THROUGH A GLASS, DARKLY

Evaluation in Australian Health and Welfare Services

Report from the Senate Standing Committee on Social Welfare

VOLUME ONE
This report is in two volumes:

Volume One—Report and appendixes
Volume Two—Papers commissioned by the Committee
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Reference

Evaluation of the adequacy of Australian health and welfare services with particular reference to:

1. standards of performance and provision of health and welfare services;
2. the pattern of current practice in the provision of such services in terms of need and demand;
3. mechanisms for evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of health and welfare services; and
4. requirements for ongoing evaluation as an integral part of the development of health and welfare service programs.

(Referred by the Senate on 2 June 1976)
For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

1 Corinthians 13:12
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The recommendations made in this report are brought together and listed here for convenient reference.

Chapter 3  *Current models of evaluation within parliamentary and government processes*

1. That the Departments of Social Security and Health define their activities in program terms and apportion costs, including departmental overheads, accordingly.  
   
2. That functional categories in the Commonwealth budget be further broken down to identify spending on individual government programs and to enable the cost of each program to be seen.  
   
3. That the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Expenditure be invited to formulate proposals for changes or additions necessary for the Commonwealth budget to become a management tool more appropriate to monitoring of the attainment of policy goals.  
   
4. That a Commonwealth department or a particular program be chosen for a trial of zero base budgeting, the trial to be fully costed and publicly documented.  
   
5. That the Commonwealth Government ensure that all health and welfare evaluation reports presented by or to it be tabled and printed as parliamentary papers, and that State Governments be encouraged to do the same.  
   
6. That evaluation reports tabled in the Commonwealth Parliament be referred to relevant committees of both Houses of the Parliament.  
   
7. That a committee of the Parliament be asked to investigate the possible use of sunset provisions in legislation.  
   
8. That the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet be charged with the responsibility for ensuring that adequate program evaluation is carried out by all Commonwealth authorities, and that it certify annually that the results of such evaluations have been properly reported to the Parliament.  
   
9. That freedom of information legislation, when enacted, provide for access to all evaluation information, with adequate safeguards for the privacy of individuals.  

Chapter 4  *Need*

10. That all levels of government make a commitment to identify and declare the state of need and of unmet need in Australian health and welfare, and to assess these factors continually.
11. That the Social Welfare Policy Secretariat, in co-operation with the non-government health and welfare sector, formulate and publish basic minimum data requirements for the assessment of levels of need in health and welfare services

12. That instrumentalities with programs designed to answer need be responsible for the collection, updating and dissemination of appropriate statistics relevant to measuring levels of need

13. That the non-government welfare sector be given specific grants for the collation and publication of data already collected by agencies with programs designed to answer need

14. That funding proposals by government departments and by non-government agencies receiving government funds be required to identify need in an approved, objective fashion and that independently funded bodies be encouraged to do the same

15. That:
   (a) all collected data on need be published, irrespective of their quality; and
   (b) lists of what data are available be published also

16. That legislation establishing new programs within government authorities include a requirement that measures of unmet and satisfied need be detailed in the annual reports of the relevant authority

17. That non-government agencies receiving government funds be required to furnish publicly, at specified intervals, measures of unmet and satisfied need

18. That independently funded bodies be encouraged to make statements of unmet and satisfied need in their annual reports

Chapter 5 Goals and objectives

19. That the Commonwealth and each State Government, in association with the non-government sector and consumers, declare in writing, clearly and publicly, (a) broad strategic goals for its health and welfare programs, and (b) precise and testable objectives for each program in which it is involved, either directly or as a funding authority; and that, in the Commonwealth sphere, the Social Welfare Policy Secretariat, if necessary, be charged with the planning, oversight and implementation of these proposals

20. That all governments state clearly, in relevant legislation, their goals for health and welfare initiatives

Chapter 6 Standards

21. That all professional groups develop and disseminate comprehensive standards of performance for the guidance of their members and for the protection and information of clients
22. That the Social Welfare Policy Secretariat be instructed to develop a co-operative strategy which will ensure that appropriate standards are progressively developed in Australian health and welfare services before 1981 and that mechanisms are established for regular review and updating of these standards .................................................. 78

23. That the Commonwealth and each State Government set and disseminate appropriate, comprehensive structure and distribution standards for health and welfare services under its control .................................................. 78

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28. That the Commonwealth and State Ministers responsible for health and social welfare direct the National Working Party on Welfare Statistics and the National Working Party on Health Statistics to produce within two years, in consultation with the non-government health and welfare sector, a list of priorities for the identification and collection of basic outcome data .................................................. 93

29. That the Social Welfare Policy Secretariat be required to report publicly, and within two years, on priorities for the identification and collection of health and welfare data .................................................. 93

30. That the non-government health and welfare sector be given grants to enable it to report on the data priorities of non-government health and welfare organisations .................................................. 93

31. That data obtained from any future census be fully processed and made available without delay, and that resources appropriate to this task be provided .................................................. 93

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32. That the Social Welfare Policy Secretariat, either alone or after appropriate consultations, prepare a document, or a number of documents, outlining the methods available to organisations for the evaluation of their activities .................................................. 100
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Chapter 9  Constraints and opportunities

34. That, in future, Commonwealth funding for any health or welfare organisation be contingent on a written agreement by the organisation that it will conduct ongoing evaluation of a quality that is approved by both the organisation and the Government; and that State Governments be encouraged to follow a similar practice.

35. That each State Government ensure that, within its Public Service, there is a section that will provide advice for organisations which wish to evaluate their own services.