aboriginal	–	–	–	12.4	11.6
Gap	–	–	–	**18.8**	13.**4**
First Nations	–	–	–	37.3	32.3
Inuit	–	–	–	21.9	18.4
Métis	–	–	–	24.5	18.0
LICO after-tax					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	–	–	18.7
Total non-Aboriginal	–	–	–	–	8.4
Gap	–	–	–	–	**10.3**

Table A.4 (Continued)

Family functioning indicators	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
First Nations	–	–	–	–	24.6
Inuit	–	–	–	–	13.8
Métis	–	–	–	–	12.8

[a] Government transfer payments refer to the percentage of total income. Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) figures capture the prevalence of low income for persons in economic family. Population 15 years of age and over.

[b] This information was derived from Statistics Canada (2010).

[c] The 2006 and 2001 information was taken from Statistics Canada (2008), p.15. The 1986 information was taken from Barsh (1993), p.27.

[d] The 2006 information was taken from Statistics Canada (2010). The 2001 information was taken from Reading and Wien (2009), p.10.

[e] The 2006 information was taken from Statistics Canada (2010). The 2001 information was taken from Reading and Wien (2009), p.10.

Additional notes for table 4

In the mid-1990s 18.2 per cent of all Aboriginal families in Canada were lone-parent families.

From 1996 to 2001, the proportion of lone-parent families among Registered Indians had increased from 27 per cent to 31 per cent of all families. In 2001, about 33 per cent of Aboriginal families living on reserves were lone-parent families. Also, in 2001, 22 per cent of Registered Indian women were lone mothers, in comparison to 8 per cent of the non-Aboriginal women (INAC 2012, p.22).

Urban Aboriginal people (comparison over 20 year period)

In 2001, between 14 per cent and 32 per cent of Aboriginal households in major CMAs were lone-parent family, compared to about 10 per cent for non-Aboriginal households (Siggner & Costa 2005).

In 2001, total income from all sources varied across the major CMAs. In certain CMAs (such as Montreal, Ottawa-Hull, Toronto, Sudbury, Calgary and Edmonton) Aboriginal population (aged 25–44) had total incomes of about $20,000 or more. The range in other CMAs was $16,000 to $19,000. In Regina, Saskatoon and Thunder Bay, the median total income of Aboriginal people was only slightly more than half that of their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Siggner & Costa 2005).

The dependence on government transfer payments among the Aboriginal population decreased substantially in all CMAs over the 1981–2001 period (McMullen 2005).

In the Prairies CMAs, the share of Aboriginal income received from government transfers declined from about 33.3 per cent in 1980 to between 25 per cent and 20

per cent in year 2000. This, however, was still significantly more than the income share that non-Aboriginal people in those CMAs received from government transfers in year 2000, which was about 10 per cent to 11 per cent. In other CMAs, however, the share of income received by Aboriginal people from government transfers was much lower and it ranged from 10 per cent to 12 per cent in year 2000.

Over the period from 1981 to 2001, the proportions of low income among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people differed across different CMAs. Low income rates in year 2000 in most CMAs was significantly higher among urban Aboriginal people than among urban non-Aboriginal people (42 per cent compared to 17 per cent) although there was some indication of emergence of an Aboriginal 'middle class' earning sufficient employment incomes to afford a 'decent' standard of living. Between 1980 and 2000, the number of Aboriginal people with employment incomes of $40,000 or more increased by 281 per cent while the number of non-Aboriginal people in that income category increased by 86 per cent for the same period of time. The number of Aboriginal people in the lowest income category, however, grew even faster (Siggner & Costa 2005).

Table A.5   **Community functioning for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population groups**

Community functioning indicators	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Living in crowded housing[a]					
These numbers refer to the proportions (%) of population living in crowded homes, defined as more than one person per room					
Total Aboriginal (off-reserve)	–	–	17.0	17.0	11.0
Total non-Aboriginal	1.8	–	–	7.0	3.0
Gap	–	–	–	**10.0**	**8.0**
First Nations	–	–	20.0	–	15.0
First Nations (on-reserve)	28.9	–	33.0	–	26.0
First Nations (off-reserve)	11.3	–	10.0	–	7.0
Inuit	31.1	–	36.0	–	31.0
Métis	–	–	7.0	–	3.0
Dwellings in need of major repair[b]					
These numbers refer to the proportions (%) of population living in dwellings in need of major repairs, as judged by the respondents					
Total Aboriginal	–	–	25.0	–	25.0
Total non-Aboriginal	–	–	8.0	–	7.0
Gap	–	–	**17.0**	–	**18.0**

Continued next page

Table A.5   (Continued)

Community functioning indicators	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
First Nations	–	–	26.0	–	28.0
First Nations (on-reserve)	–	–	36.0	–	44.0
First Nations (off-reserve)	–	–	18.0	–	17.0
Inuit	–	–	19.0	–	28.0
Métis	–	–	17.0	–	14.0
Community well-being[c]					
CWB index for First Nations	–	0.58	–	0.66	–
CWB index for Inuit	–	0.63	–	0.69	–
CWB index for non-Aboriginal	–	0.77	–	0.81	–
Gap First Nation vs non-Aboriginal	–	**0.19**	–	**0.15**	–
Gap Inuit vs non-Aboriginal	–	**0.14**	–	**0.12**	–

[a] The 2006 and 1996 information was taken from Statistics Canada (2008), p.25, p.34, p.45. The 1986 information is taken from Barsh (1993), p.22.

[b] This information was taken from Statistics Canada (2008), p.25, p.34, p.45.

[c] Community Well-Being (CWB) index is a composite average score for a community based on the characteristics of its residents. The measure was developed by INAC and it pertains to residents' income, education, housing quantity and quality, and labour force characteristics such as participation and employment rates. This information was taken from Barsh (1993), p.6.

Additional notes for table 5

Since the early 1960s, the proportions of on-reserve houses with running water has increased from 12 per cent to 85 per cent. By 1990s, about 75 per cent of the on-reserve houses had central heating and about 90 per cent had electricity (Barsh 1993).

Are things getting better or worse or stay the same? 1951, 1969 and on

The tables and notes presented above suggest that there has been some improvement in some of the socioeconomic outcomes over the past two decades. The improvement, however, is related mostly to the socioeconomic conditions of some groups of Aboriginal people such as urban Aboriginal people and to some indicators such as education and labour force participation. A reader should bear in mind that the improvements in relation to those indicators were much more pronounced among the non-Aboriginal population and that most of the long-lasting gaps have continued widening.

References

Barsh, R.L. 1993, *Canada's Aboriginal Peoples: Social Integration or Disintegration*? Alberta, University of Lethbridge, Department of Native American Studies.

Bougie, E. 2008, 'Literacy profile of off-reserve First Nations and Métis people living in urban Manitoba and Saskatchewan: Results from the international adult literacy and skills survey 2003', *Education Matters*, 7 January, 2008, Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics, Statistics Canada.

Health Canada 2009a, *A Statistical Profile of the Health of the First Nations in Canada: Self-rated Health and Selected Conditions, 2002–2005,* Ottawa, Canada.

—— 2009b, *A Statistical Profile of the Health of First Nations of Canada: Determinants of Health, 1999-2003,* Ottawa, Canada.

—— 2012, *Acting on What We Know: Preventing Youth Suicide Among First Nations*, The report of the advisory group on suicide, http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/pubs/promotion/_suicide/prev_youth-jeunes/index-eng.php#s212 prevention (accessed 9 October, 2012).

Hull, J. 2000*, Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Labour Market Outcomes Canada, 1996*, A report submitted to the Department of Indian Affairs and Development, 17 October, 2000.

Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC) 2012, *Aboriginal Women in Canada: A Statistical Profile from the 2006 Census*, Indian and Northern Affairs, Cat. no. 978-1-100-20156-6.

Janz, T. 2009, *An Overview of the Health of the Métis Population: Fact Sheet*, Statistics Canada, 19 February, 2009.

—— Seto, J. and Turner, A. 2009, *Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2006: An Overview of the Health of the Métis Population*, Statistics Canada, Analytical paper, Cat. no. 89-637-X – N0. 004.

Lix, L.M., Bruce, S., Sarkar, Y. and Young, K.T. 2009, *Risk Factors and Chronic Conditions among Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Populations*, Statistics Canada, Component of Statistics Canada Health Report, Cat. no. 82-003-X.

McMullen, K. 2005, 'Aboriginal people in Canada's urban areas: Narrowing the education gap', *Education Matters*, 7 September, 2005.

Mendelson, M. 2004, *Aboriginal People in Canada's Labour Market: Work and Unemployment, Today and Tomorrow*, Caledon Institute of Social Policy.

Perreault, S. 2011, *Violent Victimization of Aboriginal People in Canadian Provinces, 2009*, Statistics Canada, Juristat Bulletin, 11 March, 2009.

Reading, C.L. and Wien, F. 2009, *Health Inequalities and Social Determinants of Aboriginal Peoples' Health*, National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health.

Senecal, S. 2007, *Employment, Industry and Occupations of Inuit in Canada, 1981–2001*, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Research and Analysis Directorate of Indian and Northern Affairs, Canada.

Siggner, A.J. and Costa, R. 2005, *Aboriginal Conditions in Census Metropolitan Areas, 1981–2001*, Statistics Canada, Cat. no. 89-613-MIE – Number 008.

Statistics Canada 2003, *The 2001 Census: Analysis Series. Aboriginal Peoples of Canada: A Demographic Profile*, Ottawa, Statistics Canada.

—— 2005, *Projections of the Aboriginal Populations, Canada, Provinces and Territories 2001–2017*, Statistics Canada, Cat. no. 91-547-XIE.

—— 2008, *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census*, Statistics Canada, Cat. no. 97-558-XIE.

—— 2010, *The 2006 Census of Population, Aboriginal Identity (8), Age Groups (8), Area of Residence (6), Sex (3) and Selected Demographic, Cultural, Labour Force, Educational and Income Characteristics (233), for the Total Population of Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2006 Census — 20 per cent Sample Xata*, Statistics Canada, Last modified, 2010-01-07, http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/ statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/sip/Rp-eng.cfm?LANG= E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK= 0&GRP=1&PID=97446&PRID=0&PTYPE=97154&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SU B=0&Temporal=2006&THEME=73&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF= (accessed 2 October, 2012

—— 2011, *The 2006 Census of Population, Data products, Topic-based Tabulations, Labour Force Activity (8), Aboriginal Identity (8B), Age Groups (13A), Sex (3) and Area of Residence (6A) for the Population 15 Years and Over of Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2001 and 2006 Censuses — 20 per cent Sample Data*, Last modified, 2011-04-07, http://www12. stat can.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/tbt/Rpeng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH =3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=1 &PID=92101&PRID=0&PTYPE=88971,97154&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0 &Temporal=2006&THEME=74&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF= (accessed 2 October, 2012).

Tait, H. 1999, *Educational Achievement of Young Aboriginal Adults*, Statistics Canada, Canadian Social Trends, Spring 1999, Cat. no. 11-008.

—— 2008, *Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2006: Inuit Health and Social Conditions*, Statistics Canada, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division.

Tjepkema, M. 2002, *The Health of the Off-reserve Aboriginal Population*, Health Statistics Division of Statistics Canada, Supplement to health reports, vol. 13, 4 July, 2002, Cat. 82-003.

Wilson, D. and Macdonald, D. 2010, *The Income Gap between Aboriginal Peoples and the Rest of Canada*, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, ISBN 987-1-897569-97-9, April, 2010.

EVALUATION AND POLICY

12   The use of evaluation in Indigenous policy and program development: the case of Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory

Michael Dillon[1]

Abstract

This paper outlines the use of evaluation and other policy development analysis tools in the development of the Government's Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory policy and program arrangements. It also explores lessons learnt about methodology, building good evidence and transparency. The paper highlights the importance of developing the evidence base around administrative data sets, designing robust survey tools, undertaking community consultations and achieving community ownership of the issues and solutions. The value of taking a long-term perspective on building evidence, timing the development of program logics within policy development and undertaking evaluations that support continual learning are also discussed.

12.1   Introduction

Policy and program development is shaped by ideas, evidence and political and budgetary feasibility and, in many cases, opportunity, serendipity and fortune. Banks in 'Good evidence can "neutralise" political obstacles' (Banks 2009, p. 7) suggests that if we get the first two right then the 'politics' will play a less significant role.

Ideology arguably plays a disproportionately large and significant part in Indigenous affairs given the deeply passionate opinions that people have on

---

[1] Deputy Secretary, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). This paper is the product of the work of a number of contributors. Kim Grey, Margaret Henderson and Beth Abraham all made significant contributions. Ultimate responsibility for any errors must be attributed to Michael Dillon.

Indigenous issues. Thus the challenge facing policymakers, to match good ideas with evidence, is even more important. To develop good policy, policymakers must persist, giving citizens and stakeholders certainty, allowing time for lessons to be learnt and policy to be refined and improved.

On the influence of ideology and politics, Banks (2009, p. 4) puts it this way:

> Policy decisions will be typically influenced by much more than objective evidence, or rational analysis. Values, interests, personalities, timing, circumstance and happenstance — in short, democracy — determine what actually happens.

In his paper 'Evidence based policy: what is it and *how do we get it*', Banks identifies three essential ingredients in answering this question — the first is that 'methodology matters', the second is the pre-requisite for good data and the third is transparency. Transparency relates to the sharing of information not just with other experts in the field, but with the people who are going to be affected by the policy. Public consultations and community feedback play an important part in ensuring transparency (Banks 2009, p. 14).

This paper takes as its focus of discussion the policy transition from the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) to the Australian Government's recently announced policy and program framework for the Northern Territory, *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory* (Australian Government 2011) and outlines the significant role of evaluation and policy analysis in shaping that transition.

In an appendix, the paper draws an explicit line of sight between the relevance of the three ingredients of evaluation identified by Banks to the day-by-day, month-by-month practice of policy development undertaken over recent years by the Australian Government in relation to the Northern Territory.

12.2   Setting the scene — from the NTER to Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory

The development of Stronger Futures derives from a complex array of factors not well understood even amongst those deeply involved in Indigenous affairs. It has its origins in the 2007 NTER which was initiated in response to the widespread social dysfunction in many communities that was undermining the quality of life of women and children and reducing their life opportunities. The original focus of the NTER was primarily to ensure community safety, the catalyst for which was the release of the Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, titled *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle: 'Little Children are Sacred'*.

The NTER quickly became known as 'the intervention' because it involved, inter alia, the deployment of the Australian Defence Force, the enactment of legislation with a five-year sunset clause which compulsorily acquired five-year leases over some 70 remote communities, introduced universal welfare quarantining for all persons on income support in those communities, and removed the legislative protection of the Racial Discrimination Act in relation to those policy changes. Many Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory were distressed and angry about key aspects of the NTER policy and its implementation. There was also a large degree of confusion as, simultaneously, the Northern Territory Government took action to reform local government across the Northern Territory, replacing some 80 community councils with larger shires. In the minds of many Aboriginal people this too was part of the 'intervention'.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory is a policy framework which is aimed at building on the achievements of the NTER as well as redressing the hurt and distress caused by the way the NTER was implemented, re-aligning policy settings to be more respectful and to take into account the potential role of local organisations in service delivery, increasing employment opportunities arising from government investment, while retaining a focus on addressing the drivers of disadvantage and dysfunction.

Accordingly, Stronger Futures is informed by policy and program evaluations. Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory is built on a foundation of policy-relevant evidence, community consultation to ascertain community preferences, and is moving methodically and steadily to transition to sustainable and widely accepted policy settings that will underpin the Government's broader policy objectives of closing the gap in remote Northern Territory communities

Stronger Futures involves new and complex legislation, significant long-term investment by the Government totalling $3.4 billion over 10 years, complex inter-governmental partnerships and negotiations, an array of interlinked service delivery arrangements, and a commitment to strong, effective and meaningful engagement with local Aboriginal communities.

The evidence base drawn on by the Government in designing the Stronger Futures policy involved many different sources and types of information. It has been about building up a reasonably sophisticated picture of the impact of multiple, coordinated measures and using evaluations to help build that evidence base.

In 2008, the Government commissioned the Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board, chaired by Peter Yu, to review each of the key measures that made up the NTER.

Following the review, policy changes were introduced to refocus and realign the NTER with community expectations. Income management was reformed to remove its universal application, and to target it to vulnerable people, people who had been on specific payment types for an extended period and to income support recipients who requested it, and placed on a non-discriminatory basis. The Racial Discrimination Act was reapplied to the NTER policy arrangements.

The Yu review included very solid research that gave a statistical picture of the Northern Territory Emergency Response communities. John Taylor (from the Australian National University's Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research) undertook this research and showed that the population of remote Northern Territory communities was growing and would continue to grow for at least another decade by around 20 per cent.

This demographic research also busted some myths — or misperceptions. What it told us was that there was no uniform drift away from remote communities. In fact, in some places like Wadeye, the population increase was urbanising remote communities — creating Aboriginal towns. The research also highlighted that, given around 36 per cent of the population of these communities were children, as time passed there would be an increase in the working-age population. That meant that, if the current circumstances continued, there would be another, but larger, generation of people who were largely dependent on welfare, poorly educated in comparison to most Australians, and needing better access to government services.

This evidence told us that we had a long-term strategic issue — as well as an immediate and continuing emergency. This evidence is the fundamental rationale for the 10-year time frame adopted for Stronger Futures.

Over the course of the NTER, individual measure evaluations and reviews, and the six monthly monitoring reports, delivered information that we have used to put together a picture of trends over time, what was working, what was not, and what needed doing differently.

When it came to asking the policy question — what should happen when the NTER ends in 2012? — there was already a substantial base of information to inform decision making.

The demographic information showed that the Northern Territory was fundamentally unique. Some 80 per cent of the Aboriginal population in the Territory live in remote or very remote areas. Almost 30 per cent of the Territory's population is Aboriginal (not 2 or 3 per cent as in other states).

Reports from the independent COAG Reform Council have shown that each of the six Closing the Gap targets, the gap between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians, was widest in the Northern Territory by a large margin. There were very poor outcomes for education and employment (CRC 2009, 2010).

The evidence was clear that additional investment was required if the gaps in Aboriginal outcomes in the Territory were to be narrowed and brought closer to outcomes in other jurisdictions.

Significantly, the Government undertook successive and extensive consultations with Aboriginal people in remote Northern Territory communities between 2008 and 2011 (Australian Government 2009, 2011). The consultation comments from thousands of people at hundreds of meetings in over 100 communities were systematically documented against measures (or priorities).

The qualitative information from the consultations provided insights into Aboriginal people's lived experiences. Three rounds of consultations (for the Yu review in 2008, the NTER Redesign in 2009 and Stronger Futures in 2011) provided the Government with a strong picture of the wide diversity of views and experience, and some consistent common themes.

Alcohol was a consistent theme. The 2011 consultations gave us the clearest indication yet about what local people thought about alcohol. Not only did it harm people's health, people were saying it was the reason houses were damaged, children were neglected, and children were not being sent to school. The Stronger Futures alcohol measure has a strong focus on reducing harm and minimum standards, based on non-negotiable criteria, being set for local alcohol management plans.

The consultations consistently indicated that many people, particularly women, wanted income management because it helped them manage their money and feed their children. People wanted continued investment in houses, they wanted jobs and they thought their health service was good, but they wanted a wider range of services, especially alcohol rehabilitation, dental services and mental health care.

The Community Safety and Wellbeing Research Survey of over 1300 Aboriginal residents of 16 remote Northern Territory communities was published in 2011. The results showed that several NTER measures — in particular, police and night patrols — had helped to make remote communities safer. The majority of community residents (72 per cent) thought that their communities were safer (Shaw and d'Abbs 2011). Stronger Futures continues the police and night patrol funding.

There were also individual measure evaluations, like the Community Stores evaluation which provided a strong indication that the community stores licensing was having a positive effect on the supply of fresh, healthy food and the quality of stores management. Stronger Futures includes a food security measure that continues and fine-tunes stores licensing.

The NTER Evaluation pulled the many threads together to give a more complete and comprehensive picture to inform the policy development process.

So tackling alcohol misuse, education, housing and jobs are top priorities for Stronger Futures. The specific measures to deliver on these priorities have been shaped by the evidence. Most of the NTER measures have been modified, some have ceased, and there are new measures such as the Communities for Children initiative.

Stronger Futures is now in an implementation phase and evidence and evaluation continue to be important and an integral part of the Stronger Futures policy and program arrangements — there are legislated, independent reviews; there will be six monthly monitoring reports; and measure evaluations. We will continue to improve the quality of the data and evidence.

The Government will continue to assess emerging evidence to gauge whether policies and programs are on track. The latest results from the 2011 Census indicate that while there is much work still to be done in the Northern Territory, improvements are being made.

- Across States and Territories the greatest improvement in Indigenous Year 12 completion since 2006 is in the Northern Territory — where attainment of at least Year 12 or an equivalent level of qualification for 20 to 24 year olds, rose by 10.4 percentage points, from 18 per cent in 2006 to 29 per cent in 2011. The Northern Territory also experienced the greatest reduction in the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous attainment over this period — 6.7 percentage points.

- Median household income for Indigenous households in the Northern Territory rose between 2006 and 2011.

- Data from the 2011 Census shows that the Indigenous employment rate in the Northern Territory (the proportion of all Indigenous people aged 15–64 who are employed) declined from 39 per cent in 2006 to 37 per cent in 2011; however, this includes participants in Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP).

- The proportion of Indigenous Territorians aged 15–64 who were employed in a non-CDEP job, rose from 21 per cent in 2006 to 30 per cent in 2011. This 9

percentage point increase is more relevant than the data that includes CDEP participants as the policy goal is to increase non-CDEP employment not to increase the number of people in CDEP positions

Since the NTER Evaluation, 2010 data have been released showing a statistically significant 8.8 per cent decline in Indigenous infant mortality from 2007 to 2010 in the Territory.

In June 2012 the COAG Reform Council released its latest report on progress against the six Closing the Gap targets. The report indicated that, if trends to 2010 continue, the Northern Territory is on track to close the gap in Indigenous life expectancy by 2031.

The gaps are still very wide but the evidence is that improvements are being made.

Undertaking whole-of-government evaluations such as those undertaken in relation to the NTER involves looking at the macro level and rising above individual programs with the aim of creating a strategic learning framework. Working in partnership with other Commonwealth agencies and State and Territory governments requires transparency and a commitment to sharing data. Although there are significant challenges, working in partnership provides significant opportunities to improve the evidence base through collaboration, comparison across jurisdictions and sharing of lessons learnt from one place to another.

12.3   Conclusion

The shift from the NTER to *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory* is a clear example of the successful use of evaluation and policy analysis, based on a broad suite of evidence to transform and reshape policies and programs in the Indigenous policy domain.

Australian Government policy makers are relying on a broad evidence base to understand what works, and what does not, to ensure better outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

Evidence is sought and utilised in a variety of different forms, at a number of different points in the policy development and implementation cycle.

Formalised evaluations certainly have a key place in this process — but so do other mechanisms. These include investing in building intellectual capital within the public service, drawing on the expertise and experience of policy makers and stakeholders, incorporating institutional capacity and knowledge, and using

feedback loops between people directly impacted by policies, the policy makers themselves and other stakeholders. As tools in the development of strategic policy, evaluations are necessary, but not sufficient.

The use of a broad and flexible evidence base is particularly important when dealing with significant and entrenched disadvantage. Evidence from the NTER show us that overcoming disadvantage is likely to be addressed only through intergenerational shifts in behaviours, due to a variety of interrelated measures across a broad spectrum of issues, including health, housing, land, governance and education. This knowledge has been central in developing the Stronger Futures policy and program agenda.

Successful transformational policy reform uses a set of methods that inform the policy process over time and acknowledges that evidence is not the only factor which influences policy making. Policy development is not objective or neutral; but inherently involves value judgements. To recognise this reality is not to devalue the importance of strong and robust policy analysis and evaluation. The inevitable value judgements applied by governments as they shape policy will always be better formed if they are underpinned by robust analysis and evaluation.

The real value of evaluations in Indigenous policy development is the fundamental contribution it makes in helping to establish a broader understanding of how to best address and overcome disadvantage.

12.A   Appendix: Methodology matters

The following issues address some of the more technical evaluation lessons learned by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs from its policy analysis work in the Northern Territory. The paper has framed this around Banks' three essential ingredients of good evaluation.

Program logics

An important strategy for embedding evaluations into Indigenous policies is to ensure that a program logic is developed early, preferably at the same time as the policy is being developed. Generally programs have either an explicit or implicit program logic. A key task for evaluation is to make program logic explicit and draw connections to the measurement of outcomes.

The development of a program logic for an evaluation is the first step in defining the problem and working out the steps involved in getting from A to B. Program logic refers to causal models that link program inputs and activities to a chain of intended outcomes, usually represented as a diagram. Program logics can focus on intermediate outcomes to show how the activities and resources invested in particular areas are expected to contribute to longer term outcomes. Program logics also help in trying to define what evidence will be required in order to measure if intended outcomes are being reached, and what instruments will be needed to measure outcomes.

According to Banks (2009, p. 9) good methodologies have a number of features in common:

> They test a theory or proposition as to why policy action will be effective; they have a serious treatment of the 'counterfactual'; they involve, wherever possible, quantification of impacts, they look at both direct and indirect effects (often it's the indirect effects that can be most important); they set out the uncertainties and control for other influences that may impact on observed outcomes; they are designed to avoid errors that could occur through self selection or other sources of bias; they provide for sensitivity tests and, importantly, they have the ability to be tested and, ideally, replicated by third parties.

Program logics for the NTER Evaluation were developed early and used over the course of implementation and evaluation (ARTD Consultants and Westwood Spice 2010)

For the NTER Evaluation six program logics were developed that were linked to six outcome areas. Two program logics looked at the causal assumptions and outcomes in improving service delivery (i.e. covering resetting the relationship and coordinating service delivery). Four further program logics focused on intermediate outcomes to show how the activities and resources in particular areas (creating safer communities; improving health and nutrition; increasing school readiness and improving educational attainment) were expected to contribute to longer term outcomes. While program logic diagrams often show vertical causal relationships, a more strategic approach is to depict some of the horizontal relationships, particularly where achievements in one outcome area, for example, community safety, may influence others, for example, health and nutrition. The NTER Evaluation strategy and the final report were informed by these program logics.

Good data, better data

The second ingredient identified by Banks as a pre-requisite for evidence based policy is good data. In the Indigenous area we are actually at a more advanced stage than many other areas of social policy. Considerable work has been done around the development of performance indicators. For example, we have the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage reports, which describe progress being made in addressing Indigenous disadvantage across a range of key indicators. There is also the Indigenous Expenditure Report which reports transparently on expenditure on services to Indigenous Australians. A substantial range of material is also collected by the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse which brings together evidence-based research on overcoming Indigenous disadvantage.

Implementation

Gathering data about implementation is hard work and tools need to be developed to do this. This takes time. The NTER monitoring reports were developed from the very start of the NTER and refined each six months and published by FaHCSIA. That process allowed a substantial amount of information to be collected, reviewed and released on a regular basis.

For evaluation and monitoring of Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, FaHCSIA is incorporating the lessons learnt from the NTER, in particular the

findings from the NTER Evaluation, in the development of an evaluation strategy for Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory.

Findings from the NTER Evaluation revealed there are some gaps in the available evidence. While many improvements were made in gathering data, the available evidence was not ideal to show where gains have been made in a number of areas. Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory will continue to seek to improve the policy and program evidence base so as to assess the impact of measures and underlying policy on improving the lives of Indigenous citizens in the Northern Territory.

Baseline data

There is a myth that baseline data or rather the lack thereof is always a problem for evaluation. Baseline data is basic information gathered before a program begins. It is used later to provide a comparison for assessing program impact. In Australia we have numerous administrative data sets covering hospitalisation data, school attendance data and crime incident data that are readily available to use to give us baseline data for previous years.

To focus the evaluation effort on collecting baseline data, much of which is actually readily available, can take effort away from identifying areas where we have no data and building tools to collect that data. It can also distract from the more important task of undertaking secondary analysis of the existing administrative data sets and making improvements in existing data collection methodologies.

In fact, there is a risk that focusing on having one year of data at the beginning of a program which can be compared with data at the end of the program can be misleading, as it will not capture changes that are due to long-term trends. Existing administrative data sets can provide us with multiple years of data so that we can see long-term trends. Without care, just analysing trends from a 'baseline' could lead to changes being identified that are merely part of existing trends. For the NTER Evaluation the aim was to collect information for at least five years prior to the commencement of the policy, in addition to focusing our efforts on secondary analysis of the data and identifying data gaps. The secondary analysis of the data can involve looking at differences based on age and sex or between remote and non-remote communities.

Existing administrative data

For the NTER, which primarily addressed the issue of safety, administrative data sets such as police incident records have been used to monitor increases in the number of police reports around key crime incident categories such as assaults, alcohol related incidents, domestic violence and child neglect. Since the commencement of the NTER there has been an increase in almost all these categories, which is a reflection of increased police activity due to the number of extra police that are based in the NTER communities. As such it does not tell us much about underlying crime rates.

Community surveys

A key goal of the NTER Evaluation strategy was to include the people's perspective in the independent evaluation. As noted above, the views of people living in communities about safety and community change were needed. Data on people's lived experience complement and inform the interpretation of crime and justice administrative data.

In 2010 and 2011, FaHCSIA commissioned a consortium of specialist consultants led by Bowchung Consulting to undertake a Community Safety and Wellbeing Research Study (CSWRS). Several methodologies were used to help triangulate research results and improve their robustness and credibility.

To understand whether the trends evident in administrative data are making a difference on the ground involves asking those people who are directly affected by violence and other social problems — local Indigenous people and service providers.

The Community Safety and Wellbeing survey interviewed 1300 local Indigenous people in 16 remote Northern Territory communities. A quantitative survey was complemented by tailored and systematic qualitative research. The project aimed to collect systematic and robust data to meet three objectives: a) allow for an individual assessment of current status and recent changes in each place through a standardised quantitative survey; b) aid understanding of place-based perceptions of safety and wellbeing through systematic qualitative evaluation research; and c) provide a resource for each community involved that can be referenced for future community development and planning.

The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) was commissioned by FaHCSIA to design the questionnaire. The AIC examined various other survey tools used in community safety surveys, in particular surveys that were specific to Indigenous

communities, and, as such, were able to build on the existing knowledge in this area. The questions used in the CSWRS have improved on existing tools by including questions not just around people's attitudes to violence but about what they think should be done to promote change.

It was important for the questionnaire to be robust and repeatable so that it could be replicated in the future. The need for the survey to be repeatable takes into account the need for longitudinal data on community safety. The *Little Children are Sacred* report noted that it would take at least 15 years before we could expect to see any real change:

> Are there simple fixes? Of course not! Our conservative estimate is that it will take at least 15 years (equivalent to an Aboriginal generation) to make some inroads into the crisis and then hopefully move on from there. (Anderson and Wild 2007, p. 13)

Service provider surveys

For the NTER Evaluation, service provider surveys were undertaken to assess changes that were taking place from the point of view of those delivering the programs. The NTER had a strong focus on increasing service delivery particularly in the area of safety (extra police, night patrols, safe houses, and Remote Aboriginal Family Community Workers). The Community Safety Service Provider Survey involved a survey of 699 government and non-government service providers in the Northern Territory in a range of sectors, including education, health, police, housing, welfare, coordination, justice and legal services. This was conducted on-line and had a good response rate due to a communications strategy directed at the organisations that employ potential respondents.

Consultations

> The wider the impacts of a policy proposal, the wider the consultation should be. Not just with experts, but also with the people who are likely to be affected by the policy, whose reactions and feedback provide insights into the likely impacts and help avoid unintended consequences. Such feedback in itself constitutes a useful form of evidence. (Banks 2009, p. 14)

Feedback from the community is an important source of good data. In 2008, the NTER Review Board visited 31 communities and met with representatives of 56 communities, consulted over 140 different organisations, and received over 200 public submissions. The NTER Redesign consultations in 2009 involved community consultations with Aboriginal people in 73 NTER communities, as well as several other Northern Territory communities and town camps. In 2011, the Northern Territory Stronger Futures involved community consultation meetings in

over 100 communities. The 2009 and 2011 consultations also included one-on-one and small group meeting. There were over 440 such meetings in the 2009 consultations and over 370 in the 2011 consultations. Independent assessments of both the NTER Re-design and the Stronger Futures consultation processes were undertaken to determine whether they were open, fair and accountable (see CIRCA 2009, 2011a, 2011b; and O'Brien-Rich Research Group 2011). This brings us to the next ingredient identified by Banks: the need for transparency.

Transparency, debate and ownership

The need for transparency is the third ingredient identified by Banks. Publishing evaluation findings and making the evidence transparent can influence public discourse on an issue. It can encourage debate and be contested.

> No evidence is immutable. If it hasn't been tested, or contested, we can't really call it 'evidence' and it misses the opportunity to educate the community about what is at stake in a policy issue, and thereby for it to become more accepting of the policy initiative itself. (Banks 2009, p. 14)

FaHCSIA makes evidence transparent and involves the community in the research process in a wide range of ways.

Participatory research

Participatory research methods help build relationships with communities and provide much needed jobs. They also provide an opportunity for the community to become informed about what other people in their community think and experience during implementation. They can generate discussions, debates and forward thinking about what needs to be done and how to do it. It can create a sense of ownership of issues, which in turn fosters community capacity in finding solutions.

For the NTER Evaluation, the Community Safety and Wellbeing Research Survey involved a participatory action research methodology to collect qualitative information. Community members took part in a participatory process that allowed them to tell their stories about their priorities and experiences in their own community. The participatory processes broadened the scope and allowed for a place-based analysis of survey results. The qualitative research was designed to be sensitive and locally relevant. It involved participatory methods such as assessments of the most significant changes, mapping exercises, ranking of major challenges and changes in each community and small discussion groups, tailored to each community.

The project design emphasised the employment of Indigenous researchers — individuals who may have some prior experience or training in data collection techniques and interpreting, or who were interested in gaining such skills — as part of the survey team. Over fifty local Aboriginal people were employed in work associated with the survey. The findings were sent back to each participating community in a community-specific report.

The NTER Evaluation noted the key importance of such a project:

> The continuation of the practice of local people conducting research, owning it and feeding it back into their communities, should be included in all future evaluation strategies. (FaHCSIA 2011, p. 57).

The evaluations of the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory approach will aim to incorporate participatory processes that involve communities as partners in assessing progress towards change. Participatory processes can help build ownership of evaluation findings.

Local research projects

Recent work at FaHCSIA has developed a network of local Indigenous researchers who can better inform a clear picture of community perceptions and communicate this to governments in a way that they understand. The projects provide multiple benefits, including part-time employment, training in research and evaluation, and strengthened leadership and engagement across all levels of the community. This work is occurring under the auspices of the Community Local Research Projects designed to implement the commitment under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery to develop 'a research capacity to provide advice to government on local and systemic issues associated with cultural accessibility …' (NPA RSD, section 19(f))

In Ntaria (Hermmansburg Northern Territory) this model has delivered real benefits to governments and community members. The researchers informed the selection of priority actions in their communities' Local Implementation Plans through participatory action research methods. The community chose to research topics of 'safer driving and vehicle safety' and 'community perceptions of governance'. Local Indigenous knowledge of language, cultural protocols, intercultural processes, community corporate knowledge and daily lived experiences strengthened the research results and these have informed local decision-making. The experience has also led to local Aboriginal researchers getting further employment to assist with the delivery of other surveys for the Northern Territory Government on topics as diverse as household information, business operations in Ntaria and natural resources.

FaHCSIA has a continuing focus on supporting growth in sustainable jobs as a result of the approach. Successful local research projects have also trained and employed local Indigenous researchers in other locations: in Tiwi — to measure potential economic benefits of carbon credits through changed fire management practices; in Groote Eylandt — to run a detailed population survey of Indigenous residents; in Yarralin — to develop a community action plan; and in Yuendumu and Lajamanu — to strengthen community research to inform outcomes under the Local Implementation Plans.

The approach has application beyond government. Because local people are often best placed to deliver culturally appropriate programs and services, they can assist organisations in addressing challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by helping them to genuinely understand local viewpoints and ways of working.

Monitoring reports

FaHCSIA has published six-monthly on-line progress reports since 2007, when the NTER first commenced. Under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory this will continue. All NTER measures are reported on under the Closing the Gap building blocks. The reports monitor progress on outputs for all programs under the building blocks; for example, the school nutrition program, night patrol, additional teachers, additional health workers, and playgroups.

References

Anderson P. and Wild R. 2007, *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle: 'Little Children are Sacred'*, Northern Territory Government, Darwin.

ARTD Consultants and WestWood Spice 2010, *Development of program logic options for the NTER*, unpublished report prepared for FaHCSIA, Canberra.

Australian Government 2009, *Report on the Northern Territory Emergency Response Re-design Consultations*, Australian Government, Canberra.

Australian Government 2011, *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory: Report on Consultations*, Australian Government, Canberra.

Banks, G. 2009, *Evidence-based policy making: What is it? How do we get it?*, ANU Public Lecture Series, presented by ANZSOG, 4 February, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

CIRCA (Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia) 2009, *Report on the NTER Redesign Engagement Strategy and Implementation*, Final Report, Leichhardt.

—— 2011a, *Evaluation of the Community Stores Licensing Program*, Leichhardt.

—— 2011b, *Report on Stronger Futures Consultation 2011*, Leichhardt.

CRC (COAG Reform Council) 2010, *National Indigenous Reform Agreement: Baseline performance report for 2008–09, Report to the Council of Australian Governments*, COAG Reform Council, Sydney.

—— 2011, *National Indigenous Reform Agreement: Performance report for 2009–10, Report to the Council of Australian Governments*, COAG Reform Council, Sydney.

FaHCSIA (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) 2011, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Evaluation Report 2011*, FaHCSIA, Canberra.

O'Brien-Rich Research Group 2011, *Stronger Futures Quantitative Analysis Report,* report prepared for FaHCSIA, Canberra.

Shaw G. and d'Abbs P. 2011, *Community Safety and Wellbeing Research Study Consolidated Report*, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra, http://www.fahcsia.gov.au /sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/cswrs_bowchung.pdf.

Yu P., Duncan M. and Gray B. 2008, *Report of the NTER Review Board*, report prepared for FaHCSIA, Canberra.

13 Learning from experience? Getting governments to listen to what evaluations are telling them

Prue Phillips-Brown[1], Tim Reddel[2] and Brian Gleeson[3]

Abstract

The road that the Council of Australian Governments travelled to get to the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery had many clear sign posts from previous interventions and experiences of what works in place-based and community strengthening approaches for remote communities. As often seems to be the case, some lessons were firmly embraced in both the policy and implementation of the new approach, whereas others have been left to languish by the road side.

The presentation will look at how evaluation findings and evidence were embedded (or not) into the Remote Service Delivery approach since 2009. It also suggests ways governments and other stakeholders can listen and learn from these experiences

This is a strong document, it is our word. But now we think that no-one in the Education Department has read our reports because now you are paying people to come and ask us what we want again. Every year you ask us and every year we tell you but you don't listen to what we say. Some community members say that you will keep asking until we tell you that we want to be Balanda, then you'll stop asking. We are not Balanda, our skin will always be black. (Submission to Collins Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory 1999 [in Northern Territory Department of Education 1999]).

---

[1] Senior Adviser, Office of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services.

[2] Deputy Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services.

[3] Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services.

13.1 Background

In December 2008, the Australian, New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australian and Western Australian governments agreed to a new approach to service delivery in 29 remote Indigenous communities.

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery (COAG 2008b) clearly draws on previous place-based approaches to improving social and economic outcomes for disadvantaged communities. It builds on many of the principles from these previous spatial policy practices, including the application of various principles and ideas such as social capital, social inclusion and community strengthening in a remote context. It also draws on the lessons learned from recent Indigenous trials and has borrowed from the Cape York Welfare Reform trial by recognising the need to promote behaviours consistent with positive social norms and the need to invest in capabilities and capability supports (services). It sits within the outcomes-focused Closing the Gap framework.

The Remote Service Delivery initiative builds on these ideas and practices and explicitly recognises the need to address at least some of the structural issues in the 'social and institutional environment in Indigenous Affairs' identified by Dillon and Westbury (2007, p. 203). The recent remoteFocus report reinforces these points and calls for more sustainable approaches to the governance, policy development, service and infrastructure delivery for remote Australia (Walker *et al*. 2012).

As well as the historic under-investment in infrastructure and services, the approach seeks to address in a holistic way the key interdependent foundations of Indigenous disadvantage identified by Henry (2007):

- poor economic and social incentives

- the underdevelopment of human capital and of capability in general

- an absence of the effective engagement of Indigenous Australians in the design of policy frameworks that might improve social and economic incentives and build capabilities.

A key objective of the Remote Service Delivery approach is to build individual and organisational capacity to assist in developing effective partnerships. This is to support the emphasis on enhanced engagement and ownership by communities in developing the agenda for change that is envisaged under the National Partnership.

The Remote Service Delivery approach has also taken on board the suggestion that remote Australia has many of the characteristics of a failed state (see, for example, Dillon and Westbury 2007 and Chaney 2009); namely, high levels of poverty, high

levels of violence, inadequate services and little respect for government, and has sought to go beyond the normal responses, which have not served remote Australia well to date.

13.2   The policy context — key underpinnings

The following section provides a brief and somewhat subjective overview of the lessons learned in the implementation of key elements of the policy environment that appear to have influenced the development of the Remote Service Delivery methodology, including spatial, social policy, social inclusion, community strengthening and community development approaches.

It is worth noting, however, that much of the genesis of these debates and the associated research have focused on urban, or at best regional, locations (perhaps due to the European antecedents of these issues), with limited effort applied to developing specifically remote place-based policy and program models in the Australian context.

Spatial approaches

At its simplest, a place-based approach to planning, policy design or program delivery is 'a collaborative effort to address complex socio-economic issues through interventions defined at a specific geographic scale' (Cantin 2010).

A policy focus on place, rather than on people, was first considered in the 1960s (Winnick 1966) and has since been the source of considerable debate. It is now generally accepted that a focus on place offers the opportunity to better address complex and interrelated social, economic and environmental issues (Cantin 2010).

While the initial emphasis was largely on regional development aimed at compensating for disparities in productivity and income primarily through financial transfers (Gleeson and Carmichael 2001, Barca 2009a), more comprehensive place-based policies now appear to be gaining acceptance, particularly in the European Union (Bachtler 2010).

Within Australia, the shift towards whole-of-government service delivery to meet the needs of a geographically defined local community has been occurring since the 1970s. There was significant activity in the 1990s with the establishment of the Better Cities Program and the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI). The seminal work of Vinson in 1999, which clearly demonstrated the geographic distribution of concentrated pockets of disadvantage in New South

Wales and Victoria, provided the theoretical basis for an increased interest on place-based interventions to address disadvantage. The importance of a place-based approach was recognised by the establishment of the Australian Social Inclusion Board's National Place Based Advisory Group in 2011 and the publication of a paper on governance models that work best for locational approaches to address disadvantage (Australian Social Inclusion Board 2011).

Systematic evaluation of place-based approaches has been limited; however, there are some examples in the United Kingdom and European contexts. Sure Start Local Programmes were community-based, multi-agency projects in some of the most disadvantaged areas in England which aimed to improve the wellbeing, attainments and life chances of all children aged 0–4 years in the local area and to support their families. A 2007 evaluation report (Anning 2007) found that systemic, sustainable structures in governance and management/leadership and empowering parents, children and practitioners were important success factors at the strategic level.

Further, a UK study comparing person-based and place-based policies found that policies had the greatest impact when they were individually tailored to support the most disadvantaged people with minimal complexity, reflected local needs and priorities, and were shaped by active engagement with stakeholders, including end users (Griggs et al 2008). It is worth noting that attempts to regenerate towns in the United Kingdom were most successful in places with high capacity and less successful in places where there was not strong community leadership or proximity to productive economies, although clearly differing approaches are also a factor (see, for example, McCarthy *et al*. 1997).

An Australian review of health place-based interventions (Larsen 2007) found the following success factors:

- integrated and holistic approaches
- fully implemented interventions (that is, not discontinued prematurely)
- community engagement, participation, and ownership
- focus on long-term and sustainable benefits
- objectives that are based on empirical evidence
- a good understanding by the community of the types and causes of disadvantage, the needs and resources available
- investment in early intervention and prevention.

Social capital and civil society

Social capital generally refers to the set of norms, networks and organisations through which people gain access to power and resources, and through which decision-making and policy formation occur (Grootaert 1998).

According to Grootaert, the broadest concept of social capital includes the social and political environment that enables norms to develop and shapes social structure. It can be understood as 'networks of social relations which are characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity and which lead to outcomes of mutual benefits' (Stone and Hughes 2002).

Grootaert (1998) suggested that, while government clearly has a role in promoting 'desirable' forms of social capital, the following principles for development should be used:

- do your homework, do no harm — it is critical to understand the existing social capital prior to developing policies and projects, by mapping 'existing institutions, social relationships and networks'

- use local-level social capital to deliver projects — existing associations and organisations should take part in the delivery of projects, which not only has the potential to improve sustainability and reduce cost, but also to strengthen participating institutions

- create enabling environments — characterised by good governance, enforcement of property rights, competent and transparent bureaucracy and mechanisms to promote dialogue and resolve conflict

- invest in social capital — direct support to existing and emerging organisations as well as participatory processes in project design

- promote research and learning — to better understand effective approaches to achieving growth and equity objectives.

Social inclusion

There is no generally accepted definition of social inclusion. A recent paper commissioned by the Social Inclusion Unit suggested that most definitions encapsulate restriction of access to opportunities and limitations of the capabilities required to capitalise on these, as well as references to the social and economic dimensions of exclusion (Hayes *et al*. 2008).

Barca (2009b) suggests that 'ingredients' of the definition of social inclusion (the capacity to reduce deprivation of capabilities) are:

- multidimensional aspects of people's wellbeing, including all the capabilities that make a life worth living — health, education, housing, security, labour conditions, self-respect, role in decision-making, income etc — and the interdependence and interaction of these dimensions

- both threshold (achieving a socially acceptable standard) and interpersonal (achieving social acceptable disparities) concepts of inclusion

- both individual persons and groups

- the process through which inclusion is achieved, with reference both to relation between private actors and the degree of democratic participation in public decision-making

- a distinction between those features affecting a person's wellbeing that depend on his or her effort, and factors beyond his or her will (circumstances, including those that are place related).

He suggests an operational definition as:

> The extent to which, with reference to a set of multi-dimensional outcomes, all persons (and groups) enjoy socially acceptable standards, and disparities among them are socially acceptable, the process through which those results are achieved being participatory and fair.

The Australian Social Inclusion Board has described the Australian Government's vision of a socially inclusive society as one in which 'all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society', and includes some more specific elements, including Australians having the opportunities and capability to:

- learn by participating in education and training

- work by participating in employment, in voluntary work and in family and caring

- engage by connecting with people and using their local community's resources

- have a voice so that they can influence decisions that affect them.[4]

For the purposes of this paper, there are two particular elements of Barca's definition that are important — the concept that 'deprivation' is linked to a concept of a social norm, that may be different for different groups (see also Hunter 2008), and that a participatory and fair process for addressing social exclusion is integral to promoting inclusion.

---

[4] See http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/.

According to Hayes et al (2008), the main features of policy approaches to date to address social exclusion include:

- enhancing the ability of services to address multiple disadvantages ('joined-up services for joined-up problems')

- centralised coordination, which can be useful in setting targets and monitoring whether they are being achieved

- local coordination across government and non-government organisations to achieve an integrated approach

- partnerships between government and the non-profit sector

- approaches targeting multiple points across life cycles, from early childhood onwards, as well as strategies to arrest the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage, deprivation and social exclusion

- recognising that the most socially disadvantaged and excluded often do not access conventional services, so services should target transition points (for example, leaving prison, young people leaving care)

- attempts to change attitudes, values and beliefs of those experiencing social exclusion and the wider community

- identifying the extent of the problem and underlying causes, including re-examining the evidence base to identify new solutions

- relying on data, performance measures and robust evaluation, particularly over the long term.

Community strengthening

According to the Australian Social Inclusion Board (2009), building inclusive and resilient communities requires:

- understanding the community in terms of its composition, strengths, opportunities, vulnerabilities and attitudes

- embracing diversity

- promoting community leadership to set priorities and promote a sense of purpose

- building a strong and diverse local economy

- building strong networks and support

- recognising the role of the physical environment and infrastructure.

Key factors underpinning successful community strengthening programs include clearly defined and agreed goals and strong local ownership and leadership, backed by sustained government investment in the social and physical infrastructure priorities identified as important by local communities (Wiseman 2006). Also critical are appropriate resources, a strong 'third sector' (providers with strong governance and organisational capacity), skilled staff, high levels of trust between all partners and clear, tangible benefits.

Martin (2005) emphasises the importance of community organisations in the strategic engagement of communities with governments:

> … effective, appropriate and accountable Aboriginal organisations have a crucial role to play, for it is such organisations that can assist Aboriginal people to engage more strategically with the dominant society using a wider range of options over which they can exercise a degree of control than if they were dealing directly as individuals with government, and to achieve ends that are in keeping with their own aspirations.

Community strengthening is therefore not just a different means of delivery, but requires changing the way government works and changes to the traditional community engagement approach. As noted in Cavaye (2004), governments need to move from the mindset of 'we are from the government and we are going to engage you' to valuing and investing in relationships at the local level.

Community development approaches[5]

The experience of international development organisations such as the World Bank, World Vision and Oxfam[6], as well as findings from the social health literature, provide strong evidence that a community development approach can lead directly to improvements in life outcomes for Indigenous peoples by effectively addressing health issues and increasing individual and community empowerment (Campbell *et al*. 2007). While there is considerable conceptual ambiguity surrounding community development notions such as 'empowerment', the literature identifies several key success factors for community development interventions in Indigenous settings, including:

- focusing on strengths not deficits

- developing a deep understanding of the local context and history

---

[5] This section draws on the *Six monthly report of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services – September 2010 to March 2011*.

[6] See www.worldbank.org/cdd, www.oxfam.org.au and www.transformational-development.org/. See also *Principles for Development Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities* at www.acfid.asn.au/resources/practice-notes.

- ensuring stability of policy and project frameworks and long-term engagement of officers

- ensuring community development is process-driven and outcome-oriented (outcomes are not predetermined but derive from the process)

- ensuring two-way accountability and transparency

- enabling community members to own and define problems and solutions, including measures of success or failure

- employing local people and providing relevant training

- vesting sustainability in the Indigenous organisations that will exist beyond the project's lifetime, and strengthening their capability as necessary

- involving, but not overplaying, the role of outsiders in providing information about issues and possible action strategies together with opportunities for critical reflection

- ensuring harmonisation and alignment between external stakeholders

- finding ways to protect the most vulnerable (including children, women, and the disabled)

- actively involving local groups and associations in all aspects of the community development process

- adopting a cyclical action-learning approach to programming, with cycles of design, monitoring, evaluation and redesign

- developing respectful partnerships between local community members and 'outsiders'

- adequately resourcing and devolving powers to ensure a sustainable outcome.

Cape York Welfare Reform trial

The Cape York Welfare Reform trial commenced in 2008 and has been extended to the end of 2013. It is a holistic reform agenda that goes well beyond welfare reform and income management through a tripartite partnership between Cape York Partnerships, the Australian and Queensland governments and the four Cape York communities (Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge) who have agreed to participate.

Underpinning the trials is the work of Noel Pearson and the Cape York Institute, which in turn draws on Amartya Sen's concept that freedom is a critical measure of wellbeing, which is constrained by the range of choices available and individual

capability to make the right choices. Pearson (2005) suggests that three elements are required to improve wellbeing:

- a strong foundation of social values and norms

- a generous investment in capabilities supports

- a reformed set of incentives steps.

Social norms, according to Pearson (2006a) 'come into existence when two things coincide: when the widely accepted values of a social group are matched and supported by widely adopted behaviour'. 'Positive' or 'traditional' norms are those that contribute to the wellbeing of the people holding the norms. Communities with strong positive norms actively enforce a socially beneficial standard of behaviour.

He contends that the difficulty in many Indigenous communities is not the dysfunctional minority, rather it is that the communities are no longer ruled by positive social norms — there has been a shift to neutral or non-judgemental norms which 'can no longer resist the development of deviant behaviours amongst individuals and subgroups within their midst'.

While the individual is clearly a significant focus in the model, government has a significant role to play in providing an enabling environment for the development of individual capabilities (for example, education and enforcing social order) and removing perverse incentives (for example, the current welfare system). Pearson also suggests that we also need to address what he describes as a structural obstacle to Indigenous responsibility: 'the inability of Indigenous people to make the institutions of government power work for the benefit of our people' (Pearson 2006b).

Further, he sets out the prerequisites for sustainable economic development (Pearson 2006b):

- incentives for people to benefit from work

- incentives for people to be educated and healthy

- good governance

- access to financial capital to build assets

- good infrastructure

- social capital/order (respect, trust, accountability and enforcement of law)

- protection of property (legal protection of individual ownership).

13.3 The policy context — Indigenous policy approaches

Australian governments have been testing 'new approaches' to addressing Indigenous disadvantage for more than ten years, particularly since the abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). Indigenous affairs is largely characterised by a litany of reports and strategies, but implementation failure. Additionally, in many cases, implementation has been limited to pilots and constrained by poor resourcing and coordination between governments and ineffective engagement with communities (Henry 2007).

The involvement of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) since the early 2000s has opened up the possibility of approaches which cut across levels of government. In November 2000, COAG agreed to 'an approach based on partnerships and shared responsibilities with Indigenous communities, program flexibility and coordination between government agencies, with a focus on local communities and outcomes' (COAG 2000).

By 2004, COAG had begun to take a more active role in this area. The COAG trials (see below) were agreed to in April 2002, and the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators'* reports were commissioned to 'help measure the impact of changes to policy settings and service delivery' and to measure progress (COAG 2002). The June 2004 meeting agreed to new National Framework Principles for Government Service Delivery to Indigenous Australians, which would underpin overarching bilateral agreements on 'new arrangements for Indigenous affairs' between the Australian and State and Territory governments (COAG 2004).

In July 2006, COAG committed to a 'long-term generational commitment' to overcome Indigenous disadvantage (COAG 2006). The current Closing the Gap agenda evolved over the following two years, with the November 2008 meeting announcing the six targets and the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, which 'captures the objectives, outcomes, outputs, performance measures and benchmarks that all governments have committed to … in order to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage' (COAG 2008a).

We outline below the main findings of the evaluations of four key approaches during the evolution of the Closing the Gap agenda — the COAG trials, Shared Responsibility Agreements/Regional Partnership Agreements, Communities in Crisis and Indigenous Coordination Centres. These have been selected because the key elements in all of these were engaging directly with communities, sharing responsibility and better coordination, or whole-of-government approaches.

There is no doubt that a key influence throughout is the finding in the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development (see, for example, Cornell and Kalt 1998) that Indigenous tribes with greater decisionmaking powers experience less poverty and higher levels of economic development. As stated by Henry (2007):

> Policy reforms are more likely to be successful where they are informed by those affected — those who are uniquely placed to understand their own needs and preferences. More than that, the opportunity to participate in policy development is, like education and good health, a development outcome in itself, contributing directly to higher levels of wellbeing.

COAG trials

The synopsis report of the evaluations of the trials (Morgan Disney 2006) found that the trials did improve relationships and intergovernmental effort and, where staff and community representation was relatively constant, increased levels of trust between all government and community partners. However, the report identified a number of challenges, including:

- lack of shared understandings — there was some confusion over the trial objectives and the emphasis on working in new ways was not consistently supported

- developing effective, respectful relationships — some government officers did not have sufficient understanding of Indigenous communities and culture, and some Indigenous leaders did not have enough understanding of government processes and culture

- capacity gaps — both within government to work in whole-of-government ways, and within the community in relation to community governance and engagement with government, exacerbated by high turnover of staff and community representatives

- systemic issues — it took time to understand the supports and mechanisms needed to foster whole-of-government work and shared responsibility, which resulted in frustration and efforts outside the framework which undermined confidence and trust.

One of the key lessons identified was:

> Solutions should be responsive to local circumstances and be within the parameters that make a whole of government, as opposed to single agency, initiative. Flexible approaches need to be applied which reflect the individual circumstances of communities, the nature of the issues facing communities, and the developmental status

of intergovernmental and cross sectoral relationships. There cannot be a one size fits all approach.

Shared Responsibility Agreements/Regional Partnership Agreements

Again, the key issues identified with the implementation of Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs)(Morgan Disney 2007) include:

- lack of shared understanding — of the nature of the program and a lack of ownership across government

- limited capacity of staff and communities — with respect to project management, working in a whole-of-government way, and lack of leadership

- lack of flexibility of funding — including local delegations and the development of single funding agreements and single reporting across the funding commitments agreed to achieve outcomes for communities.

The evaluation also identified the need to share what has been learnt from good practice and the need for more strategic thinking on simple effective indicators and outcome measures.

Communities in Crisis

The evaluation of Communities in Crisis (SGS Economics and Planning 2007) found that there was a strong focus on governance and administration issues in selecting communities for inclusion, and that this was at the expense of other areas such as physical infrastructure, health services, education services and economic security and development. The evaluation found that more targeted selection of intervention sites may have resulted in better outcomes.

In seeking to address the crisis, the main responses addressed issues relating to governance, essential municipal services and ongoing capacity development. While these are all important, the evaluation found that a deeper understanding of crisis and its causes may have resulted in a more comprehensive, broadly focused, collaborative and better resourced response (SGS Economics and Planning 2007, p. 19).

One of the key findings on implementation related to the need for an overarching plan to direct and guide 'the resources and actions of "all-comers" to the Indigenous development task'. The evaluation also noted that 'disjointed and competing plans, programs and projects are more likely to sustain crisis than resolve it'.

In terms of supporting processes, the key findings were:

- Formal consultation was missing in the design of the policy and was of variable effectiveness in engagement during implementation, resulting in a loss of momentum and 'diminished community understanding of, involvement in and faith in interventions'.

- The lack of a binding overarching implementation plan was a major limit to genuine coordination.

- The absence of baseline community profiles limited the effectiveness of the evaluation of outcomes.

- Broader performance measures are 'not subtle enough to guide and measure short term, discrete efforts' and practical 'intermediate' or transition measures that link to the higher level framework are required.

The evaluation recommended that intervention policies for the development of Indigenous communities should:

- recognise the need for a long-term development approach

- understand the transitional nature of development

- understand the role of external versus local influence

- understand the five foundations of stable development (governance, physical infrastructure, health services, education services, and economic security and development)

- pursue the qualities of planning, equity, empowerment and sustainability.

In implementing this approach, it was recommended that attention be applied to planning for stable development, applying flexibility in the right place and coordinating the right knowledge and expertise.

Indigenous Coordination Centres

The final report of the evaluation of Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) (KPMG 2007) found that:

- building partnerships with Indigenous communities and organisations was a core strength of ICCs

- the implementation of whole-of-government collaboration required significant improvement in information sharing, flexible funding solutions and co-location of the appropriate line agency staff

- the implementation of flexible and responsive solutions to community-identified priorities required clearer and more flexible funding solutions and better accountability processes (including reporting, delegations and assessment processes and reductions in red tape).

Subsequently, Dillon and Westbury (2007, p. 203) advocated strongly for:

> ... appointment of government officers to live and work in remote regions and communities with a broad functional responsibility and effective mandate to represent government, act as a conduit for information flows between government and community both upward and downward, facilitate increasingly complex strands of service delivery in co-ordinated and cost-effective ways.

13.4   Were the lessons learnt?

It is timely to reflect on whether the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery has learnt from the previous approaches it clearly draws on. In addition, it will be important to assess whether the Agreement has been implemented effectively, to ensure that decisions on successor arrangements are informed by the lessons learned since 2009.

Some lessons were firmly embraced in both the policy and implementation of the new approach. They included the need to: ensure a strong government presence on the ground (the 'single government interface'); establish formalised coordination and accountability mechanisms (boards of management); have a shared community plan of local priorities (Local Implementation Plans); and allocate funding to build the capacity of local leaders and organisations, cross-cultural competency of government officers and collect baseline information; and build in evaluation opportunities (formative and summative).

However, as is often the case, there is a gap between policy intent and implementation reality. Some of the lessons that have not been effectively implemented to date include:

- adopting a strengths-based approach rather than singular focus on deficits and understanding how best to foster positive social norms

- implementing a whole-of-governments approach at all levels (incorporating local governments and full involvement by all agencies, not just Indigenous affairs agencies)

- paying adequate attention to building the capacity of staff on the ground (to operate in partnership with community members and organisations)

- understanding cultural maps to ensure right community decision-makers are at the table

- implementing flexible funding based on needs and outcomes rather than programs

- better coordinating programs capable of delivering multiple policy objectives (for example, infrastructure)

- delegating decision-making closer to the ground

- incorporating key performance indicators that inform implementation planning, not just plans that too often are one off

- understanding cultural maps to ensure that the right decision-makers are at the community governance table

- learning from experience so that formative evaluation opportunities are not missed.

13.5 Conclusion

Based on the experience of the Office of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services since 2009, governments in future need to:

- ensure summative evaluations are early enough so that they can influence the next iteration of the policy and program frameworks

- embed formative evaluations so that they can be responsive to the lessons being learnt, which would then prove to officers that it is worthwhile to change the way they work in response to circumstances

- provide meaningful feedback on evaluation findings to Indigenous communities and other stakeholders

- where appropriate, respond directly and quickly to findings that suggest structural change to policy and/or institutional arrangements is needed

- embed evaluation findings in policy frameworks and budget decision-making

- equip officers with the capability to implement the policy framework (including an enabling environment).

The recent review of the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage report (ACER 2012) has some very useful recommendations (greater focus on strengths, evidence-based case studies, place-based/tailored information, linkages between indicators, and improved engagement with communities and policymakers). These themes and issues are not new but they highlight the need for a more systematic

approach by governments, researchers and, most importantly, Indigenous communities and their leaders in building on key reforms such as the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery.

References

Anning, A. 2007, *Understanding Variations in Effectiveness amongst Sure Start Local Programmes: Lessons for Sure Start Children's Centres*, National Evaluation of Sure Start, NESS/2007/SF/024.

ACER (Australian Council for Educational Research) 2012, *Review of the* Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators *report for the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

Australian Social Inclusion Board 2009, *Building Inclusive and Resilient Communities,* Australian Government, Canberra.

—— 2011, *Governance Models for Location Based Initiatives,* Australian Government, Canberra.

Bachtler, J. 2010, 'Place-based policy and regional development in Europe', *Horizons (Sustainable Places)*, vol. 10, no. 4, March, Policy Research Initiative, Government of Canada, http://www.policyresearch.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=2010-0022_09.

Barca, F. 2009a, *An Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy, A Place-Based Approach to Meeting European Union Challenges and Expectations,* Independent report prepared at the request of Danuta Hübner, Commissioner for Regional Policy, http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/future/pdf/report_barca_v0306.pdf.

—— 2009b, Pursuing equity through place-based development policies, rationale and the equity-efficiency issue, presentation to the OECD/TDPC Symposium on Regional Policy, Paris, 2 December, http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/41/37/44305783.pdf.

Campbell, Pyett and McCarthy 2007, 'Community development approaches to improve Aboriginal health: building an evidence base', *Health Sociology Review,* vol. 16, issues 3–4, October.

Cantin, B. 2010, 'Integrated place-based approaches for sustainable development', *Horizons (Sustainable Places)*, vol. 10, no. 4, March, Policy Research Initiative, Government of Canada http://www.policyresearch.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=2010-0022_03.

Cavaye, J. 2004, Orientating government to support community capacity, paper presented to the *Changing the Way Government Works* seminar, Melbourne, 5 October, Department for Victorian Communities, Victoria.

Chaney, F. 2009, The future of remote Australia: the governance and service challenges of remote Australia, The Future of Remote Australia, Seminar Series 2009, Centre for Remote Health, Alice Springs, 19 August.

Cornell, S. and Kalt, J. 1998, 'Sovereignty and Nation-Building: The Development Challenge in Indian Country Today', *The American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1998), pp. 187–214.

COAG (Council of Australian Governments) 2000, communiqué, 3 November.

—— 2002, communiqué, 5 April.

—— 2004, communiqué, 25 June.

—— 2006, communiqué, 14 July.

—— 2008a, communiqué, 29 November.

—— 2008b, National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery, http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/docs/national_partnership/national_partnership_on_remote_service_delivery_with_amended_schedule.rtf.

Dillon, M. and Westbury N. 2007, *Beyond Humbug: transforming government engagement with Indigenous Australia*, Seaview Press, South Australia.

Gleeson, B. and Carmichael C. 2001, *Responding to Regional Disadvantage: What can be Learned from the Overseas Experience?*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), Positioning Paper no. 20.

Griggs, J., Whitworth, A., Walker, R., McLennan, D. and Noble M. 2008, *Person or Place-based Policies to Tackle Disadvantage? Not Knowing What Works,* Joseph Rowntree Foundation, United Kingdom.

Grootaert, C. 1998, *Social Capital: The Missing Link?* Social Capital Initiative Working Paper no. 3, World Bank, Washington D.C., USA.

Hayes, A., Gray M. and Ben Edwards B. 2008, *Social Inclusion: Origins, Concepts and Key Themes*, Australian Institute of Family Studies paper prepared for the Social Inclusion Unit, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra, October.

Henry, K. 2007, Creating the right incentives for Indigenous development, Cape York Institute Conference, 'Strong Foundations — Rebuilding Social Norms in Indigenous Communities', Cairns, 26 June.

Hunter, B. 2008, Indigenous social exclusion: insights and challenges for the concept of social inclusion, paper presented to the Brotherhood of St Laurence Social Inclusion Down Under Symposium, 26 June.

KPMG 2007, *Evaluation of Indigenous Coordination Centres: Final Report*, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.

Larsen, K. 2007, *The health impacts of place-based interventions in areas of concentrated disadvantaged: A review of the literature*, Sydney South West Area Health Service.

McCarthy, John and Pollock, and Alan S.H. 1997, 'Urban regeneration in Glasgow and Dundee: a comparative evaluation', *Land Use Policy,* vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 137–49.

Martin, D. 2005, 'Rethinking Aboriginal community governance' in P. Smyth, P., Reddel, T. and Jones. A. (eds) *Community and Local Governance in Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, pp. 108–27.

Morgan Disney & Associates 2006, *Synopsis Review of the COAG Trial Evaluations,* November, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.

—— 2007, *Implementation Review of Shared Responsibility Agreements: Don't let's lose another good idea*, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.

Northern Territory Department of Education 1999, *Learning Lessons — An independent review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory (Collins Review)*, Northern Territory Department of Education, Darwin.

Pearson, N. 2005, The Cape York agenda, address to the National Press Club, Canberra, 30 November.

—— 2006a, Arthur Mills Oration, Royal College of Physicians, Cairns, 7 May.

—— 2006b, New approaches to Indigenous policy: the role of rights and responsibilities, public seminar, Cairns, 6 July.

SGS Economics and Planning 2007, *Evaluation of the 'Communities in Crisis' Policy, Evaluation Report,* vol. 1, Canberra: Department. of Families, Community Services, and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.

Stone, W. and Hughes, J. 2002, *Social Capital: Empirical Meaning and Measurement Validity*, Australian Institute of Family Studies Research Paper no. 27, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

Vinson, T. 1999, *Unequal in Life: the Distribution of Social Disadvantage in Victoria and New South Wales*, University of New South Wales, NSW.

Walker BW, Porter DJ, and Marsh I 2012, Fixing the Hole in Australia's Heartland: How Government needs to work in remote Australia, Desert Knowledge Australia, Alice Springs.

Winnick, L. (1966). 'Place prosperity vs. people prosperity: Welfare considerations in the geographic redistribution of economic activity', in Real Estate Research Program (Eds.), *Essays in urban land economics in honor of the sixty-fifth birthday of Leo Grebler*, Los Angeles: University of California.

Wiseman, J. 2006, 'Local heroes? Learning from recent community strengthening initiatives in Victoria', *Australian Journal of Public Administration,* vol. 65, no. 2, pp. 95–107, June.

APPENDIXES

A Roundtable program

2012 Productivity Commission Roundtable

Better Indigenous policies: the role of evaluation

Monday 22 October	
Session 1	***Introduction***
2.30 – 2.40	**Welcome to country – Aunty Agnes Shea**
2.40 – 3.00	**Gary Banks**, Chairman, Productivity Commission *Introduction: 'Why this roundtable?'*
3.00 – 3.20	**Robert Fitzgerald,** Commissioner, Productivity Commission *Outcomes for Indigenous Australians — the current situation*
3.20 – 3.40	**Fred Chaney,** Board Member, Reconciliation Australia *The Indigenous policy experience 1960 to 2012*
3.40 – 4.10	*Roundtable discussion*
4.10 – 4.30	***Afternoon tea***
Session 2	***The challenges in evaluating social and Indigenous policy*** *Chair: Mike Woods, Deputy Chairman, Productivity Commission*
4.30 – 4.50 4.50 – 5.10	**Les Malezer**, Co-Chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples *The challenges in evaluating social policy in general, and Indigenous policy in particular* **Deborah Cobb-Clark**, Director of the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research *The case for making public policy evaluations public*
5.10 – 6.00	*Roundtable discussion*
6.00 – 7.00	***Pre-dinner drinks***
7.00 – 10.00	***Dinner*** Dinner speech by **Jody Broun**, Co-Chair, National Congress of Australia's First Peoples.

Tuesday 23 October	
Session 3	***Key themes in evaluation of Indigenous policy and programs***
	Chair: Lisa Gropp, First Assistant Commissioner, Productivity Commission
9.00 – 9.20	**Matthew James,** Branch Manager, Performance and Evaluation Branch, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
	Designing evaluation strategies
9.20 – 9.40	**John Taylor,** Director, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University
	Data for better Indigenous policy: achievements, constraints and opportunities
9.40 – 10.00	**David Kalisch,** Director, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
	Communicating evaluation outcomes: Maximising transparency and impact
10.00 – 10.45	*Roundtable discussion*
10.45 – 11.00	***Morning tea***
Session 4	***International experience***
	Chair: Jenny Gordon, Principal Adviser Research (Canberra), Productivity Commission
11.00 – 11.30	**Helen Moewaka Barnes,** Director of the Whariki Research Group, Massey University, Auckland
	Better Indigenous policies: an Aotearoa New Zealand perspective on the role of evaluation
11.30 – 12.00	**Frances Abele**, Professor of Public Policy and Administration, Carleton University, Ottawa
	Is evaluation a tool for social justice? Reconciliation? Control? Reflections on the Canadian experience in Indigenous affairs
12.00 – 12.30	*Roundtable discussion*
12.30 – 1.30	***Lunch***
Session 5	***Evaluation and policy***
	Robert Fitzgerald, Commissioner, Productivity Commission
1.30 – 1.40	**Michael Dillon**, Deputy Secretary, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (presented by **Matthew James**)
	The use of evaluation in Indigenous policy and program development: the case of Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory
1.40 – 1.50	**Brian Gleeson**, Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services
	Learning from experience? Getting governments to listen to what evaluations are telling them

1.50 – 2.30	*Panel*
	Jody Broun, Co-chair, National Congress of Australia's First Peoples
	Fred Chaney, Board Member, Reconciliation Australia
	Helen Moewaka Barnes, Director of the Whariki Research Group, Massey University
2.30 – 3.00	*Roundtable discussion*
3.00 – 3.15	***Afternoon tea***
Session 6	***Conclusions: How to do better?***
	Chair: Alison McClelland, Commissioner, Productivity Commission
3.15 – 4.30	This session will draw on the Roundtable discussions to propose ways of improving and extending the conduct of evaluations.
4.30 – 4.45	***Final remarks and close***

B Roundtable participants

Frances Abele	Professor of Public Policy and Administration, Carleton University (Ottawa, Canada)
Fadwa Al-Yaman	Manager, Social and Indigenous Group, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Pat Anderson	Chairperson, Lowitja Institute
Athena Andriotis	Assistant Director, Strategic Policy and Coordination, Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, Department of Planning and Community Development (Victoria)
Leah Armstrong	CEO, Reconciliation Australia
Gary Banks	Chairman, Productivity Commission
Stephen Brady	Deputy Director General, Strategic Initiatives and Performance Group, Department of Premier and Cabinet (NSW)
Robert Brooks	Research Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation
Jody Broun	Co-Chair, National Congress of Australia's First Peoples
Amanda Cattermole	General Manager, Social Policy Division, The Treasury
Fred Chaney	Chair, Desert Knowledge Australia and Board Member, Reconciliation Australia
Deborah Cobb-Clark	Director and Ronald Henderson Professor, Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research
Belinda Collins	A/g Branch Manager, Families, Social Support and Indigenous Policy, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Michael Dillon	Deputy Secretary, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Meredith Edwards	Emeritus Professor, ANZSOG Institute of Governance, University of Canberra
Henry Ergas	Senior Economic Advisor, Deloitte Australia and Professor of Infrastructure Economics, SMART Infrastructure Facility, University of Wollongong
Robert Fitzgerald	Commissioner, Productivity Commission
Michael Fletcher	Indigenous Policy and Social Inclusion Unit, The Treasury
Brian Gleeson	Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services
Jenny Gordon	Principal Adviser Research (Canberra), Productivity Commission
Lisa Gropp	First Assistant Commissioner (Melbourne), Productivity Commission

Sara Hudson	Indigenous Affairs Research Program, Centre for Independent Studies
Matthew James	Branch Manager, Performance and Evaluation Branch, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Alan Johnston	First Assistant Commissioner (Canberra), Productivity Commission
David Kalisch	Director, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
David Learmonth	Deputy Secretary, Department of Health and Ageing
Tania Major	Spokesperson, GenerationOne
Les Malezer	Co-Chair, National Congress of Australia's First Peoples
Alison McClelland	Commissioner, Productivity Commission
Lawrence McDonald	Assistant Commissioner, Productivity Commission
Helen Moewaka Barnes	Associate Professor and Director, Whariki Research Group, School of Public Health, Massey University (Auckland, New Zealand)
Justin Mohamed	Chairperson, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
Mark Moran	Adjunct Associate Professor, Indigenous and International Development Effectiveness, University of Queensland
Brian Pink	Australian Statistician, Australian Bureau of Statistics
Andrew Pope	Group Executive Director, Australian National Audit Office
Alex Reid	Executive Director, Arts and Cultural Affairs, Department of the Premier and Cabinet (South Australia)
Paul Ronalds	First Assistant Secretary, Office of Work and Family, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
John Taylor	Professor and Director, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University
Jo Wood	General Manager, Indigenous Economic Strategy, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Mike Woods	Deputy Chairman, Productivity Commission

Observers

Angela MacRae	Commissioner, Productivity Commission
Jonathan Coppel	Commissioner, Productivity Commission
Warren Mundy	Commissioner, Productivity Commission
Daryl Quinlivan	Head of Office, Productivity Commission
Les Andrews	Assistant Commissioner, Productivity Commission
Noel Gaston	Principal Adviser Research (Melbourne), Productivity Commission
Peter Daniel	Productivity Commission
Clinton Pobke	Productivity Commission
Margaret Mead	Productivity Commission
Romy Nath	Productivity Commission
Kelley Watson	Productivity Commission