



POLICY ROUNDTABLE

ADVANCING POLICY AND PROGRAM EVALUATION IN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT



FRIDAY 21 MARCH 2025

In person: CG.39 Treasury Building, Langton Crescent,
Parkes, Canberra

PROGRAM

FRIDAY 21 MARCH 2025 | 9:00AM - 1:30PM AEST

ARRIVAL | 8:45AM

WELCOME

9:00 - 9:30AM

Welcome and opening remarks

Professor Kate Darian-Smtih | **Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia**

Ms Eleanor Williams | **Australian Centre for Evaluation**

The Hon. Dr Andrew Leigh MP | **Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury and Assistant Minister for Employment**

SESSION 1

9:30 - 10:30AM

The evaluation landscape in Australian Government

The Australian Centre for Evaluation (ACE) was established in 2023 to improve the volume, quality and use of evaluation in the Australian Public Service, with a particular focus on impact evaluation. To understand and realise the promise of ACE - rigorous, defensible evaluations - first requires a survey of the evaluation landscape in Australia. This session will explore how and why evaluations are conducted, how those who commission, conduct and use evaluations understand them and the complexities and considerations distinct to Australian Government policy processes and decision-making.

Chair:

Professor Jane Hall | **University of Technology Sydney**

Presenters:

Professor Rosalie Viney | **University of Technology Sydney**

Mr Selwyn Button | **Productivity Commission**

Professor Ilan Katz | **University of New South Wales Sydney**

MORNING TEA | 10:30 - 10:45AM

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SESSION 2

10:45 - 11:45AM

Fit-for-purpose evaluation: Established and emerging tools

With Australia's evaluation landscape now defined, this session will explore the considerations, tools and methods needed for fit-for-purpose evaluations, with a focus on the role of randomised trials and quasi-experimental designs. The discussion will explore the appropriate, responsible and ethical use of experimental and quasi-experimental designs in different social sciences contexts. This includes how considerations differ across population groups, governance structures and different stages - from intervention and testing to mass implementation - as well as the complementary methods required to understand the generalisability of results and how to ensure methods are in line with the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy.

Chair:

Professor Brian Head | **University of Queensland**

Presenters:

Emeritus Professor Elliot Stern | **Lancashire University**

Associate Professor Jenny Povey | **University of Queensland**

Mr Andrew Hawkins | **ARTD Consultants**

SESSION 3

11:45 - 12:45PM

Realising the potential of data and research for evaluation

The Australian Bureau of Statistics and other government agencies are working to build high-quality, large-scale data assets and, increasingly, to integrate data assets and broker access to enable deeper insights. This infrastructure, coupled with ACE's role in improving evaluation capability across the Australian Government, has the potential to support better research and policy and program evaluations. This session will consider the investment in workforce, data and relationships needed to strengthen and sustain Australia's evaluation landscape, and the immediate steps that government and academia can take to support this process.

Chair:

Mr David Kalisch | **University of Canberra**

Presenters:

Scientia Professor Carla Treloar | **University of New South Wales Sydney**

Dr Phillip Gould | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark | **University of Sydney**

PROGRAM

FRIDAY 21 MARCH 2025 | 9:00AM - 1:30PM AEST

CLOSE
12:45 - 1:00PM

Summary and closing remarks

Professor Mark Western | **University of Queensland**

NETWORKING LUNCH | 01:00 - 01:30PM

PRESENTERS

Mr Selwyn Button was appointed as a Commissioner at the Productivity Commission in June 2024, co-leading the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stream of work at the Commission. Selwyn is Gungarri man from Southwest Queensland and an experienced leader of health, education and governance organisations across the public, private, not-for-profit and community-controlled sectors. Prior to joining the Commission, Selwyn was partner of PwC Indigenous Consulting, the national Registrar of the Office of the Registrar for Indigenous Corporations, the Assistant Director-General for Indigenous Education in Queensland, Chief Executive Officer of the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council, and Chair of the Lowitja Institute. A former primary school teacher and Queensland police officer, Selwyn holds a Bachelor of Teaching, a Master of Public Administration and a Graduate Certificate in Business Administration. He was a Wolfensohn Scholar at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and is an active member of the Harvard Club of Australia.

Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark is Professor and Deputy Head (Research) in the School of Economics at the University of Sydney. She is Deputy Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Children and Families Over the Life Course; an Officer of the Order of Australia; an elected Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia; and a Distinguished Fellow of the Economic Society of Australia. She is passionate about preventing poor children from becoming poor adults. Her research centres on building psychological concepts (locus of control, self-control, risk attitudes) into economic models of family decision-making. She studies the way that poverty affects the attention (cognitive capacity) parents have available; the role of depression, risk attitudes, and welfare receipt in risk-taking behaviour; the role of locus of control and self-control in human capital formation; and the link between parents' self-control and children's outcomes.

Dr Phillip Gould is the Deputy Australian Statistician. He leads the Data and Statistical Practices Group, responsible for providing the statistical infrastructure to support the work of the ABS and improve data sharing, data integration and microdata access across government. Phillip joined the ABS in September 2024 from the Department of Health and Aged Care where he was the Chief Data Officer and First Assistant Secretary for the Health Economics and Research Division. Phillip has worked across the private, university and government sectors, including at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet with roles in the COVID-19 response taskforce and in establishing the Office of the National Data Commissioner, and previously at the ABS where he helped establish the ABS's data integration program. Phillip holds a PhD in Time Series Econometrics and has spent much of his career championing the use of data to inform important decisions.

Mr Andrew Hawkins is Chief Evaluator and Partner at ARTD Consultants. Andrew has worked at ARTD for almost 18 years, leading hundreds of evaluation projects across the public policy spectrum. This extensive experience at one of Australia's most respected specialist evaluation firms has enabled him to develop innovative approaches like propositional evaluation, bridging academic theory and practical policy application. As a trusted advisor, his approach is distinguished by deep listening and reasoning that illuminates new pathways forward—using evaluation to develop insights and actionable strategies for diverse initiatives to address complex policy challenges.

PRESENTERS

Professor Ilan Katz is Professor at the Social Policy Research Centre at University of New South Wales Sydney. Ilan started his career as a social worker and manager in the UK, and he has many years of policy, practice and research experience in children and family services. He was head of Evaluation, Practice development and Research at the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Chief Investigator of the National Evaluation of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy and Brighter Futures, NSW Department of Community Services Early Intervention Program and is currently Chief Investigator on the evaluations of the New Income Management, the Family Support Program and the Community Detention program and 'Where's the Evidence in Indigenous Social Policy', an ARC linkage project. His research interests include evaluation of complex interventions, parenting, child protection, youth justice, prevention and family support, children, families and communities, comparative child welfare systems, migration, race and ethnicity.

The Hon. Dr Andrew Leigh MP is the Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities, Treasury and Employment, and Federal Member for Fenner in the ACT. Prior to being elected in 2010, Andrew was a professor of economics at the Australian National University. He holds a PhD in Public Policy from Harvard, having graduated from the University of Sydney with first class honours in Arts and Law. Andrew is a past recipient of the Economic Society of Australia's Young Economist Award and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Social Sciences. He is a fellow of the INZ (Bonn), CESifo (Munich), and the Centre for Applied Macroeconomic Analysis (Canberra). He has published more than sixty journal articles and more than ten books, including *Battlers and Billionaires: The Story of Inequality in Australia* (2013), *Randomistas: How Radical Researchers Changed Our World* (2018), *Reconnected: A Community Builder's Handbook* (with Nick Terrell) (2020) and *What's the Worst That Could Happen? Existential Risk and Extreme Politics* (2021).

Associate Professor Jenny Povey leads the Inclusive Education and Employment research group and is also the Deputy Director (Training) at the Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR) at the University of Queensland. She is also Associate Investigator for the ARC Centre of Excellence on Families and Children over the Life Course. Jenny is a Psychologist and obtained her BA Honors, MA and PhD from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in South Africa. Before coming to ISSR, Jenny worked as a Chief Researcher at the Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa in the area of Education effectiveness. Jenny's research takes an intersectionality and life course perspective focusing on education and labour force outcomes among individuals from a range of marginalised groups. Her work predominantly focuses on achieving an impact on policy and practice, and she has extensive experience in large-scale mixed methods evaluations, using administrative data complemented with survey and qualitative data.

Emeritus Professor Elliot Stern is Emeritus Professor of Evaluation Research at Lancaster University and a Fellow of the UK Academy of Social Sciences and was on Council for many years. He is a recognised expert on evaluation methodology and design and on innovative evaluation methods and an active member of the international evaluation community. Elliot was past-President of the European Society, was founding President of the UK Evaluation Society and the International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation, and edits the journal *Evaluation: the international journal of theory, research and practice*. He has led major international development evaluation and consultancy projects for the European Union, OECD, UN agencies, and the World Bank.

PRESENTERS

Scientia Professor Carla Treloar is a social scientist and works at the Centre for Social Research in Health at UNSW, Sydney. Her work brings to light the gaps, failures and harms of health and social systems and poses solutions to better meet the needs of people who experience social marginalisation. She has been a member of more than 50 advisory committees for government, health agencies and non-government organisations and is committed to the effective translation of research into policy and practice and to ethical and respectful conduct of research in close collaboration with affected communities. She is co Editor in Chief of the International Journal of Drug Policy and a current recipient of a NHMRC Investigator Award (2025-2029) to build the knowledge base for effective stigma reduction interventions in health care.

Professor Rosalie Viney is Professor of Health Economics and Director of the Centre for Health Economics Research and Evaluation at the University of Technology Sydney. She has extensive experience in health economics, health services and health policy research. Rosalie has also had longstanding involvement in the fields of health economics and health services research in Australia and internationally, through the Australian Health Economics Society and the Health Services Research Association of Australia and New Zealand, and through the International Health Economics Association where she is a current Board member and Treasurer, and the EuroQol Foundation, where she is a member of the Scientific Executive. Rosalie was a member of the National Health and Medical Research Council Research Committee from 2015-2021. Until March 2017 she was also a member of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee and Chairs its Economics Sub-Committee.

PARTICIPANTS

Ms Danielle Aeukens	Branch Manager, Performance and Evaluation Department of Social Services
Mr Scott Bayley	Managing Director Scott Bayley Evaluation Services
Mr Selwyn Button	Commissioner Productivity Commission
Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark AO, FASSA	Deputy Head (Research) School of Economics and Deputy Director Life Course Centre University of Sydney
Dr Honae Cuffe	Policy Director Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia
Mr Bruce Cunningham	Assistant Secretary, Employment Evaluation Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
Professor Kate Darian-Smith FASSA	President Academy of Social Sciences in Australia
Professor Karen Fisher FASSA	Social Policy Research Centre University of New South Wales Sydney
Dr Phillip Gould	Deputy Australian Statistician, Data & Statistical Practices Group Australian Bureau of Statistics
Mr Harry Greenwell	Director, Impact Evaluation Unit, Australian Centre for Evaluation Treasury
Professor Jane Hall AO, FASSA, FAHMS	Centre for Health Economics Research and Evaluation University of Technology Sydney
Professor Brian Head FASSA	Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences University of Queensland
Dr Chris Hatherly	CEO Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia
Mr Andrew Hawkins	Partner and Chief Evaluator ARTD Consultants
Mr David Kalisch FASSA	Faculty of Business, Government and Law University of Canberra
Professor Ilan Katz	Social Policy Research Centre University of New South Wales Sydney
Dr Susie Kluth	Assistant Secretary, Analysis, Data and Measurement Department of Education

PARTICIPANTS

The Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP FASSA	Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities, and Treasury and Assistant Minister for Employment
Associate Professor Jenny Povey	Deputy Director (Training) and Principal Research Fellow, Institute for Social Science Research University of Queensland
Emeritus Professor Elliot Stern	Emeritus Professor of Evaluation Research Lancaster University
Scientia Professor Carla Treloar FASSA	Centre for Social Research in Health University of New South Wales Sydney
Professor Rosalie Viney FASSA	Director, Centre for Health and Economics Research and Evaluation University of Technology Sydney
Professor Mark Western FASSA	Research Director, The Queensland Commitment University of Queensland
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