

**Program Evaluation and  
Policy Management  
in  
Australian Central Agencies**

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# D e c l a r a t i o n

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own independent research and that all authorities and sources which have been used are duly acknowledged.

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# A b s t r a c t

Of the many components of reform to Australian government administration in the 1980s, the introduction of systematic program evaluation is perhaps one of the least examined. This thesis seeks to assess the Federal Labor Government's evaluation strategy as an instrument for enhancing what are here termed the policy management capacities of central agencies. It proceeds in two steps. First, the thesis traces in detail the development of program evaluation policy in Australian federal government from the effectiveness reviews of the Coombs Report of 1976 to the current evaluation strategy, and argues that, despite competing purposes for it, evaluation was intended primarily to serve decision making in central government. This policy aim was cemented by the economic crisis of the mid 1980s and framed around budgetary issues by its steward, the Department of Finance. Second, in order to assess the impact of the evaluation strategy, the thesis develops a framework for analysing program evaluation as one instrument for strengthening the core policy management functions of central agencies. In this context, policy management is essentially a coordination task. The contribution of evaluation to two aspects of policy management—resource coordination, and policy development and coordination—is examined. The findings confirm that attempts to formalise evaluation processes have had a variable impact—central budgetary processes remain dependent on relatively informal assessment procedures, although recent attempts to enhance policy coordination through the evaluation of policy advising processes have proved potentially to be more influential. In conclusion, the thesis argues that the evaluation strategy represented a credible attempt to better inform policy making in central government, but suffered for want of clear policy design and firm execution that resulted in only a marginal impact on these processes.

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## Abbreviations

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ADP	Automated Data Processing
AEP	Agency Evaluation Plan
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
APS	Australian Public Service
ASO	Administrative Service Officer
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
BIE	Bureau of Industry Economics
CAA	Civil Aviation Authority
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CPD	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates
DAS	Department of Administrative Services
DASET	Department of Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DHHCS	Department of Health, Housing and Community Services
DHSH	Department of Human Services and Health
DILGEA	Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs
DITRDD	Department of Industry, Technology and Regional Development
DoF	Department of Finance
DPIE	Department of Primary Industries and Energy
DPMC	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
DSS	Department of Social Security

DTC	Department of Transport and Communications
DVA	Department of Veterans' Affairs
ECG	Evaluation Consultancy Group
ERC	Expenditure Review Committee (of Cabinet)
ESAB	Evaluation and Staffing Analysis Branch
ESSB	Evaluation and Statistical Services Branch
ESU	Efficiency Scrutiny Unit
FESP	Forward Estimates Strategy Paper
FMIP	Financial Management Improvement Program
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GED	General Expenditure Division
GFEP	General Financial and Economic Policy Division
HRSCCE	House of Representatives Standing Committee on Expenditure
HRSCFPA	House of Representatives Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration
HRSCTCI	House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport, Communications and Infrastructure
IDC	Inter-departmental Committee
JCPA	Joint Committee of Public Accounts
JMR	Joint Management Reviews
MAB	Management Advisory Board
MATS	Modernised Apprenticeship and Traineeship System
MBS	Medical Benefits Scheme
MIAC	Management Improvement Advisory Committee
NPP	New Policy Proposal
OCG	Office of the Comptroller-General of Canada
OPAAM	Office of Policy Analysis and Administrative Management
OSC	Commonwealth-State Officials Steering Committee
PAR	Program Analysis and Review
PEAC	Program Evaluation Advisory Committee
PEMS	Policy and Expenditure Management System
PEP	Portfolio Evaluation Plan
PES	Public Expenditure Survey
PEU	Program Evaluation Unit
PMB	Program Management and Budgeting
PMPR	Program Management Performance Reviews
PMR	Policy Management Review
PPS	Program Performance Statement
PSB	Public Service Board

PSC	Public Service Commission
RCAGA	Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration (The Coombs Commission)
RIPAA	Royal Institute of Public Administration Australia
RMI	Resource Management Improvement Branch
RNSWGA	Review of New South Wales Government Administration
SAC	Structural Adjustment Committee (of Cabinet)
SO	Savings Option
SOG	Senior Officer Grade
SSCFPA	Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration
SSCSW	Senate Standing Committee on Social Welfare