What does it actually take - to provide a professional support society?

*Reflections on a decade in the life of the Australasian Evaluation Society*

*(especially from 1990-99)*

by

Ian G Trotman

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Reflections on a decade in the life of the Australasian Evaluation Society

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INTRODUCTION
This year’s Conference is the 21st birthday of conferences held by a group of evaluators who after a few such efforts organised themselves more formally to become, in 1986, the Australasian Evaluation Society (AES), the third such regional professional society of evaluators, after the Canadian Evaluation Society (1981) and the American Evaluation Association (1986, as the consolidation of two earlier evaluation Associations: the Evaluation Network and the Evaluation Research Society).

Those of us from New Zealand should always be thankful that at that time there was an Aucklander from the Commerce faculty of Auckland University, Martin Putterill, to whom we owe the Australasian rather than Australia in the title, along with the farsighted and non parochial “Ozzy cousins” involved.

The fact that this is only the second time the Society has met outside the Commonwealth and that this year is the 10th anniversary of the Auckland Evaluation Group led me, somewhat foolishly, to think over January that perhaps, in the spirit of new year’s resolutions, I should crawl out of my retirement comfort zone and reflect upon 10-11 years in various guises at the centre of the Society’s evolving activities over that time. The more my conscience wrestled with me as I looked for excuses to desist I realised that there were very few people who had been continuously in office for all that period, possibly only Anthea Rutter and myself. It was pointed out to me that in the spirit of the very practical thrust the conference organising committee were seeking, a contribution would be appropriate on the ‘behind the scenes’ efforts that go into a professional society to provide the practical support for evaluators by maintaining and developing professional support and services. During this project it has become clear there is no readily accessible repository of historical information on the Society apart from an interim history prepared by Sharp & Lindsay (1992). Although this document is not a history I hope with the appendices it helps fill this gap.

Why reflections?
This presentation is not a history of the AES. It lacks the academic rigour and research. It particularly overlooks much of the activities of the regions which are really the heart of the Society. It glosses over some of the crucial activities with which I have not been actively involved like the production of the Society’s publications. It is not as balanced as a true history should be as it reflects my experiences, my perceptions of these, and my analysis of patterns, utility, outcomes and implications. Despite these deficiencies or potential biases I hope that it provides an insight of what goes into making a professional society as effective and highly regarded as the AES is, despite having had its share of trials and tribulation on the way.

1Note: In this article to save space the commonly accepted abbreviations for the Australian States and NZ for New Zealand are frequently used. Currency is in $A unless stated otherwise.
The approach
I spent some time trying to decide whether to use a chronological or a thematic
approach in marshalling material and ideas. There are arguments both ways but in
the end, I straddled the fence or took a bob each way (both metaphors suit our
cultures), as observations of other’s efforts in addressing this quandary indicates that
it is usually easier to follow a time sequence in order which allows consideration of
other contemporary events and any inter-relationships whilst drawing together trends
and patterns is best under themes.

Some context
Before reflecting on events it is important to explain some of the characteristics of the
Australasian evaluation scene which adds to the challenges of managing a
professional society for evaluation. In North America, the home of the older
societies,, at this time people, gained qualifications in evaluation and expected a long
career. Here people of varying disciplines float in and out of evaluation in a more
flexible career path. Most evaluation here is tied to the public sector. In other
countries, especially the USA, private foundations, research organisations and
community based trusts or organisations are major commissioners of evaluation. In
North America and some of Europe there are tertiary institutions whose academic
staff and students provide a major source of consultants and a trained labour force.
Here, apart from Melbourne, we have few evaluation courses and academics to
boost the supply side which places an increased burden on a relatively small pool of
very knowledgeable and experienced consultants.

MY EARLY YEARS
In 1989 the New Zealand State Services Commission was reorganised as part of the
reform of the Public service and under new legislation set up a Reviews Division to
assess the performance management of departments (see Trotman,1992 & 1993)
and chief executives (see Trotman & Jones,1993) and I was appointed one of the
managers. We spent the first three or four months reviewing all the literature on
review, audit, and evaluation and set up our frameworks and processes described in
the above references. It was during this period we became aware of the AES and its

At the time I was not aware that Dr Anona Armstrong whilst lecturing at the University
of Melbourne and Jerome Winston at the Philip Institute of Technology had
commenced the convening of NECs in 1982,1984,1986 and 1988. These must have
been interesting affairs as I believe Michael Quinn Patton and Michael Scriven would
have been at some. It was arising from these conferences that the AES was founded
in 1986 under general Victorian provisions for incorporated societies and sports
bodies with about 150 members . In 1986 the NSW Government mandated
evaluation for all programmes in all state government agencies, advising agencies in
1985 that this would occur and that agencies would receive support (training and
other) in the lead up to and following the mandate taking effect. The Commonwealth
followed this lead in1987 and mandated evaluation for application to federal
programmes. Over time several of the other State governments also adopted
mandatory evaluation. These developments led the NSW government to sponsor
NEC ‘90 including the funding of 12 months of a senior organiser. The Office of
Public Management in NSW Premier’s Dept funded the conference on the basis that
it considered evaluation to be an integral part of good management. Hence the title of
the conference: Evaluation: you can’t manage without it! Also the conference was
seen as a watershed point for demonstrating what had been achieved since 1985
with the program evaluation reforms in NSW and, in particular, to demonstrate case
examples and methodologies that had been developed over this period. The central
agency profile and sponsorship and the extra and paid effort put into organising the conference under the strong leadership of the then President (Bryan Lenne) changed the format and size of what became annual conferences which have moved around most of the States and New Zealand.

1990-91
I attended Sydney NEC’90 and was impressed by the very efficient organisation and content which included six streams of concurrent sessions - one covering major issues, two case studies and three workshops, many of these being aimed at basic training for those who found themselves with responsibilities for organising, commissioning, or conducting evaluations. In my notes of the meeting I recorded a vigorous debate on whether the AES should foster training for evaluation or evaluation training. Interestingly a strong consensus focused on internal evaluation as it was felt external evaluation led to reports gathering dust with little change whereas internal evaluation usually had some vested interest in implementation. At that stage I was so innocent or ignorant that I did not appreciate how different this view was to those of US and Canadian experience which was not widely challenged until Arnold Love’s book *Internal Evaluation* a few years later. This session concluded that the AES should collect and supply information on tuition courses, experts, resource kits, case studies, standards and guidance on when to use internal or external evaluation.

It was here I was introduced to the power of program logic and its heirachy of outcomes some of which nowadays would be regarded as outputs. With 340 attendees the conference was well over double the size of it predecessors and set new expectations for the future. Many attendees were particularly impressed to receive “Proceedings” of all papers on arrival. As one of the few New Zealanders present and perhaps from opening my mouth too much I was pressed by the incoming President Darrel Caulley to join the AES (General or Management) Committee from which has developed a major interest with its share of ups and downs. Not long after the Conference I was persuaded to join the Ethics & Standards Sub-committee to provide a NZ perspective.

Around the same time a group of Wellington public servants whose organisations had review and evaluation responsibilities formed the Wellington Evaluation Group (WEG) for mutual support and networking (see Trotman 2003). At the time there were only 8 New Zealand members of AES. This group metamorphosed into the New Zealand and later the Wellington Region of the AES. Like a number of AES regions there are many attendees at local level meetings and workshops who do not belong to AES although several go on to see the light and join. These groups usually collect a local membership fee or meeting fees to meet the costs of meeting venues and newsletters. Fortunately thus far this region has had sponsors who have precluded the need for such funding provided things are kept basic and that commercial workshops are handled as such. Being a different country under different laws and with a different currency could potentially create problems if too formally addressed. So, from early on WEG and the Wellington Region of AES have effectively run as two parallel and overlapping organisations which meet the requirements of the AES evolving constitution and policies whilst allowing others to also play an active role.

Going back over the records for 1990-91 Committee which at that time operated by two telephone conferences, faxes and mail there was a very active QLD region with regular comprehensive newsletters which at that time mention the activities of three long term AES stalwarts; Illana McLean, Peter Mountney and Kerry Rose. At that time the Region was proposing to encourage student members by offering an essay
prize across all QLD universities. They also established a video library of case study presentations. VIC also had a newsletter but less frequent and more oriented to local meetings. WA had a Programme Evaluation Network which met six weekly with 60-120 (usually the upper end) of attendees although having only 15 members of AES in the State. During this period there is also mention an ACT Evaluation Forum being formed of public sector evaluators. A significant profit, about $20,000, from the Manly Conference enabled the President to offer financial assistance to regions to help organise their activities.

It may come as a surprise to many that during late 1990 and ‘91 the three members of the Committee from NZ were actively engaged in discussions with the State Services Commission and the Treasury to promote evaluation by holding training seminars or workshops involving a visiting group of up to four from the AES organised by the President. The concept evolved away from training to a “Seminar on Evaluation” aimed at establishing common ground between countries in evaluation methodologies; clarifying NZ needs, including the possibility of setting up its own evaluation society; and considering approaches to future dialogue. The AES participants were reduced to two along with 20-30 attendees from central and local government, academics, the private sector and other professional bodies (e.g. Assoc. of Social Science Researcher and the NZ Inst. of Public Administration) as it was felt one of the barriers to evaluation was an unfulfilled professional support market niche. The proposal was strongly supported by the State Services Commissioner, Don Hunn, who had been exposed to evaluation developments at international meetings and overseas visits. The file records note “The Minister of State Services has a gathering feeling that the separation of output delivery by service agencies and the consideration of outcomes by policy ministries is resulting in policy agencies being unable to provide information that is needed” The seminar was also seen as helping to keep up with Australia and provide a vehicle for the NZ financial reforms. Unfortunately before the event was held there was a change in government, the introduction of tight budget controls, and the Treasury developed doubts on the application and levels of evaluation, observed in Australia, for the NZ reforms. It is interesting to speculate whether such a forum would have led to an NZES or would have reinforced the Trans-Tasman link as occurs in some of the science professions. An unfortunate consequence of the strengthening evaluation activity in Wellington was the resignation, from the AES Committee, of Martin Putterill who had in a sense lit the light for NZ in the Society and kept it burning for close to a decade.

During 1990-91 the Committee considered a paper on Standards in Evaluation by Christine Martins which described the work of the Joint Committee on Standards for Education Evaluation led by Stufflebeam2 and advocated more active exploration of the topic in the Journal and NECs. A new Training Co-ordinator was appointed, John Owen, who conducted a survey of regional contacts which led the formation of a Training Network and a Clearinghouse focusing on information about:

A. Recent evaluation training programmes  
B. Existing training needs  
C. Resources for evaluation training  
D. Discussion and Research on professional development  
E. Visitors from overseas.

Much of the committee’s time was spent in overseeing the Adelaide NEC’91 organising committee. Planning was budgeted on 250 but hoped for nearer 350 attendees. Again a major sponsor and supplier of administrative support was the SA Office of Government Management Board. Major policy issues arising included AES

\footnote{2 Standards for Evaluations of Educational Programs, Projects and Materials, Stufflebeam (Ed), Sage 1981}
indemnity for public liability and insurance for this; abandonment insurance being built into the NEC budget, and AES acceptance of responsibility for loss as well as profit. The issue of discount for AES members, or surcharge for non members, or reduced membership for non member attendees as a form of recruitment was debated as was whether proceedings should be included in registration or be an optional extra. It was decided fees would be $280 for members and $310 for non members inclusive of proceedings. A cancellation fee was added where a replacement was not proposed. I cannot find a decision on the non members fee providing a years membership but I recall this continued as an issue for some time. The Committee also endorsed a previous policy proposal (original date unknown) that NEC registration fees should aim for a surplus to finance Journal production costs, then about $20,000.

Darrel Caulley also took responsibility for or initiated new developments including: establishing an Awards Sub-committee with Ralph Straton as first Chair and indicated he would sponsor the Caulley Tulloch Pioneering Award for pioneering articles on evaluation in admiration of all pioneers but particularly his own forbears; setting up a Conference Planning Sub-committee to ensure geographical balance and early arrangement of suitable venues with Robyn Robinson as initial Chair; personally putting the membership list onto computer; and producing the first combined promotional statement of AES Aims and Objectives and membership application. He also introduced the idea of the Committee and Sub-committees meeting the day prior to the Conference to allow for face to face in-depth discussion.

**Ethics & Standards**

As a result of experience a few years previously in researching and developing a code of ethics for the NZ public service I felt the approach being taken by the Sub-committee was too philosophical and academic which whilst interesting and important considerations were unlikely to quickly lead to practical guidelines for practising evaluators. I therefore drew on a seminal publication of the moment *Ethical Issues in Professional Life* by Joan C. Callahan (Oxford University Press, 1988) which was illustrated by examples from eight professional societies, and collected a range of NZ professional group codes. From this material an example was prepared, by extraction with modification, of a possible code for the AES under headings of: service, competence, responsibility, integrity and impartiality. I suggested consideration of formats ranging from a simple “10 Commandments” on a card through an expanded but short pithy version suitable for carrying in a wallet or purse to a more discursive booklet with or without examples and recommended a two stage approach starting simply and advancing to the more comprehensive.

Colin Sharp, the new Chair of the Sub-committee, prepared for the Adelaide NEC ’91 a comprehensive paper covering: the history of the Sub-committee from its formation in 1988; key concepts; the study of ethics under three types - moral philosophy, casuistry, and descriptive ethics; and the question of appropriate approach for the AES having regard to the issue that many evaluators are professionals of other disciplines which have there own codes. Colin recommended in summary that:

A. AES adopt Stufflebeam’s Joint Committee Standards with some caveats;
B. These be used by commissioners of evaluations and practitioners for guidance;
C. AES pursue the use of draft guidelines and case studies, including overseas examples, to illustrate excellence and pitfalls;
D. AES advise practitioners and users if in doubt to seek advice of other professionals to determine action which would have least harm to the most at risk;
E. AES appoint a list of experts to represent and interpret codes of ethics and standards in evaluation; and
F. AES promote research to verify the appropriateness of standards and demonstrate exemplars of quality evaluation practice.
1991-92
The Adelaide NEC’91 was fully booked out for the size of venue with 355 participants including an innovation of day registrants. Except for the three keynote addresses at the start of each day six concurrent sessions covered: ongoing issues, new challenges, special interest groups and 10 workshops (several all day) aimed at providing hands on experience. A period was scheduled at the end of each day for regional groups to meet.

The conference evaluation and subsequent discussion by the organising committee suggested for NEC ’92:
- involvement of local government and the community sector on the organising group;
- allow more time for the AGM which had been for the first hour of the Thursday;
- recognition that the State Government support was very important at around $70,000 including the equivalent of 1FTE;
- the conference evaluation identified topics of interest and it could be useful to invite contributors/sponsors of many delegates to describe their expectations;
- the committee had to return fees to over 50 people due to lack of space and believe a target of 450-500 could be viable;
- the profit of over $30,000 is due to the high attendance above the budgeted 250 and that most budget items were under-spent;
- flexible use of 3 day registration to allow changing delegates widened exposure as did the single day registration which was very successful encouraging participation which would otherwise have been too long or too expensive;
- 20% of delegates joined the AES from the 60% who were not members;
- the conference character was set by classical music ensembles greeting delegates each morning;
- the new challenge sessions were recorded as highlights as they opened new ground;
- social events including a lunch time cruise on the river and an evening walking tour of "Pubs & Pulpits" were appreciated;
- the conference evaluation used the same four headings as NEC ’90 of content, process, image/perception, and infrastructure. A survey of delegates designed for quick analysis had a 25% response rate and supported more detailed responses from nine delegates representative of stakeholder groups who met as a focus group to cover the four aspects.

The Committee and sub-committee meetings ahead of the conference and at breakfast on the last day went well with the concept being adopted for the future. It was heartening that membership had increased to 443, an increase of around 50% probably due to increased and higher profile activities. Concern was expressed that only 40% of NEC attendees were members. The Conference Planning Sub-committee proposed NEC ’92 at Melbourne, NEC ’93 at Brisbane and hoped for Perth in ’94.

The QLD student essay competition received only three entries but it was decided to continue and broaden it to a national event. Debate on whether to pick up QLD’s trial of a video library was shelved due to concerns about maintaining quality and suggestions audio tapes may get wider use.

The new Awards Sub-committee was tasked with considering areas for further awards and the development of procedure for seeking nominations, the adequacy of documentation, refereeing candidates and whether awards should be open to members or evaluators at large.

The major topic addressed was the future of the AES which appeared at a crossroads and difficult to administer by teleconference. Up until then it was primarily a loose network pulled together to arrange an annual conference. The last two of these had become much larger and more sophisticated. Pressures were arising for AES to become more involved in training by oversight of standards for providers or become involved in delivery. This raised issues of potential endorsement of a school of thought or a consultant’s methodology which contrasted with the AES
objective to foster debate. There was potential competition with consultant members livelihoods. Under the law were also issues of possible liability. There were indications that if ethics and standards were not addressed by the profession evaluation was now gaining such political prominence across Australia that government(s) could become involved.

I explained that there was considerable uncertainty in the WEG as to whether it wanted to stay an ad hoc group, become associated with AES or develop an NZES. This was well received as it reflected the evolution of the AES and even if an independent society was formed there would be considerable advantages for affiliation between them.

At this time there was no formal constitutional provision for regional branches/chapters. This had been done deliberately to allow maximum flexibility. Now the regions believed a formal arrangement was needed particularly in relation to training activities and to financial needs and management. There were indications some would go their own way e.g. WA. An interim formula was adopted that regions concentrate on providing information to members but make places available for others using terms such as "the encouragement of debate", "sponsored by the Society" but not "promoted by" or "under the auspices of the AES".

After long debate it was decided to set up a Strategic Working Party to look at the future of the AES and to finance a weekend retreat for the group at Melbourne as the least costly location.

Colin Sharp’s major paper on ethics and standards led to healthy debate during the conference and at the AGM. The Sub-committee was strengthened to make more progress with recommendations for the next AGM. It also became clear that progress would have to involve wider consultation with allied groups and clients.

There was also debate on whether the AES issue membership cards and encourage members to use letters (MAES) after their names and to provide additional grades of membership like Fellows. This raised issues of accreditation. Decisions were held pending the strategic review. There was discussion on what services could help more remote members and the idea of a newsletter floated.

Minutes of the February '92 Committee teleconference indicate work continuing on a membership brochure, membership cards being prepared to go out with the annual subscription renewal, a newsletter of about 20 pages being developed, satisfactory progress with NEC '92 including a shift of the AGM to the end of a day to allow more time and possible over-run without impacting other sessions, and possible short publications on evaluation with Barry Bannister as editor and perhaps able to arrange cheap production in Hong Kong.

The Strategic Planning Sub-committee made great progress over a solid weekend workshop and produced its report prepared by Hans Wijgh in the form of the then in vogue corporate plan, AES 2000 - Leading the Society into the Future. It enunciated, for the first time, the role of the AES in a triangular relationship between doers of evaluation (practitioners including consultants i.e. the demand side) and supporters of evaluation (academics and the most experienced consultants i.e. the supply side) where it fulfils the role of bridge and broker. It also has a role in representing the profession and providing information and guidance e.g. for those thinking about commissioning evaluation for the first time. The plan indicated a range of possible approaches including from an interest group to a learned society to an exclusive chartered profession. The range of services it provided would depend on which
approach. It suggested that any significant developments could not occur while dependent on volunteer office bearers and that consideration be given to a full or part-time executive director.

**Ethics & Standards**
The rejuvenated Sub-committee made progress by teleconferences and the clear allocation of tasks and a timetable aimed at four products before NEC '92: a statement of legal requirements and implications (Darrel Caulley); a draft code of ethics (Ian Trotman); a set of standards for evaluation practice in Australasia (Jerome Winston); and a PR pamphlet or discussion paper (Colin Sharp). It was fortunate that in Wellington two organisations were looking at codes for their own evaluation work so I was able to draw on their work and form a working party with Marlene Levine (Dept. Social Welfare) and Jeanette Schollum (Education Review Office). This group reviewed the previous work, examined additional codes until around 40 had been sighted, and went through a process of consultation on a number of drafts. As Michael Small of WA, one of the Sub-committee, was on a sabbatical at Massey University we were able to easily keep in touch and finally met in Palmerston North for revision and sign off from the working party who had put in a lot more time and effort than generally appreciated and without whose work we would not have achieved a quality product. An example was also prepared in a small folding format for purse or wallet. It included a preface on the code’s purpose and information on the AES. This was finished for a late February teleconference where a few changes were made and some different formats tried. The draft *Interim Code of Ethics* was then circulated to participants of the previous NEC and to regions for comment before NEC '92 in July.

This led to a range of views from support to questions of timeliness and appropriateness for AES as an interest group rather than attempting to push for an elite and controlled profession. The QLD region reported on a forum of 40 participants in a two page statement which while commending progress over the last decade questioned the maturity and expertise of the majority of members to develop and adopt a code. It questioned whether there was a common core of values and proposed a set of standards or a statement of “Best Practices” be developed to guide practice. A code, if developed, should reflect behaviours rather than procedures. It expressed concerns at the legal ramifications, particularly in respect of expert witnesses in a court.

**1992-93**
NEC '92 at Melbourne had 475, with an additional 22 non-conference registrants at workshops the previous day. Over 100 papers were presented or tabled. The usual pattern of 3 keynote addresses in opening each morning in a plenary session was increased to five by adding afternoon plenaries. Again six concurrent streams were used, this year to cover:

- Performance management in government;
- Tools and techniques of evaluation;
- Evaluation in government health and welfare;
- Other government social programmes;
- Non-government social programmes; and
- Resources.

The overseas guest speaker was Maria Barrados who spoke on *Effectiveness evaluation and audit reform in Canada.* To demonstrate a different technique the conference was subject to a photographic evaluation, by Ros Hurworth, which surprised many at what it was able to show.
With the celebration of 10 years of National Evaluation Conferences Colin Sharp and Ann Lindsay produced and tabled an excellent *Interim history of evaluation in Australia and New Zealand* with Anne Donnell assisting with the latter although there was limited published background material. Sharp recommended the AES form an archive of evaluation possibly through the University of Melbourne Library which has never been picked up.

The AES General Committee meeting spent most of its time discussing Sub-committee reports demonstrating the progress that this approach was able to make. The Strategic Planning draft corporate plan *AES 2000 - Leading the Society into the Future* somewhat shook the full Committee. Consensus was reached that the AES should be a “learned society” promoting the field of knowledge covered by evaluation and providing services to its members. It should not become exclusive seeking to provide accreditation and restricted membership. It recognised that many of the costs had been carried by office bearers’ employers and that it must now look to using contracted secretarial services. It was decided the corporate plan and the Committees discussions should be used by a new Sub-committee to develop a new constitution.

The draft code of ethics was adopted with a few changes as an *Interim Code of Ethics* for trial and comment over the next two years. It was confirmed that the AES would continue to advocate the Stufflebeam joint committees standards which were currently being revised and it was noted the AEA was working on standards. It was felt it may be best to adopt one of these and provide a commentary on application to Australasian conditions.

The Committee endorsed guidelines prepared by the Awards Sub-committee for the *Evaluation Training & Services (ET&S) Award* earlier donated by the AES Foundation President Anona Armstrong in the name of her company.

The President’s report noted that the membership had risen to 565, there were formal regional branches in QLD and VIC with regular meetings in other State capitals and Wellington. Membership was roughly 60% public service and 30% academic and private sector but concern was expressed that the *Evaluation Journal of Australasia (EJA)* was primarily orientated to academics and doubts were raised at its utility for the majority. The Publications Sub-committee brief was widened to include the “How to do it booklets” and other means of communications e.g. videos. The *EJA* publication and printing was shifted to Canberra which almost halved its costs. It included refereed articles, reflections on practice and critical book reviews. The Editor, Marion Amies, also changed the cover and layout to give a more distinctive identity. Barry Bannister retired from Chair of the Publications Sub-committee where he had made a major contribution from 1987 when he published the *Bulletin* of the AES which evolved into the *Evaluation Journal of Australasia (EJA)*, a refereed journal published twice yearly; he edited until moving to Hong Kong in 1990. In setting up the General Committee for the coming year provision was made for a President Elect which was Ilhana McLean from the QLD public service and I think more formal nomination and election procedures were introduced.

In September 1992 a crisis emerged for the AES. An overdue and previously obstructed audit found that the Treasurer had embezzled over $80,000, later revised to $142,000 inclusive of interest on the funds, primarily in a farming property in Esperance WA. Peter Mountney, the QLD branch treasurer and a member of the General Committee stepped up to the national role. Although some cash was repaid
after a series of protracted negotiations the AES instituted civil proceedings to seize the property and declare bankruptcy. Fortunately the AES retained significant liquidity to continue most key activities. The amount of additional work brought on by this situation hastened the necessity to employ a part time Administration Officer and Mrs Lena Aderhold, a former executive secretary, was appointed. An office was also set up in Darrel Caulley’s home rent free and some computer equipment acquired. This provided the first permanent address and phone and fax numbers for the AES. New financial and administrative procedures were established.

Around this time the first issue of the newsletter, *Evaluation News and Comment (EN&C)* was produced by the President with some paid help from an associate editor, Ann Neil. It was hoped to publish quarterly rather than the original target of three issues per annum.

The untimely death of the ex-treasurer in April ‘93 left the AES with interests in a car and poor quality farmland. While this situation had stretched the Executive, of the office bearers, there was considerable activity on other fronts which is demonstrated by what I think was the largest pack of information ever sent to all members in December 1992. A covering letter explained the financial situation and introduced 12 enclosures among which were:

- the first edition of *Evaluation News and Comment*;
- a list of office bearers, the General Committee and Sub-committee members;
- a schedule of Special Interest Groups (SIGs);
- the draft *Interim Code of Ethics* along with a covering letter from Colin Sharp explaining terms, the form of consultation and its trial use;
- the *Interim History of Programme Evaluation in Australia and New Zealand* and a covering note from Colin Sharp seeking comment, correction and additional information;
- clearing-house information on training and personal development; and
- information on a number of evaluation conferences including those of the AEA and CES.

In January ’93 Patricia Rogers who was on maternity leave from the RMIT was appointed a second associate editor for *EN&C*. The editorial team developed a policy of aiming to have regular sections on:

- evaluation in the public sector;
- focus on an evaluation issue;
- focus on an evaluation organisation;
- focus on an evaluation journal;
- recent reports and articles on evaluation practice in Australasia;
- book summaries; and
- news from the regions.

A number of the General Committee were speaking or participating in a commercial AIC Conference in Sydney during February which provided an additional opportunity for brief meetings of the Ethics and Standards Sub-committee and much of the General Committee.

Minutes of the March and June teleconferences note concerns about the tax status of the AES including exemptions, the implications of becoming involved in training where fees were collected, regional finances, and safeguards so the AES was not compromised by regional branch activities. There was concern at the liability of committee members. Reference is made to a new award for “Excellence in public service evaluation”, to the possibility of a percentage of conference profits going to the organising branch and to looking at the AES logo. Also in March ’93 evaluation in NZ was put into the spotlight by an address of the Controller and Auditor-General on “Establishing the links between outputs and outcomes”.

**Constitution revision**
The Constitution Sub-committee met over an intensive weekend in Melbourne. The existing constitution was a standard model used for associations, clubs and societies in VIC. It no longer met the needs of the evolving AES where functions were managed by sub-committees or designated positions. It did not cater for an international organisation with members in all Australian States, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Indonesia and the USA. Some regions had developed semi-autonomous branches and there was a need to clarify powers and financial relationships. It was proving legally deficient. As well as reviewing these reasons for change the group reviewed the constitutions of the AEA, the CES and several Australian learned societies and drew on the previous years draft strategic corporate plan.

Legal options were to use recent State legislation covering associations or a company limited by guarantee. The group also reviewed and revised the AES aims and objectives. Key findings of the weekends discussions were brought together under two headings - Characteristics & constraints and Guiding principles.

I have reproduced these in full here as together they define what the AES had become and where it was going and have not been published elsewhere.

**Characteristics & Constraints**

- Insufficient membership in most regions to provide a critical mass which can sustain independent branches capable of implementing the aims and objectives.
- Focus on a regional structure is unlikely to maintain core activities of the journal, newsletter and conference.
- AES does not have the capacity of larger or higher profited organisations which attract additional funding or assistance with resources.
- AES objectives focus activity on the wider evaluation community rather than the provision of exclusive services for members.
- Protection of the name, image, and credibility of the AES is increasingly a vital consideration.
- Activities and structure need to match the reality of resourcing with main funding from subscriptions and conference revenue and with inputs focused on volunteers rather than paid staff.
- Potential benefits of increased funding from corporate membership are likely to be more than offset by reduction in other members as well as increase the administrative costs of servicing them.

**Guiding Principles**

- Management should be by a small group which meets in person two or three times p.a. (once at the Conference) to improve manageability and efficiency, reduce costs, whilst ensuring representativeness in decision making.
- Management will be by a committee of equals to ensure democratic representation of the regions.
- AES needs to maintain a central capability to further its aim and objectives whilst providing for devolution of authority to sub groups.
- Sub groups should have financial support in furthering the AES objectives.
- Sub groups might be expected to generate additional funds within agreed guidelines.
- Sub groups will rise and fall with changing needs including the co-ordination of core activities.
- Where financial authority is delegated the minimum requirement is that the sub group maintain appropriate books which are audited annually and reported to the central body.
- Sub groups may be geographically, functionally or interest based.
- The Board of Management should comprise an Executive of four elected office bearers, with defined responsibilities, and elected sub group representatives.
- The sub group for representation on the Board at this stage should be based on regional sub groups with a minimum membership capable of promoting the aim and objectives of the AES - probably a minimum of 5-10 members.
- The Board will appoint from within it Board members to liaise with or act as members of standing committees and/or convenors of special interest groups.
- Members liability must be limited.

**1993-94**

The NEC ‘93 at Brisbane in July was another successful conference and at 400 a little more manageable than the previous year. It had strong State support. In some sessions there were up to seven concurrent streams including some of the workshops. The overseas keynote speaker was Prof. Joseph Wholey, recently moved from the School of Public Administration, University of South Carolina to the Washington Centre of Policy and Performance Studies based in South California. He spoke on “Using evaluation to improve government performance and credibility” There were also a few registered participants from Hong Kong and the USA.
In my opinion the General Committee meeting at this conference and the AGM were among the more far reaching in AES history. It was decided to reconstitute under recent federal legislation based in ACT which better limited liability of the management board. There was major debate around changing from a small body focused on networking to a larger organisation providing services to members. There had been concern that the executive was too powerful and operated too loosely. At the same time the General Committee had grown to around 30 to provide representation and a check on the Executive. There was therefore concern at the recommendation to reduce the size of the management board.

The result of these debates was the AGM supporting a new constitution with a Board of Management of office bearers (president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer), single regional representatives and up to five more members appointed by this initial group. The Executive was increased to the four office bearers plus up to three elected from within the Board. The Executive would meet face to face at least two times a year, including at the AGM, whereas the Board would meet physically only once with teleconferences to ratify actions of the Executive. The definition of Australasia was also raised as formal references suggested it only covers Australia and New Zealand whereas most thought it extended to Oceania and some thought South East Asia. This became important because of attendees from the latter attracted to the AES by its broad regional scope. New logo options were considered with a stylised map of Australia and New Zealand favoured but several doubted the need for change and it was decided to delay until the constitution was ready.

The draft *Interim Code of Ethics* was formally adopted by the AGM. There was disappointment that the US Joint Committee on Standards revision had concentrated on Educational use instead of being more generalised as expected. It was felt the AES may have to produce something itself such was the interest and number of requests for such information.

The Conference Planning Sub-committee had analysed information from recent conferences which confirmed most participants are not members although a number join. Most attend for training, up-skilling and networking opportunities. It proposed “National” should be dropped from the annual conference title as it does not truly reflect the membership or attendees. The forward programme was confirmed as Canberra ’94, Sydney ’95 and after some discussion between Perth or NZ for ’96 the former graciously bowed out until later. Tentatively ’97 Adelaide, ’98 Perth, ’99 Melbourne and 2000 Brisbane.

The Awards Sub-committee applied the criteria it had developed to determining the ET&S award successfully. It presented criteria for the Caulley-Tulloch Pioneering Prize for the best article related to evaluation published over the preceding two years which were adopted.

For the first time a budget had been prepared as part of tightening up financial management and it was agreed the AES must live within its operating income to protect and slowly enhance its reserves. These had been invaluable in the crisis from which it was now expected to recover only 35-50% of the embezzlement. The new newsletter/magazine was reduced to two editions in the year and the part-time support reduced. The proposed booklets were put on hold. Postage of the *EN&C* with one issue including the membership directory and the *EJA* should be staggered and alternated to provide quarterly mail-outs with any other material included. This would both save funds and provide regular communication with members. To sustain services which members clearly wanted the subscription was increased from $60 (over several years) to $75.
Darrel Caulley’s report noted that QLD was the largest and most active regional branch; VIC appeared to have lapsed in activity over the year; WA had been formally accepted as a regional branch and meetings had been held in NSW, SA, TAS and NZ.

At this point he retired from office. A quiet and unassuming man Darrel had surprisingly, to many, over three years led the Society to more than triple its membership to over 600, directed or cajoled the preparation of key documents, set up lasting structures, increased the services to members and during a time of crisis had demonstrated unexpected steely resolve.

THE MIDDLE YEARS
1993-94 continued

New President Illana McLean wrote soon after the Conference to the General Committee highlighting the ongoing period of exciting changes with proposals for a standard teleconference agenda, a calendar for meetings and target products, mail-outs and other events and a pro-forma for all Committee members to set out their roles. She set expectations that sub-committee and co-ordinators reports would be circulated a week before meetings to ensure discussion was informed and did not use time on background. For the first time correspondence would be summarised by the Admin Officer. The draft role statements would provide a means of reviewing or formalising objectives for each sub-committee who should provide the Secretary with agendas and minutes to ensure a permanent record of their activities.

Over August and September role statements were prepared for 13 positions and the Constitution Sub-committee undertook further revisions with much of the work falling on Marion Amies who had to deal with the Registrar responsible for the legislation. This led to more redrafting than simple revision. She had the added task of working with the Victoria Registrar on how to make the change-over. As a reward or punishment for me being one of the worst "amenders" we had many phone calls on issues effectively becoming an editorial working group. They were lively times! Peter Mountney kindly arranged for one of his staff to word process the document over its several revisions. For a long legal type document this was a major contribution. On the issue of “Australasian” it was initially defined as “Australia and New Zealand” but did not preclude members from outside these countries. Later it was decided to simply drop any definition.

The October ’93 teleconference was more structured, included a number of pre-circulated reports (but not all) and for the first time a full schedule of all payments for ratification. The Publications report noted the transfer of EJA Editor from Marion Amies to John Dunn with Neville Higlett as sub-editor of “Reflections on Practice” and Denise Conroy of Book Reviews. It also noted the “How to Booklets” should be made cost recoverable and that three were in preparation on: photography in evaluation; health evaluation and an introduction to basic ideas in evaluation.

An evaluation of the Brisbane Conference based on a 30% response was tabled. Key points were satisfaction levels about 10% up from the previous year although the rating for proceedings was 14% down. Of greatest importance to participants were: topics; value for money; presenters; networking and the proceedings. The key suggestion for future improvement was for a more practical hands on orientation. $50,000 surplus was expected from the Brisbane Conference with attendance well above budget after $10,000 seeding loan was deducted. It was suggested conference evaluations be presented at the end of the conference as had been done at Sydney and Melbourne. The Canberra ’94 Conference theme “Making Evaluation
Count” and target of 350-500 delegates was confirmed. It was noted that tenders had been called to use a conference organiser for the first time but this had proved too expensive. Subsequently an organiser had offered to arrange all accommodation at no cost to AES. The Sydney ’95 Conference indicated a theme of “Evaluation - Are you being served?” and that they were also seeking to use a commercial organiser.

It was agreed to respond to an invitation made through Jerome Winston to serve on the first international evaluation conference at Vancouver (1995) programme and marketing committees provided this did not lock AES into future financial or other commitments. Ralph Stratton who was on a sabbatical in the USA acted as our liaison and later Jim Stevenson from the Dept. of Finance, seconded to Washington. Darrel Caulley become Co-ordinator of SIGs. Non-financial members were sent reminders that the EJA and EN&C would stop until subscription renewal. Any members who paid before 1 January could have the old rate. Following an AGM decision to audit regional accounts WA’s was reported as completed and SA scheduled for the next year. No other regions reported keeping separate funds. It was noted the role statements would need revision in light of the new constitution and to ensure consistency across regions. There was more discussion about the coverage of national and regional relations, ethics and disciplinary measures in the draft constitution. Little progress had been made on Ethics and Standards whilst waiting for information from the USA. It was noted their approach was framed for external evaluation whereas much of ours was internal. It was agreed to move without waiting as Colin had received a number of enquires arising from interest and from ethical difficulties.

In November there was a fax discussion around the provisions for overseas members in the constitution, even whether the Society’s name be changed, and the degree of outreach that should be undertaken. In December the Esperance property was sold for much less than expected and with other creditors and heavy legal bills deducted the AES received only $2500 but the saga was finally over.

In December ’93 the Executive reviewed a draft business plan for publications. It decided non-member subscriptions should be the same as membership except for a special library rate of $30 for the EJA and the cost of production for EN&C to be clarified. Criteria for the proposed new award for public sector evaluation were refined. The Canberra Conference theme “ Evaluation - Making performance count” was endorsed as was the use of a conference organiser. It was agreed to set up a separate conference account with a seeding loan of $10000. It was decided to relocate the office and administrative support to Canberra where the Secretary was located and where under the new constitution the Society would be registered. It reiterated the policy that AES would not endorse commercial evaluation conferences or workshops (e.g. IIR or AIC) but would send out information at cost and would not release the AES mailing list. It would explore holding joint meetings with like-minded professional bodies such as the RIPAA and internal auditors, possibly for the Brisbane 2000 conference.

The General Committee February ’94 teleconference approved employment of International Technological Services (ITS) run by Peter and Eva Sullivan for secretarial services on a 12 month contract for $11000 plus attributable costs with a six month review. Prime duties were to manage the membership register, banking and financial records, service the executive and general committee, correspondence and filing, mail-outs and postal elections, AGM preparation, operating a conference stand and support services and publications support although much was done by the editors. A number of decisions relating to the Canberra Conference were ratified
including the highest fees yet ($700/750) as the National Convention Centre had been booked as the only venue holding above 350 (up to 625). There was concern that several academics and community groups would be unlikely to attend. A large discount for early registration was agreed. A day of chargeable pre-conference workshops was added and the overseas speaker, Arnold Love agreed to participate in this plus pre- and post-conference tours to selected regions. Falling interest in the Clearinghouse on Training and comments from the Training in Evaluation SIG led to the forming of a standing sub committee on Training and Professional Development of Jerome Winston, Brian English and Chris Curteis. In a budget review it was suggested provision be made for regional visits by the AES President but it was not used during this year. There was further consultation on the Vancouver International Conference and its themes of: global issues, evaluation lessons learned and changing faces of evaluation.

At the Executive April and General Committee May meetings there was concern at the increasing size and cost of EN&C and it was decided it must not exceed 40 pages or the budget of $8000/issue. Comments from circulation of the draft constitution were considered and amendments made.

Colin Sharp as President-elect presented a discussion paper on a “Tentative Strategy for the AES for the next Presidency”. In the previous two years the organisational, programme and budget structure had been provided. The previous exercise had been done by a small group and he wished to involve the whole committee. The Strategy assured the continuity of function and leadership of the AES and a strategic marketing focus but provided for a new SWOT analysis. Colin went back to a keynote address by Michael Quinn Patton to the NEC’89 suggesting that for evaluation to thrive as a profession it needed a vision, quality products and processes and skilled and trained evaluators. Colin proposed:

Plan 1 Develop and implement a new code of ethics & guide on standards for the AES and evaluation practitioners in the region.
Plan 2 Take the AES to the Asian-Pacific region which mirrored the interest of both the Australian & New Zealand governments by forming an interim SIG on “Evaluation in the Asia-Pacific Region” and requesting the Conference Planning Sub-committee to focus on the larger region in planning, particularly for the NZ’96 conference with a stream on this topic with a contingency fall back to Perth’99). These activities may lead to a new regional group within the AES.
Plan 3 Publish a 10 year history of AES in1997.

It was decided to progress by circulating the paper to regions for comment and to hold a special meeting before the general committee meeting prior to the Canberra conference. The discussion also identified the need for a manual on conference planning and organisation.

1994-95
The Canberra Conference’94 did not reach expectations in attendance of over 450, possibly due to the high registration fee which led to discussions to try to benchmark at $600. The 360 who attended may have been able to just squeeze into one of the hotel venues and cause less anxiety about whether break-even would be reached. Despite these concerns the conference was well run and met many needs with a few key themes emerging through the sessions:

- Quality management, associated benchmarking and promotion of best practices;
- Growing interest in “soft” performance measures relating to staff commitment and to customer satisfaction;
- Growing interest in ex-ante evaluation and an overlap with policy analysis;
- The use of evaluation in strategic planning; and
- Overview papers on the status of evaluation in the federal government, NSW, QLD and France and developing an evaluation system to meet ISO9000 standards.
Different to normal was a very entertaining and educational hypothetical (role play) involving an issue of following through a Minister’s bright idea without adequate analysis and trying to retrieve it by evaluation as it began to fall apart. Realism was intense with a Senate Minister, leading TV interviewer, union leader and a range of officials playing their real-life roles in an exaggerated manner. It brought out the importance of planning evaluation at an early stage and trying to envisage the issues it would likely need to address. It was videoed for later use.

Dr Arnold Love, President of the Canadian Evaluation Society, described the Canadian situation highlighting the problems of evaluating in silos without cross-linking activities or agencies, evaluation was being linked into total quality management and the learning organisation, there were concerns at a lack of external more objective evaluation and a lack of publication or more critical evaluations and low levels of training.

With the experience of handling over 20 nominations, mainly from NSW, for the public sector award the Sub-Committee split it in two with awards for the best evaluation proposal and for the best evaluation system and methodologies for organisational self improvement.

The General Committee instituted what has become the tradition of taking the conference organising committee to dinner. At this time the General Committee met twice at the Conference - the previous day and on the last morning with the new members elected by the AGM to sort out sub-committees, priorities and procedures. It was agreed to anticipate AGM approval of the new Constitution in the new committees and to ask the new chairs as a priority to prepare draft statements of delegation, roles and responsibilities drawing on the draft strategic plan.

It was informed a review of the new membership database had led to a reduction in members from 651 to 599 plus 14 subscribers to the Journal. It was now intended to document the AES corporate memory; particularly the boundaries of responsibilities for conference organisation. WA raised confusion over “corporate membership”.. This led to an agreed motion that “nominated position” membership may encompass corporate membership equating to a specified number of specified persons or positions, with fees based on the aggregate, each position to enjoy all rights and obligations of membership until their status is revoked or amended by the corporate organisation.

The Ethics & Standards Sub-committee reported some comments on experience in using the interim code; a lack of response from the USA on standards; a paper by Colin Sharp to an IIR conference on the topic and including case studies relating to ethical concerns which was being prepared for the Newsletter, EN&C.

The Publication Sub-committee reported the resignation of John Dunn due to changing employment. The contribution of referees and the production team in Canberra was acknowledged. The importance of EN&C to members was recognised and despite earlier constraints it was decided to increase each issue by 16 pages for $1000. The incoming committee was charged with developing policies and specifications for each publication covering roles, presentational features and formats, marketing, referees and editors responsibilities. It was noted that the SIGs made significant contributions to EN&C and to conference sessions.

Training and professional development had drifted and there was a surprising response from a number who had previously strongly opposed any interest in accreditation to now reconsider this in light of pressures from the quality movement and interest in meeting ISO standards. The new committee was charged with urgently reviewing the implications of the new Constitution, the draft strategic plan, feedback from the conference and membership views through the regional reps.
The Conference Planning Sub-committee reiterated the need for bigger conferences every two or three years with potentially smaller venues interspersed and noted that as a result of less direct governmental support with organisation it was likely more conference organisers would have to be employed with cost implications. Its analysis of recent conferences gave the following breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practitioners</td>
<td>40-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics/Researchers</td>
<td>15-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers of evaluation or drawing heavily on it</td>
<td>15-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other users</td>
<td>15-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sector</td>
<td>70-80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary education</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government &amp; voluntary sector</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultants</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 30-40% were AES members

The special strategic planning workshop led by Colin Sharp, Sue Funnell and Judith Aitken revisited a SWOT analysis and while confirming the AES as a broker between suppliers of evaluation method and techniques and askers and doers on the demand side indicated strong threats from the quality movement and pressures to meet ISO standards. Sue Funnell facilitated the sessions using two matrices: one relating to the achievement of the AES core business aims; and the second to the development, enhancement and maintenance of the Society as an organisation seeking to fulfil these aims.

This pre-conference General Committee meeting and the AGM completed Illana McLean’s as President during which she and the Secretary Marion Amies introduced much more structured procedures, more formal reporting and meaningful minutes which allow an understanding of debate and decisions which previously lacked depth.

This 1994 AGM this year had to consider the major issue of adopting the new Constitution and a number of special resolutions to bring about the change. I was asked to introduce this critical step in AES history and in doing so reminded members of the long process of consultation since the 1991 strategic review, the adoption of revised aim and objectives and the “Guiding Principles” the previous AGM. I noted these principles sought to ensure the Constitution was an enabling document providing a balance between the role of the central body as custodians of the Society’s aim and objectives and devolution of authority to regional groups all in keeping with management by a committee of equals. Or as Colin Sharp later summarised, a federation of regional groups. The AGM passed the Constitution with a number of amendments some of which required later working through with the auditor and the registrar.

In December ’94 Colin Sharp made the first formal visit by a President to a region, in this case to New Zealand. He conducted two workshops in Auckland and Wellington covering Bench-marking: pros & cons, and Appropriateness issues in evaluation. He also held a meeting in Christchurch to raise interest in establishing a group there, had a dinner meeting with leaders of the public sector which Vice President Judith Aitken organised and met with the two local committees about setting up two regions under the new Constitution - altogether a very productive and beneficial visit. In March ’95 Colin formally wrote to both IIR and AIC explaining that AES could not endorse their commercial conferences nor could AES office-bearers appear in that capacity although they could as individuals or as organisation representatives. The AES believed that this policy was necessary to avoid competing against its own conferences and to avoid confusion among its members and the public.

During the year the Executive met in February, April, June and July and the General Committee in January, May and August. Over the year the major matters which
took much time were monitoring and responding to the current budget and later developing the next budget, correspondence, the calendar including updating it, the next two conferences at Sydney and Wellington and publications. Later attention was given to the format of the annual report so that it would help sell the AES, reflect the new logo and desired house style and cover the work of all committees and regions.

A wide range of other matters were considered and dealt with. Following up the amendments to the Constitution and the process to close up the registration in Victoria. This revealed that gaps in previous reporting especially of finances meant AES was in breach of its legal requirements. This meant searching for and preparing information and where unavailable preparing statutory declarations to that effect. All this meant we missed the legal elapsed time from the special resolution which would have to be repeated at the next AGM.

Early in the year ITS felt that the workloads and time required meant they could not continue. Analysis indicated that some of this was one off work associated with change and that, if necessary, assistance could be acquired for heavy work like running the postal ballot. An increase of their fee to a little over $20,000 was made.

The financial year (July to June) being different to the Conference and AGM created problems necessitating formal policy adoption giving the outgoing Executive authority to spend up to 25% of the next year’s budget. Similarly experience required that regional reps could use a substitute for meetings provided the Secretary was advised in advance, they were advised of the elected members views and debriefed them on the meeting. The application for two new regions at Auckland and Wellington was approved. The volume of work proved difficult to cover in the 1-1.5 hours allocated for teleconferences so that pressure was on reports being sufficiently comprehensive so the focus could be on decisions. During the year regional reps were regularly sent membership status information.

Early out of the blocks were the Strategic Planning and Training and Professional Development Sub-committees. In January the former produced a draft plan The AES: Leading Evaluation Theory, Practices and Use into the 21st Century. Much time was spent on revisions to ensure a useable format of goals, strategies to achieve them, by activities with time-lines, responsibilities and performance measures. In March the Training and Professional Development sub-committee produced an issues paper highlighting:

- identification & monitoring of members needs;
- how can AES best meet these;
- clarify the role of the Annual Conferences in training & development;
- activities and workshops to further training & development beyond annual conferences; and
- accreditation - its feasibility, advantages and disadvantages.

In August they distributed a comprehensive questionnaire to regions on training undertaken over the previous three years, what was needed, and their views on core competencies for evaluation. As well as the summary of replies they raised for the face to face meeting at Sydney the need to decide on:

- continuing existing AES vehicles - regional networking, SIGs, conferences & publications;
- extending to advise on training & development opportunities;
- providing training itself;
- becoming a broker; and
- considering accreditation.

CEASE, the Committee on Ethics and Standards in Evaluation, recommended review of the Interim Code of Ethics in light of: the published revision of the US Joint Committee’s Standards (Saunders); the powers for disciplining members under the Constitution if they persistently and wilfully act in a manner prejudicial to the interests
of the Society and its code of ethics; and the impacts of collecting case studies on ethical issues.

A review of SIGs by Judith Aitken suggested these had emerged like topsy as needs emerged or people were willing to lead and wondered if a more structured approach could be helpful such as:
- established in line with major political or policy developments; or
- represent large socio-econ-political sectors of interest; or
- recognise evaluation as a critical factor in determining the quality of service initiatives.

The retiring board met briefly early during the Conference to ensure there were no loose ends for the AGM. Colin Sharp handed over the presidency to Neville Hightett. During Colin’s year he led the changes of implementing the new Constitution by developing a strategic plan which related to all the Society’s activities; he had a very successful visit to NZ which went a long way to making evaluators and public service leaders recognise the AES as the professional body for evaluation and in turn the setting up of two regional groups; he also encouraged the more serious approach to training and professional development and promoted the AES taking a more international perspective. Colin left after a single year term in order to lead the planning and preparation of the Adelaide ’97 Conference as by this time conferences were taking at least two years to prepare for.

1995-96

With all the changes to governments and their approaches to evaluation the numbers at the Sydney Conference ’95 were 390, smaller than expected although with the two new formal regions from NZ the numbers from there tripled to around 30. Unlike past years proceedings were not available at the conference which made for difficulty in choosing sessions to attend and to write up beyond those attended. Nor were all keynote speakers in plenary sessions. Streams covered themes of education, community service, health, local government, and evaluation methodology. The overseas keynote speaker was Prof Ernest House whose address was on *Evaluation in the market place*. He also presented two workshops, one on “Evaluation Research and Development”. David Shand who had worked at a senior level in NZ, QLD and VIC returned from the OECD (Paris) to speak on *Evaluating Service Quality*.

Using the new Constitution procedures for the election of the Board and regional committees resulted in a larger turnover than previously and a smaller Board. This had some effect on the continuity and efficiency of the Board meeting which for the first time met after the conference. The major task was to work through the draft strategic plan to reflect the new Board’s views and to establish its priorities. This included reviewing the appropriateness of services to members and seeking to develop greater recognition for the AES. It also went through the role statements and the draft budget. It was decided that financial support would be provided to Board members and those appointed to committees to attend meetings (including those associated with the Conference if they were not being paid by their employer) and committee workshops but would not support regional committee members attendance to the AGM and conference. The Board reaffirmed maintaining a central capability to further the objectives whilst delegating to sub-groups. Furthering the strategic plan was delegated to the President and Treasurer. The Committee structure was reviewed with the feeling that Publications, Ethic & Standards (CEASE) and Training & Professional Development should be seen as standing committees. It again recognised a need to obtain a legal opinion on the implications of formally adopting the Interim Code and particularly in relation to handling grievances raised previously by Colin Sharp. In addition committees were set up to review the
publications, consider electronic communications and review membership & recruitment.

*First International Evaluation Conference, Vancouver, November 1995*

This was jointly organised by the CES and AEA who made some effort to involve the AES (10yr), the Central American Eval. Soc. (2yr) and, at Colin Sharp’s insistence, the new UK and European Eval. Societies (1yr). Attendance was 1700 including 40 from Australia and 7 from NZ. There were well over 300 sessions so for any 90min time slot there may be up to 35 sessions in nearby buildings, complicated by there being only titles without abstracts. At the same time it was inspiring to be a part of something so large and to listen to and meet a number of the gurus and leading lights of the profession several of whom had high exposure as commentators and panel members. There was much debate on ongoing dichotomies in evaluation such as:

- summative & formative evaluation
- qualitative & quantitative methods
- internal & external evaluation and their impacts on reporting and utilisation
- aims of evaluation for independent situation reporting or ongoing improvement
- use of individual studies or synthesis of similar studies (meta-evaluation) and
- moves from program evaluation to policy evaluation.

It was noticeable that in North America those who departed from the norm and promoted new theory are elevated and treated as celebrities whereas in the Antipodes perceptions of egalitarianism sees the tall poppy syndrome apply. Both the CES and AEA were still debating issues of professionalism and how far to move toward legislative recognition with views fairly evenly split. I found it surprising that no opportunity was provided for leaders of the six evaluation societies to consider the utility of periodic joint international conferences.

A pre-conference workshop on the Joint Committee revision of *The Program Evaluation Standards*, Sage, 1994 was presented by its Chairman Dr James Sanders who explained the history of the Standards going back to the mid 1970s review of education standards. Over the years 15 organisations became involved. It initially produced three different versions of each section to give a range of perspectives which were joined into a single draft and circulated to over 50 reviewers leading to a second draft. This was then trialed by volunteers and later a third draft submitted to a range of public hearings.

Colin Sharp and I with Neville Highett, for part of the time, had a meeting with Dr Sanders to discuss the possible internationalisation of the Standards and their possible re-development to fit the then new ISO approach. Although partially interested the Joint Committee was weary after their work in revising the Standard to more generally apply than its initial focus on education which was still prime. They were also very concerned at the practicality of spanning different cultures. He was interested in the potential of AES producing a commentary or companion volume for our needs. He was also interested in detailed comments which would be collected for further revisions possibly at about five yearly intervals.

**Board activities continued**

The Executive met in November, March, May and July, for face to face meetings using airport lounges which saved time and costs through airline club memberships. The Board met in December, February, April and June. As usual the major content of meetings was monitoring the strategic plan (although difficulties were found in trying to incorporate regional activities) and budget and overseeing the management of three conferences at any time: one being wound up, the next in the detail of preparation and the one two years away in the preparation of the business case and booking a venue. This year was complicated by the Wellington Conference’96 being
managed in a different currency. This year there was also dialogue with Melbourne on Conference’98. An evaluation report of the Sydney Conference’95 was presented in a form to try and help organising future conferences. It was decided that the Administrative Officer would attend Conferences to man the AES stand with help from locals and would attend the following Board meeting. Overseas guest speakers were not able to participate in pre or post regional visits which led to suggestions this issue should be given more attention in the future.

Problems with auditing earlier accounts were not resolved until this year which meant the winding up of AES in Victoria was further delayed and yet again needed a repeat of the related AGM resolution.

The Membership Committee early developed a plan which acknowledged the central services but emphasised regional activities like training, access to close expertise and advice, opportunity to share difficulties and successes all of which add value and are not available from other organisations. It proposed: regional action plans with six monthly reporting; regional liaison with SIGs, publication of a membership brochure; analysis of lapsed members; identification of regional organisations that may be interested, help to members to speak to others through use of a recruitment pack and the collection of more information about members interests to better service their needs. The membership nomination form was modified to collect information on employment sector, special interest, conference attendance and papers presented and was sought from existing members with the renewal of subscriptions. They also saw the membership directory important but wanted to clarify privacy issues. The Committee planned to meet with government organisations at all three levels, universities and professional bodies. Legal advice required regions to use the standard letterhead although it could add regional contact details and any use of funds must be audited to ensure we met the criteria of one society with a range of services delivered through regional outlets. It was decided to register the name and logo with the Trade Marks Office. Joint membership with CES was explored with full membership rights at the local rate but paid in the other country with an annual reconciliation.

The Training and Professional Development Committee reported mid year that it needed more information on members experience in use of and needs for training and development. It noted normal university processes for accrediting courses for evaluation should be appropriate but AES may wish to seek involvement in assessment panels. It noted variations in regional emphasis on different competencies and also that regions were catering for many more than just AES members. It pointed out some overlaps with the Publications Review and noted the EJA as a flagship seeks to demonstrate the credibility and enhance the status of the AES but has no particular focus on training whilst the EN&C ranges widely across readers needs and makes a significant contribution. It also commented that the previous moves to prepare specific “How to” booklets may be met by using EN&C.

Later Maggie Jakob-Hoff & Carolyn Coggan prepared a paper on Core Competencies for Evaluation. It assumed evaluation was a unique discipline although borrowing skills and knowledge from others. It acknowledged the dispute between the view that evaluators need content-specific knowledge and the view that those with generic evaluation skills can produce successful evaluations with limited content-specific-knowledge. They favoured the latter view. They assumed evaluators must be responsive to client needs and in multi-cultural societies sensitive to issues like:- ethnicity, race, gender, age, social class, disability. Their model included

Generic competencies
Research skills
Organisational/management theory
Project management skills
Ethical behaviour Communication skills
Change skills

**Specific competencies**
Understanding what evaluation is and its role
Understanding debates surrounding evaluation and the implications for practice
Ability to make judgements based on information collected
Ability to ensure maximum utilisation of evaluation findings
Synthesis skills to combine the other competencies
Intuition.

The **Publications Review** was asked to check that our publications were linked to the national indexing system and to check out the implications of electronic publishing now being used by some journals. Darrel Caulley retired as editor of *EN&C* after having launched this most valuable and highly regarded membership service with Patricia Rogers taking over. There was concern that the *EJA* was not getting enough articles to maintain its quality.

The Constitution was published and sent to all members as an example of the new house style.

It was agreed Awards nomination materials could be destroyed after a year to reduce storage. There were only six nominations for the Public Sector awards with that for systems and methodologies going to the Sydney Powerhouse Museum but with no award for an evaluation project as the desired standard was not reached.

A Post Occupancy Evaluation (of buildings) SIG was approved. A Public Officer was appointed to liaise with the Registrar in Canberra. Discussions were held with the World Bank on furthering AES endeavours in Asia-Pacific and late in the year supporting the potential development of a Malaysian Evaluation Society.

An offer was made by ITS to develop an **AES home page** at no cost which was accepted with appreciation and agreement that subsequent development of it would be at cost. The **Electronic Communications** Committee proposed consideration be given to a bulletin board like *Govteval* and that as 33% have e-mail it could reduce costs.

It was decided that efforts be made to **review the Interim Code of Ethics** so that it could be finalised and that more work be done on how to handle standards using a weekend workshop. This was not able to be organised during the year. Discussion re-raised issues of whether the Code was primarily a regulatory device or an advisory guidelines. It was also decided to include a response form in conference satchels and a workshop session during the Wellington Conference ‘96 and to publish examples of applying standards in *EN&C*.

Closure of the Federal Department of Finance regional offices had a major impact on the AES ranging from reduced support of training, assisting with region mail-outs, and supplying speakers and providing a dampening in spirits.

At this time in the spirit of the new Constitution Marion Amies retired from being the Secretary for three years. Marion made a huge contribution to the AES over a period of several years as Editor of the Journal where she managed to review procedures and reduce costs, as initial Chair of the Constitution Committee and as Public Officer in which position she spent much time liaising with the Registrar on the fine detail, and as Secretary where she provided the continuity on the Executive and led the
changes by reviewing all the administrative procedures as they were contracted out. She was a successful change manager with the ability to draw out contributions from others and her meeting minutes were a quantum step ahead of those she followed and proceeded. She went on to serve as chair of the Awards Committee.

Reflections on organising the Wellington Conference

As a slight departure I include at this point some relatively brief reflections on the topic of conference organisation since it is a major cyclical endeavour for regions. In the NZ case it was more complicated running the financial dimension in a different currency and this was the first time the Treasurer and the Executive, with some hesitation gave up the control of having transactions go through an AES conference account. This was effectively used to bulk fund detailed transactions through the conference organisers trust account.

The conference is unlikely to have been the success it was were it not for the leadership of Judith Aitken, AES Vice President and Chief Executive of the Education Review Office who started planning about two years ahead. About 18 months in advance and at the end of the Government financial year she wrote to all other public service chief executives seeking funds and using a scale of free registrations, depending on contribution, as an incentive. This raised considerable funding. She also brought together a wide range of interests, including some on the edges of evaluation, into the organising committee.

In the tendering for a conference organiser an Auckland firm was chosen as having more experience of similar type conferences, having a good financial model and trust accounts, promising to arrange sponsorship and having developed a good chemistry with the committee. However with the benefit of hindsight it may have been better to have used a local less experienced firm as it was often not clear how much of a meeting would involve the organiser whose time and part share of travel costs had to be met. In the end little sponsorship, through them, was forthcoming. Maggie Jakob-Hoff a committee member from Auckland had to spend a lot of time assisting with financial aspects. To give a feel for the level of activity turnover was around $360,000. Meetings were initially 6-8 weekly but come down to monthly and for intense activity to fortnightly or even weekly.

Other key decisions which were time consuming were determining the venue, arranging speakers, planning brochures including the call for papers and developing the programme. Initial venue choice was between the Town Hall complex, major hotel conference suites and the local university. In the AES there has always been some tension in the planning of conferences between those who wish to reduce registration costs to encourage wider representation from community and non-profit groups and academics by using cheaper venues and accommodation and those who want to ensure retention of a professional image with comparable organisations. A combination of reducing costs whilst trying to capture the atmosphere of an academic institution led to finally using the campus of Victoria University of Wellington.

We were fortunate that the changes NZ had made to its government management systems by separating outcomes and outputs, removing a number of controls whilst emphasising accountability had become of international interest. Several from overseas were willing to participate to see at first hand these changes without a full subsidy of their travel costs. This led to the participation of four overseas keynote speakers who also led workshops over the preceding two days. They were Michael Scriven, one of the fathers and gurus of the profession, Prof. Ernest House for the
second time, Frans Leeuw, Director of Performance Auditing and Programme Evaluation of the Dutch Audit Office and a member of the new European Evaluation Society, Prof. Jack Evans, University of North Carolina, and Baldrige Quality Award Judge, together with David Shand who again made a visit home from the OECD and summarised the Conference.

The most complex endeavour was putting together the programme which took many hours of intense debate across several meetings. We departed from the norm by not having a conference dinner in order to allow more opportunity for those out of town to experience the downtown as the university was on the edge of the CBD, and we included a cultural display of items by Maori and Pacific Island groups during the opening evening extended cocktail session. We also tried to use a loose leaf ring binder for the proceedings so that late papers could be inserted but these outgrew the folder and later 50 copies were bound for records and sale.

I will also never forget the sense of achievement and committee “togetherness” after spending the afternoon and evening of the day proceeding the start stuffing satchels and at the early morning meetings during the Conference to check all was on track and any unexpected issues were handled.

1996-97
The Wellington Conference ’96 had the theme of “Evaluation: How can it Improve Quality” with seven sub-themes - customer satisfaction, leadership, strategic planning, human resources, process quality, information and analysis and getting results. Attendance was smaller than normal at around 220 but as about 75% were local it had a significant effect in putting evaluation on the map. This conference was also a particular personal highlight as I was presented with the Society’s ET&S Award. This certainly made the previous six years efforts seem worthwhile and helped recharge for a few more. David Shand in a concluding summary noted the 62 papers had been a mix of war stories, philosophical treatises, and methodological reviews. He believed the major themes to emerge from the sessions were: customer satisfaction which built on the previous years Sydney Conference concerns, ethical issues and associated objectivity or independence with the Australasian focus on self review being challenged, evaluating public management reforms and the need for more study of the impact of evaluation.

At the first session of the face to face Board meeting on the Friday evening Neville Highett presented a paper on the strategic directions for the new year, emphasising a business plan which allowed linkages between objectives, strategies, and activities down to the individual projects and with the related financial information readily linked for the first time. He proposed a review of all committees and the frequency of meeting. He proposed a:

- **Administration Committee** to oversee the secretariat and finances and to look for greater efficiency including the use of electronic communications e.g. for processing Board and Executive papers. This would include the Secretary + Treasurer + one.
- **Publications Committee** The EJA had not been published on schedule leading to queries from subscribers who had paid in advance. There had been problems with the Annual Report not being carefully enough checked by contributors at the draft stage which led to many and costly changes to the page proofs. This would include the two editors + two.
- **Conference Committee** to pull together procedures as there had been no effective passing on of skills and much re-learning. This would include reps from Sydney, Wellington, Adelaide and Melbourne conference organising committees.
Regional Activities Committee. There had been a degree of tension in bedding in the new Constitution, especially the auditing requirements. He wanted each region to have a member of the Executive meet with it and a small liaison committee.

Electronic Communications Committee. ITS were involved directly in ALGIS (Australian Local Government Information Service) which provided an example of the potential for AES. He proposed exploring other strategic alliances, such as, with the Inst. of Municipal Management, with over 3,000 members, (which had recently published a code of ethics and disciplinary process) and with overseas evaluation societies. Awards were seen as one means of enticing local government people to become involved in evaluation. Hence one of the initial steps in forging linkages with the Institute of Municipal management was a request by Neville to Sue Funnell as chair of awards to publish a lead article in the Institute’s magazine and in return the Institute advertised the AES Awards. The article based on a synthesis of findings from various evaluations and program theories was entitled “Can performance based pay work in local government?” *Local Government Management December 1996, Vol. 30 No. 3 pages 6-9.* Unfortunately while the article generated some enquiries to the author it did not generate nominations for the Awards.

Ethics & Standards and Training & Development must continue.

Neville expressed concern that the previous year there had been a busy meeting schedule but not much action between. He concluded it would be better to have the minimum number of three meetings for the Board & Executive. Each committee should have a budget and an action programme and report progress to the Board and seek any policy endorsements. He highlighted a weakness of slow starts unless outgoing chairs produced draft proposals for new committees and also proposed new chairs so that they were available for the face to face meeting at each annual conference.

The Board also met with Arunaselam Rasappan to be briefed on the formation of a Malaysian Evaluation Society. It was resolved to support this with documents and publications.

The next day much time was spent in setting up new committees, with members as described in the Appendix 1 Neville’s views were accepted except for the Regional Activities which it was felt the Executive could cover. The Ethics & Standards Committee was directed to try and progress from the *Interim Code of Ethics* by producing *Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations* desirably with illustrative case studies. The USA Joint Committee *Program Evaluation Standards* were formally recognised as being appropriate for members use. The Training & Development Committee plan was endorsed to:

- Identify training & development opportunities in universities;
- Liaise with trainers to make specific modules/courses and develop promotional strategies;
- Continue work on competencies;
- Liaise with Adelaide to run a stream of training through the next conference; and
- Set up an action plan for the Executive.

Later the committee proposed the contract employment of two research assistants to help collect information for a training directory. This was deferred until a joint meeting with the Electronic Communication Committee to consider using the website for listing potential suppliers or providing links to their sites for a fee. This also related to a paper by Chris Milne on *conflicts of interest for regional reps* in providing information on local courses and consultants on an ad hoc basis. He suggested the setting up of a database of those who offer services on the condition

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3 *The Program Evaluation Standards, 2nd Edition*, Sanders, J (Ed), Sage 1994. [In this paper often abbreviated to JCS - Joint Committee Standards. Replaced Stufflebeam (1981) see footnote 2.]
that AES did not endorse or accredit the services although it would take reasonable care to make sure claims were accurate by requiring applicants to provide two referees to confirm the information for AES use only. Regional committees would be asked to vet the information and if necessary negotiate agreed statements of experience. The aim in bringing together this material was to avoid any AES administration burden or being arbiters of quality.

There was much discussion on details of the active conferences. For example, Adelaide’97, the title theme, tenders for organiser and the following contract and the possibility of a training stream; Melbourne’98, timing to September rather than July, concerns at possible Casino venue, need for proper tendering for organiser and travel agent; and Wellington’96, need to tidy financial report and audit. WA was producing a handbook on evaluation and there was discussion on its potential wider use and how much AES should contribute. During the year there were some concerns about getting sufficient sponsorship for Adelaide. I was fortunately able to negotiate a form of joint venture where NZ interests were persuaded to underwrite the travel expenses for all three of the overseas speakers if they came on to speak at major government conferences or meetings in NZ as well as visit the local sections. It was decided to have four meetings of the Board in December, April, August & October and the Executive in October, February, June & September.

Over August-October I chaired the Conference Committee through the use of e-mails and a few phone calls to produce a draft “Policies on Annual Conference Planning and Management” including highlighted action steps. This had been sought for several years but had not been produced in a single document or in a policy format. The whole committee who had strong interests in the outcome from involvement in the most recent and forthcoming conferences were resolved to produce a quality document quickly. This approach became the precursor and model for a number of policy documents over the next few years. In approving the policy the Board decided it should be reviewed annually at its meeting immediately following the conference.

As an example of how easy it is for oversight to create problems the way the Board, including me, had approved the membership nomination form led to NZ members being classified in the membership database as employed by “overseas governments”. Many felt this implied the dominance of Australia in the Society which was not fair or true since the Board, in all my experience, has always been careful that nothing was ever done to create that impression. This led to changes to the form and database which made it more useful but it took a lot of time and effort and re-work by the secretariat. Similarly in December’96 there were still problems relating to the shift of registration from VIC to ACT with the former requiring only financial statements and the latter audits the format of which was debatable particularly how regions were handled. VIC, SA, WA, & QLD were required to report as part of AES accounts while other regions (AK, WN, ACT, NSW & TAS) who had relationships with other professional or government bodies to collect or expend funds did not need to comply, However there was an alternative interpretation that all should be audited.

There was also much debate on whether to include regional financial activity in the main accounts as separate budget items, as for publications, or whether they should each have separate accounts. Problems also arose with conference accounts having to provide and pay for two audits, one to tie in with the financial year and another to finalise the account after the conference wash up of payments. Regions had not been timely and had arranged local audits of variable quality. To resolve
these issues after considering four options it was decided from the 1997-98 year to centralise finances with regions having budget items and all accounts being sent quickly for national office payment and preparation of monthly statements for reconciliation with bank statements. The exception would continue for conference accounts which were increasingly using organisers trust accounts and which had to provide detailed reports to each Board meeting. This topic took up much of all meetings over the year. In April WA reported completion of its annual regional conference, a workshops and seminar series and production of a handbook for the 200 on its mailing list. It had concerns that funds raised for and by such activities were at risk from the centralising of finances.

After setting up the web home page the **Electronic Communications Committee** sponsored a policy paper by Peter Sullivan of ITS on the use of subsidiary pages and the setting up of Evalnet which included access to the six major databases comprising ALGIS (see above) and four of Trainet (Australian Foundation for Management Development), both of which were managed by ITS who was using the situation to allow AES to piggy-back on work which had been done and paid for by the others. AES should now contribute by extracting details of all its publications extracts into the database. This would cover material from the EJA, EN&C, conference proceedings and any other major articles AES could arrange access to. This would lead to Evalnet being a very powerful and sought after resource. To prepare these extracts for the index would cost about $3,000 for 500 extracts. Previous material would be added on the basis of “latest information first” while future information would be indexed as received. The Adelaide’97 Conference was advertised on the web by a page set up by the organiser and linked to the AES site. Later the membership information and nomination form were put on the website.

The **Ethics & Standards Committee** held a weekend retreat at Melbourne in December to address the need of advancing the *Interim Code of Ethics* by something shorter and tighter and which if possible linked to standards and included examples. This intense weekend under the chair of Ros Volpato and the assistance of a contracted researcher made excellent progress in developing a 24 step *Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations* with each step illustrated by a very brief pithy illustrative example. It was seen as complementary to the USA Joint Standards and covered both principles and procedures.

The NZ groups combined to prepare a business case to use some of the surplus ($NZ90,000) from the Wellington Conference’96 for a **NZ Pilot Training Project** aimed at extending knowledge and skills and providing a qualification or path towards one or a certificate of accomplishment. This was seen as a pilot regional development project testing the logistics for refresher training. The pilot was based around the AES derived competencies and included four parts:

- familiarisation with selected readings;
- a block course on evaluation theory;
- a block course on practice and methodologies; and
- a written paper for assessment;

at three locations with up to 30 places over two weekends and the intervening week. Training was to be provided by Australian academics, preferably linked to NZ trainers to facilitate cultural match. Candidates were expected to be from proficient to approaching expert i.e. no novices. The Board agreed to call for proposals and costs subject to developing financial project management which enabled centralised management, reducing audit costs, and that fees were set on the basis of member rates allowing for break-even and non-members at a surcharge to provide a buffer.
During the year there was ongoing concern about **publications** with shortage of material and mid term changes of editors with John Wilson taking over the *EJA* and Anthea Rutter and Julia Thornton co-authoring *EN&C*.

It was agreed to explore **membership benefits** such as reduced costs for presentation training by Toastmasters, and reduced banking and phone charges. Concerns arose over member losses in ACT & QLD mainly as a result of government policy and structural changes. There were also concerns over the precision of minutes, especially recording financial matters and implications which were sensitive due to the need for full records for audit. This necessitated going back to tapes of teleconferences and time consuming rework. The requirement for a Public Officer was met by nominating a Deloittes employee at $80/hr for any work required.

The end of the year saw Neville Highett hand over the Presidency, after two years, to Sue Funnell. It was unfortunate that the second year became caught up in resolving problems about audits and regional finances and publications which diverted effort and attention which can only go so far in a voluntary organisation. Neville should be remembered for his major contribution in developing the new tools of electronic communications and the Internet as well as taking a crisper approach to the running of meetings. Neville and the secretariat had developed the website to encourage interest in the AES and attract potential members and to allow sponsorship and revenue, whilst providing barriers so that additional useful services could be provided only to members.

**THE LATER YEARS**

1997-98

The Adelaide Conference ’97 was held at the beautiful coastal location of Glenelg which also helped create an atmosphere away from the normal hurly burly of a CBD. It had a strong focus on the so called third sector. I also remember it for a record attendance by 49 from NZ out of 280 participants including a smattering from Europe, the USA and Canada who had been attracted from the website. I also remember it from the personal highlight of being elected Vice President. The overseas speakers, especially Chris Pollitt and his wife Hikka Summa were well used around SA in speaking to various groups. At that time evaluation was in a state of flux around the world. On one hand some countries were dropping formal mandates and on the other was a realisation that only through evaluation could the success of major programmes be judged. In some places more effort was being made to link budget processes, formal audits and evaluations. A number of countries were using sunset clauses in legislation or corporate/strategic plans to ensure progress and formal summative evaluation. There were particular concerns in managing health with its growing size and complexities. A trial of lunch-box meetings for SIGs was not as successful as expected. Over a 100 papers were offered but nearly a third pulled out.

The new Board had a larger turnover than in recent years. For me moving on to the Executive for the first time became an eye opener of how much went on behind the scenes. It also became a two year period of intense activity with significant highs offset with some lows.

As incoming President, Sue Funnell, followed what had become a tradition of presenting her strategic directions for the coming year. From reviewing activities and accomplishments she identified **four issues and challenges** - to ensure
1. projects fulfilled their potential.
2. maintenance of core services.
3. a shared understanding of the fundamental features of evaluation.
4. AES functioned efficiently as an organisation.

She proposed a more disciplined project management approach with clear objectives and a timetable and with one person in each project especially focused on the regional perspective and implementation at that level. She noted significant developments had been made in the new area of electronic communications and Evalnet whilst struggling with some core services - conference attendance had started to drop and there were now commercially driven competitive evaluation conferences, the Journal was struggling as were some regions with TAS in recess.

She proposed more of a joint venture approach with academic institutions for the journal, possibly a larger single issue each year rather than struggling with two. She advocated more support and personal intervention by the Executive for flagging regions. Professional pressures were increasing with requests for information about evaluators and comment about professional issues such as standards. There was some overlap among professional societies and competition for members. AES needed a clearer view of good and bad practice and competencies. We were not alone as the CES and AEA were grappling with the same issues. We also needed a better record of the Society’s approach and policies so these could be better drawn upon or understood where we had come from when changes appeared necessary.

Sue also noted there should be better use made of the experience of past Board members and strategic alliances considered with some allied professions e.g. internal auditors. New approaches such as advertising, sponsorship and cost recovery could all have a profound influence on the future. She advocated three standing Committees of Awards & Standards, Professional Training & Development, and Publications. Other matters to be dealt with by project taskforces, including a quick update of the Conference policies, consider the implications of sponsorship, improved services for members, continue the development of electronic communications, and review the Constitution which some felt was becoming an impediment.

The NT was approved as a new region with 30 members after active support by the Auditor-General and the Public Service Commissioner. Later in the year approval was given for a South Island NZ region based on Christchurch with a core of 10-15 members. It was agreed the Membership Directory would provide for “yellow pages” type adverts for consultants for a fee of $40 which would cover an entry in print and on the website, whilst making clear this did not imply AES endorsement or liability. There would also be opportunity for larger adverts as in the yellow pages from an eighth of a page to a full page at a higher cost. Late in the year a broker offered to arrange public liability insurance for a 25% discount. Rather than accept this offer it was decided to negotiate with other brokers and how various arrangements had worked for other professional bodies. The WA Evaluation Handbook was published, 300 copies, for $20,000 and was sold to members for $85 and non members for $105.

Conferences as usual took much time with four under action over the year. Adelaide wound up with an unexpected profit of over $78,000. SA region worked on preparing a business case to use part of the profit to develop a manual and workshop for community sector and aboriginal sector evaluation. Later it was intended to try to make this proposal a joint venture with research, industrial research and training interests but it never quite came to fruition. Melbourne’98 struck problems with its first organiser and had to make a change. It also trialed the idea of using a specialist sponsorship consultant to help with revenue with little success. Perth’99 made
steady progress although there were some initial problems in finalising the venue originally planned for the old port of Fremantle and ending up also on the coast at Scarborough. Experience over recent years led to the contract for this conference organiser being legally vetted with the intent of it becoming the model contract around which future tenders would be called. Brisbane'2000 began preparing their business case but suffered from uncertainty on potential size due to being the Sydney Olympics year and an announcement that the AEA was holding its 2000 conference at Hawaii and expected it to have a high international element. There were concerns that the AEA conference might compete with the AES conference and in particular that the NZ contingent may be attracted to Hawaii rather than to Brisbane. There was some discussion as to whether the AES conference could be tacked onto the AEA conference and take place in Hawaii also. This mini conference would be supplemented by a training and development package in Australia that would be more easily accessible to all AES members. One of the obstacles to this option was the need to have a quorum for the AGM that typically takes place during the AES Annual conference. We could not be sure that we would be able to attract sufficient AES members to the Hawaii conference. There was also some discussion around whether to use a usual city venue or possibly more of a self contained lower cost holiday park type venue.

Publications continued to be a problem with no issues of the EJA in 1997 and complaints from library subscribers. It was decided to produce a bumper issue in 1998 and give them a refund and again review the position. A Teleconference involving John Wilson, Colin Sharp, Brian English and Darrel Caulley reiterated the Journal's importance for academic publication, decided no conference papers should be published as presented without further polishing and that the Publications Committee would have to chase articles. They also stressed the importance of alternating the publication of the Journal in September and March and the magazine, EN&C in June and December. It is interesting to recall that two other professional organisations to which I belong were also having problems around this time which in one case led to a combination of its journal and magazine ensuring a distinction for refereed articles.

Early in the year it was decided to bring all the collective experience and decisions of the Board together into a Compendium of Board Policies, particularly encouraged by the success and practicality of the policy for planning and managing conferences. The Compendium was envisaged as covering:

- Conduct of Meetings
- Conduct of Standing Committees and Taskforces
- Reporting Requirements
- Transition between Elections and Appointment of the Board
- Recognition of New Regions
- Sponsorship and Advertising (later separated)
- Publications especially the Annual Report
- Awards
- AES Business Planning
- Special Projects
- Finances.

Initial responsibility for this work was given to Sue and I who worked together to get the concept up and running with major contributions by Eve Barboza. In her Finance Policy Eve formally codified that the Board should keep the equivalent of two years membership subscriptions in investment reserves to protect from unexpected revenue loss or excess costs. This also covered the use of credit cards which had been somewhat ad hoc. Although not all sections were completed that year those
that were allowed new Board Members to gain a quicker insight and contribute more meaningfully. At the same time they were not treated as sacrosanct and amendments were made as the need became apparent.

Arising from her initial strategic directions paper and as a precursor to developing the initial draft Sponsorship & Advertising policy Sue Funnell early prepared an insightful and far reaching paper on **Values and Principles for Board Decision Making**. At one stage it was suggested that it be published with the Constitution but after being worked over with much debate and going through a few iterations it became an underpinning document to the Compendium of Policies. In order demonstrate the thought and range of considerations that Boards must consider I have summarised these as follows:

**Values and Guiding Principles**

Overarching commitment to service members, making every effort to ensure

- Service to members takes priority
- Exchange of information is maximised
- Privacy is respected
- Links among members and others with evaluation interests are fostered
- Collegiality is fostered - AES to be inclusive rather than exclusive or hierarchical & mutually supportive instead of having a competitive orientation
- Equitable treatment of members and respect for differences
- Affordability - core services are to be affordable to all members
- Value for members subscription is maximised
- Cost recovery - is achieved for services not available to all members and/or available to non members, benefits to members and AES corporate values take precedence over revenue raising

**AES Corporate Image**

Through adhering to these values and guiding principles the AES will endeavour to promote an image reflecting:

- Strong service orientation
- Responsiveness
- Consultation
- Collegiality
- Professionalism
- Visibility in a range of environments/sectors
- Global awareness, and participation
- Fairness and helpfulness in dealing with external parties
- Efficiency and cost effectiveness in its management.

The **Ethics Taskforce** had an extremely busy year now under the leadership of Chris Milne At the start it published the **Guidelines for the Conduct of Ethical Evaluations** in the AES corporate format and distributed copies centrally to the federal Australian and New Zealand governments which brought about some positive comments. It was left for regions to distribute copies to State governments. A regular feature on ethical examples was initiated in **EN&C**. Later a weekend workshop in Sydney tackled a review of the **Interim Code of Ethics** by re-looking at specifications, and preparing a comparative table of expected professional behaviour, statements from the interim code and from the guidelines for ethical evaluations and the new values and guidelines for Board decisions. It concluded it would have to consider the implications of sanctions for behaviour which seriously offended expectations and that acceptance and adherence to a code must be a condition of membership. This led to a revised draft **Code of Ethics** in a much simpler style than before and a draft policy on its implementation. A disciplinary process involving a special investigative group, including an independent member from a related professional organisation, was proposed. The Board approved the package for circulation and comment prior to its Melbourne meeting.

**Professional Training and Development** was advanced by the **NZ Pilot Training Project** summer school held in winter for 50 students (plus a short waiting list) in two courses at Wellington by John Owen and Ros Hurworth from the Centre for Programme Evaluation at Melbourne University. About 60% were AES members and 40% non members who paid $NZ 1600-1850. Students were given access to the
University library and website for a semester. It turned out to be very successful and thoughts were given to repeating it at Darwin and Townsville. It also flushed out some issues around intellectual property and how long the rights of the presenters should last.

Work on the competencies was reviewed and placed into a more general UK professional competency model. Other countries work in the same area was also considered. There were still difficulties associated with defining evaluation and the levels of competencies required by those playing different roles in evaluation - commissioning, managing, evaluating, researching and training.

**International moves.** Arising from the 1996 Vancouver International Conference an informal forum of evaluation societies had developed. This led to proposals for a Panel of Presidents meeting in Chicago in Nov ’98. The Board supported AES involvement and considered the implications of a possible new international evaluation organisation, an international association in which the current regional societies became chapters and the possibility of a federation of the existing seven societies. It decided that because of the large amount of work Sue had undertaken with the forum and to consider the issues she should represent the AES and would recommend this to the incoming Board.

Sue also conducted the negotiations which led to a formal agreement that members of AES & CES could have status as Associate Subscribers (members); without voting rights and without access to awards, of the other organisation at discounted rates.

An Overview of **Electronic Communications Infrastructure** was conducted by the Committee. There were five core components.

1. A Membership database developed in 1994 using Microsoft Access
2. A Financial database developed in 1994 using Microsoft Excel
3. An E mail infrastructure added in 1995
4. A Home page on the Web developed in 1996 which included AES Aims & Objectives; membership information and application form; regional activities; details of the Board and Committees and some Taskforces; links to other evaluation societies; and links to AES Conference sites often developed by conference organisers.
5. The Evalnet Research database using Oracle which was developed over 1997 and launched at the Adelaide Conference. This was developed at little cost to the AES and built on work Peter Sullivan (ITS) had developed for the Inst of Municipal Management and re-engineering of its offshoot ALGIS and the Foundation for Training’s Trainet. AES equity in the service included exclusive use of the technology for evaluation, rights for sale of Corporate Partnerships (sponsors) and editorial control, advanced research options for AES members, first option to develop new technology and possible future development of and international evaluation research site building on Evalnet. ITS would manage this using third generation web technology for a fee funded by sponsorship until June ’98 when major decisions on future direction would be required. ITS had developed a subsidiary AIMS (Australian Marketing Services) to secure Corporate Partnerships for ALGIS so that it could manage the site for IMM for five years independent of board and staff changes. It was proposed the Electronic Committee be replaced by a high profile AES Corporate Partnership Team to establish policy guidelines and to meet with senior management of potential partnering organisations to build partnerships to mutual benefit.

During the year the author profile model was adapted for recording consultants and consideration given to a regional facilities framework on Evalnet to encourage take up and training at the Melbourne’98 Conference and to corporate fees to widen access to members’ employing organisations. It was decided to proceed as the review recommended with maximum AES funding of $15,000 and any further investment to be at a level matching returns from corporate partnerships. AIMS was given a 12 month trial to secure partnership support.

An **advertising policy** was eventually developed covering issues like - who, what, how openly, degree of prominence, limits for members & non members. It was one of
the first direct applications of the Values and Guiding principles to a practical Board issue. No more than 10% of any printed medium could be advertising. Except for in the database of consultants and trainers there would be no advertising on the web, this being kept for sponsors. Rates would normally be set at cost + 25-33%, discounted to 20% for members. Limits were set in terms of equity and affordability remembering that many consultants and trainers were 1-2 person firms. There should be no direct contact between advertisers and members e.g. direct marketing could only be through AES mail-outs and products or services were not endorsed by AES. An interim sponsorship policy was developed, in part, to guide the work of ITS in seeking sponsorships for Evalnet but it was realised this would evolve as things like corporate partnerships evolved. It was recognised that there would only be a single major sponsor at any time, say $15,000/yr or $35,000 for 3yrs and a limited number of minor sponsors, say $7,500/yr or $20,000 for 3yrs. It was believed sponsors should be outside evaluation and were likely to be in the services sector such as banking, auditing, printing, utilities and perhaps government agencies. It was expected that they would be limited to no more than 10% of a web page and be in clear banners or links separated from AES content. Development of these policies involved much discussion over the year and interaction with the draft Statement of Values & Principles.

The Constitution Review explored a number of issues where it was felt the Constitution inhibited action. If it was accepted that the Constitution was an enabling document, like legislation, from which policies could flow most of the perceived problems disappeared. One issue was the increasing use of faxes; fortunately the legislation under which we operated made provision for their use provided they were backed up by an original. The Constitution provided no upper limit to size of regional committees and policy options were prepared for prior approval of regions to elect larger committees or to simply co-opt additional members. It was surprising how the earlier concerns quickly adopted simple co-option.

An additional Award was offered by the Australian Youth Foundation after discussion with Colin Sharp for recent evaluations in community development with part of the award financing the winner to the conference for its presentation.

1998-99

The Melbourne’98 Conference was held in the luxurious downtown Hotel Sofitel. Despite a State wide gas strike and a general election 350 attended presenting over 100 papers. I noted at the time that the quality of the 14 pre- conference workshops and the provision of focused sessions on professional topics were now providing more scope for professional development. In a session on ethics it was great to have managers very openly expose critical issues which had faced them, the options they considered and why particular courses of action were taken. There was very high audience participation and clear appreciation of the opportunity to discuss such real issues.

The theme of Evaluation: Investing in the Future, and sub themes around Change together with key speakers and participants from North America, UK, and Asian countries highlighted some interesting international trends.

• A tension between “heroic Evaluators” focusing on social science research and “renaissance evaluators” who see an expanding role across a wider range of activities and multi-disciplinary approaches.
• increasing recognition of having evaluators involved in policy design so that effectiveness and efficiency of application are capable of being monitored and evaluated.
- Increasing complexity of issues involving multi agency programmes and partnerships between different levels of government, the voluntary sector and the private sector.
- Difficulties from evaluation dealing with values and judgements of worth while increasingly interfacing with politics.
- More demand in the northern hemisphere for evaluation by the legislature more than the executive.
- The use in Japan of part time voluntary counsellors who evaluate complaints against all levels of government.

There was an apparent change in Australia to more selective evaluation as government restructuring had cut down evaluation groups and with a number of more experienced practitioners becoming consultants. One of my colleagues, Louise Munro, who attended the conference developed a simple chart to show how different approaches to government management reforms on both sides of the Tasman were becoming more complementary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>New Zealand</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Late 80’s early 90’s Efficiency focus</td>
<td>Financial / Admin Reforms • clearer accountability • output based budgeting • devolved management</td>
<td>Administrative Reforms • focus on outcomes • programme evaluation • increasing managerialism • performance indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 90’s Effectiveness focus</td>
<td>Government Strategic Management / Outcomes / Networks • outcome / impact evaluation • performance indicators</td>
<td>Financial Reforms • output based budgeting • increasing accountability focus</td>
</tr>
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At her second annual Board meeting President Sue Funnell highlighted the strategic environment and new opportunities locally and globally to improve services; excellent work had been done on a number of projects but more was needed for their conclusion; board members time as volunteers was more of a constraint to new initiatives than funds or the capacity to identify opportunities; value for members fees must be ensured; balancing was required between maintaining core services and new initiatives and between local needs and positioning AES on the global scene for the future.

**Professional development and competencies** had become caught up in the ongoing debate on accreditation and certification but the Committee had decided to stand clear and concentrate on training needs. They had identified only a few Australian approaches and the competency framework the earlier committee had developed for the NZ Pilot Project. Other countries were also working in the area. The most useful was the UK where a paper on *Establishing Competency based Standards for Professionals* identified three approaches. Firstly, divide work into roles, tasks and sub tasks; secondly, identify the attributes of a practitioner crucial to effective performance; and thirdly, add the context within which practice occurs such as a code of ethics. This work was part of developing National Vocational Qualifications which included a module on evaluation. Building on the above Cheetham and Chivers in a paper *Towards a holistic model of professional competence* used four components:-

- Functional competencies - tasks, skills
- Personal/Behavioural competencies - attributes
Knowledge/Cognitive competencies - knowledge and application

Values/Ethical competencies

Not all competencies were required for all jobs and in some cases were provided by using teams rather than expecting all individuals to have all of them.

The Committee drew all this material into a framework for circulation and comment.

**Ethics** now awaited comments on its new draft code but also noted that review of the committees efforts over several years indicated the importance of putting more effort into clarifying purpose and expectations. Later Chris Milne presented to the European Evaluation Society at Rome on the development of the AES Guidelines with particular interest from Ireland and Sweden.

Discussion on **Evalnet** raised concerns about tax implications if not handled very carefully and also that “partnerships” implied AES endorsement so that a change was made to “opportunities for commercial exposure”. AIMS favoured focusing on minor sponsors to make use of the rapidly growing number of consultants whereas the taskforce favoured looking for a major sponsor, across all AES activities, plus 18 minor sponsors for regions and research centres (e.g. Health, Justice etc.) It was expected that visitors to the website would click the sponsors banner to acknowledge their support or use a hyperlink to find out more about their products or services. Sponsorships (minor) would be offered to members. It was learnt that getting trademark approval could take up to two years.

I presented a paper on **membership** having regard for a number recent developments including an increase in the accreditation debate as reported by the Professional Development Committee, requests for corporate membership and access to Evalnet, signing up to the code of ethics, sponsorship and reciprocal membership with the CES. I recognised three groups of interests.

1. Only want core services, e.g. publications; support AES; no strong professional commitment.
2. Support aims & objectives; want all services; don’t feel able to make a fuller commitment to more professional elements e.g. code & updating skills.
3. Support AES; want all benefits + recognition for deeper commitment of signing up to code and ongoing professional development.

I suggested titles for these groups of affiliate/student; members (existing); and registered practitioners. There was not time for discussion of this topic and it was held over.

A **draft regional policy** was tabled by Anne Clifford for comment.

**International developments** Sue had put a great deal of effort into the Presidents’ list serv email discussions and developed a draft position paper for the AES which was adopted. It supported strategic alliances and international partnership rather than an overarching organisation. Value would be added by emphasising learning through diversity and seeking political support by avoiding any monopoly domination or single paradigm. Evalnet showed what could be done through the internet and placed AES in a lead position. Cost must be kept to a minimum, less than 5% of subs. The paper advocated three broad approaches - build evaluation capacity by brokering information and synthesising evaluation results; contribute to knowledge about world issues; and enhance evaluation organisations. All the material was presented in a comprehensive framework showing potential vision, mission, beneficiaries, objectives, and optional roles.

The meeting convened by the AEA International and Cross Cultural Topic Interest Group (TIG = SIG) was a success with the AES position more advanced than most of the 10 participants - newer members being from Kenya, Malaysia, Italy and Germany. A further meeting was planned for Italy the following August ’99 if foundation sponsorship could be organised to develop the concept.
Conferences  Concerns about financial losses at Melbourne immediately after led to a decision to review corporate governance by Treasurer Barry Shaw and Kate Stanton at least one of whom was a chartered accountant. By the December meeting the deficit appeared around $17,000. There was no misappropriation of funds. Cost blow-outs occurred in workshop venues, printing, audio visual hire, too many subsidised overseas speakers (2-3 added late), and the issuance of credit booking during the uncertainty of the gas strike and late failure in sponsorship. The budget and the conference accounts used different packages with different line items. This led to the preparation of a standard budget format for future conferences. Historically for ease of administration and decision making the running of the conference had been by an autonomous group in the region running the conference. It became obvious as a result of the financial problems with the Melbourne conference just how dependent the AES was on the revenue from conferences to pay for the ongoing running of the organisation. And it also became apparent that despite its dependence on this revenue the Board had minimal control over the conference budget and expenditure once it had approved the initial proposal. It also led to realisation that AES was living above its means and a more in depth strategic review was required for the February face to face Executive meeting which should be over two days. Fortunately the Perth planning stayed on track. By the February Executive meeting it was getting a good response to its web marketing, had sponsorship offers, decided to limit the number of workshops to 10 and had arranged multi-risk insurance for $2250. Brisbane was asked to look at cheaper venues and to do a business case for only 200 attendees and to explore the possibility of a 2-3 yr contract for conference management.

For the February Executive meeting some major reports came together. The review of Corporate Governance drew heavily on Knowing the Ropes: The Essential Guide to Business Issues for Non Profit Organisations prepared by the MS Society. It focused on the role of the Board, committees and management by the Executive and Administration. It had a preliminary look at risk management and identified that the Executive may need more clearly delegated authority, for the size of AES business potential risk from single entry accounting compared to double entry computer packages and possibly issues around legislative compliance. It recommended an Audit Committee to manage risk both financial and non financial; to ensure reliable management and reporting; compliance with laws & regulations; effective operation of delegations and constraints on management; effective & efficient audit and checking of conference guidelines. It also suggested exploring reconstitution under federal corporations law and that the election process may need review. These recommendations were accepted with Barry and Kate being appointed the audit committee together with an outsider to be added.

Eve Barboza with responsibility for Member Services had prepared papers on Communications and on the Cost of Services. The former noted major savings from the use of E-mails (70% member access) and the web (53% access). Evalnet had been developed largely by sponsorship of others at little cost thus far to AES. Publications were costing around $34k. Conference proceedings cost around $20k and were sold too low especially to non members. There was limited targeting to individual interests. Information was not timely due to the publications process and associated mail-outs Moving to an electronic approach could improve these elements, reduce costs, and allow electronic archiving. We should trial producing publications in hmt format using the magazine at first. The latest Membership Directory had been double the budget and cost $6.75 / member. There was less use of yellow pages and advertising by consultants than expected.
The paper on costs showed significant under pricing of annual membership subscriptions meeting less than half the costs of services $134k, professional development $18k, o’heads and Bd/Exec $42k. Eve proposed different membership packages for Associates $95, Professional Members $120 and Commercial members $140. She noted that lapsed membership was giving a turnover of 15-20% annually mostly as people moved out of evaluation. She advocated looking at ideas for retention and exploring discounts for electronic supply of services.

As an incentive in regional finances it was decided that surpluses from special projects would be charged a 15% handling fee with the balance earmarked for the regions use. It was also decided to re-allow small bank accounts for regions and the issue of receipts for small amounts, effectively regional petty cash, but these accounts must not be in the name of the AES but rather say Adelaide/Perth Evaluation Group.

Over the Christmas-New Year break 1998-99 Sue and I with help from Anthea and Eve prepared a major review paper covering AES origins, achievements, nature of membership, fee structure, nature of current and emerging services, benefits and likely appeal to segments of members, modus operandi of the Board, prime sources of income and expenditure, and options for increasing revenue and reducing expenditure.

In summary
Membership rose four fold from 135 in ’87/88 to 565 in ’91/92, plateaued to 654 in ’96/97 and increased 100 in ’98/99.
Members were 53% public sector, 16% consultancy firms (many small), 14% higher education followed by private sector, non government organisations and others.
Revenue was primarily from subs, held at $75 since ’94 and from conference surpluses. The Melbourne Conference loses brought home the dependence of this. Services and professional image costs were increasing and the AES was living above its means. Dabbling at sponsorship, including the use of specialist consultants, was so far unsuccessful.
Major development had occurred in electronic communications over the previous four years largely on the generous sponsorship of ITS and IMM. It was now moving to the point of providing a major research tool with a current cost of $15k to maintain software licences and indications were that to fully pay our way it would cost $25k/yr.
Administration costs increased with more members but especially with new and active regions which flowed through to a larger Board to ensure representation. With more regions and standing committees Board meetings had become unwieldy with longer and more frequent meetings to get through the business which with more dispersed points of contact increased the costs of preparing and distributing material as well as the teleconferences. We also discovered that the move to centralise finances to meet audit requirements had reduced revenue by 20-30% by reducing regional inputs which had not formally gone through the main books. Annual turnover involved -

| Legal and accountability requirements | $17k |
| annual report finance & legal AGM |
| Services to members | $58k |
| journal x 2 magazine x 2 membership directory regional meetings evalnet |
| Professional image and development | $15k |
| awards ethics professional training & development overseas initiative |
| Administration | $55k |
| members database and enquires board executive |
| Total | $140 |

The paper raised a number of options and was aimed at seeking the views and priorities of members by all the Board agreeing to undertake structured interviews of a stratified sample of members through 4-8 interviews each. Only four of 11 regions completed the task and the results of the 28 interviews were often split. They did reveal that several comparable organisations now had annual professional subs of $300-350. There was support for sponsorship and corporate membership. Reduced teleconferences and less involvement were supported as was the
magazine (strongly) whilst views on the journal were split. The membership directory was used but less for finding consultants than expected, possibly because those local were already known. Evalnet had a mixed response. Ethics was seen as an important and core function of a professional organisation’s credibility and image. Work on competencies had high support with comments that accreditation focus on courses rather than people. Awards were also supported for their professional image with suggestions that sponsors be sought. A little surprisingly overseas initiatives were supported.

The Executive decided to recommend the Board maintain Evalnet until the ITS contract expired in December 2000. Prior to this time additional professional advice would be sought on the strategy and its affordability and expressions of interest sought, including ITS. The Board would be recommended to meet only the minimum of three times in the Constitution with the Executive increased to the maximum of eight by adding a representative from standing committee chairs plus representatives from Australian and New Zealand regions and meeting as required to progress the business. It was also recommended to trial the concept of business managers for member services; marketing and AES image; regional maintenance, development and conference implications, who may be invited to participate in Executive teleconferences. In practice the only business manager position trialed was that for Member Services where Eve Barboza was appointed with a large component of the task being to develop and monitor Evalnet drawing on her close relationship with and experience of working with ITS when Treasurer.

It recommended protocols for teleconferences including:
- no discussion of information papers unless requested
- papers for decision assumed read, with specific questions invited
- recommendations discussed - not content, then any additional recommendations
- encourage early circulation of papers, which need not be polished, and any queries to authors.

Further work on membership categories, services and fees was to be undertaken by Sue, Eve and I. Papers arising from this work generated a great deal of discussion and diverse views.

The Board after much discussion on whether or not to include the difficult to manage category of Student members decided to recognise full time students to support professional development and in recognition that other societies operated this group on an honours basis. This status would be questioned after four years. Provision was made for Associate (International) Subscribers and for Associate (Library) Subscribers. These and students would pay $55/yr compared to normal membership which was raised to $105/yr. An additional Enrolment fee of $20 ($10 for students) would be charged to meet the set up costs of new members or those whose membership lapsed for over three months. All fees were to be reviewed annually against the CPI. It was also decided to amend the Constitution to enable the Board to set fees and report them to the following AGM. This was consistent with the underpinning legislation. In making these decisions the Board decided to cease the Journal after the August ‘99 edition and cease formal printing of the Annual Report, instead providing photocopies for the AGM and those who requested them whilst also making it available on the web-site. The Board also decided to look further at electronic membership (services provided by e-mail or from the web), corporate membership, and enhanced membership to recognise fuller professional commitments.

Arising from the Executive recommendations on Evalnet Peter Sullivan presented an overview for the Board to clarify a number of points he believed had been lost sight of. It was not accurate to state that the major cost to the AES was for software licences rather they covered third party costs involving the provision of physical infrastructure including data storage, www access, providing the Oracle database, exclusive use of an evaluation specific search engine and
provision of sponsorship management and monitoring software. ITS had developed research extracts and indexes and maintained these at a cost estimated at $10k/yr. They currently received a fee of $250 or 7% of gross revenue to add advertising which had a perceived value of $50k/yr. No charges were made for maintaining the consultants database. If the AES was unable to secure advertising it may mean that the AES has to accept a lesser share of revenue and increase the annual fee.

Peter expressed the view that the Executive recommendations (above) were not in line with the Joint Venture approach in which the AES has exclusive naming and marketing rights to the Evalnet trademark being registered and ITS meets its aim of developing an evaluation specific www research service. Both parties share costs and share revenue from advertising after meeting a fee for ITS to set up banners. ITS maintain a home page for AES at no direct cost but as a component of its administration services. Either party can terminate at 30 June annually given adequate notice. Termination would sever the connection between a number of databases. There are incentives on both members to attract revenue and sponsorships to defray costs. He noted this was a priority for the Convenor of Member Services and tabulated the current benefits of Evalnet activities against targets as:

| Consultant database | 50            | (70) target |
| Banners            | 2             | (5)         |
| Members with advanced research | 70          | (100)       |

The Board rescinded the Executive recommendations and noted this understanding of the joint venture which included a list of about 15 sister sites covering topics like evaluation theory & process research, arts, heritage & culture evaluation, health evaluation research etc. The trademark application cost $150 followed by $300 for registration which lasts for 10 years before renewal.

The Board adopted the Executive recommendations for reducing management and administration costs by a reduced number of meetings, for expanding the Executive as described above, a reduced number of mail-outs to four per year. Some time was taken to develop an agreed process for handling issues by round robin which arose between teleconferences or which time precluded being finalised at meetings. Concerns arose through the audit committee that although financial reporting was adequate the packaging account used was not providing sufficient detail for financial management decisions. It transpired that with an inability to collect as much debt as expected from the Melbourne conference its loss increased to over $30k. It was decided more formal delegations should apply between the national Treasurer and conference treasurers. Conference business plans should also include an analysis of risks. Later in the year GST was announced and it was felt this would require a move to double entry accounting. The regional co-ordinators developed a process for exit interviews of lapsed members.

In the last quarter an unfortunate incident occurred when Eva Sullivan acting as the returning officer for the elections and using the criteria on the nomination forms rejected two nominations as lacking consent of the nominees and one as not being a financial member. The latter appealed noting the non payment of subscription was an oversight and that the constitution did not state candidates had to be members or financial members. Legal advice confirmed this view and Eva felt compelled to resign from returning officer. The Australian Electoral Office was appointed to take over the process.

By this time the Board was starting to become factionalised over Evalnet. The majority believed it was costing too much of the Society’s resources, could not be afforded, was not attracting sponsorship, did not appear to be providing much utility to many members, was taking too much management time and effort diverting the limited time of the executive away from other activities, required specialist expertise and was becoming divisive. There were opportunity costs for other possible services including other electronic services like an electronic journal, discussion lists or chat rooms - most of which were available elsewhere. Some believed that most of the material was available in print form or was available from other abstracting or search facilities. A minority believed that much investment had been made, that electronic media was the way of the future and that it was ahead of other evaluation societies.
They advocated more investigation particularly of utility by those registered to access Evalnet, many of whom were recent, and with decisions held for the new Board. A paper on the topic which covered options of making a medium term commitment, or a short term commitment or recommendations for revisiting by the new Board were all rejected and a Board decision made to cease its operations before the AGM. Not long after ITS (Eva & Peter Sullivan) resigned after having served AES for five years.

ITS had become interested in evaluation and in 1994/95 saw the potential of electronic communications. They took a joint venture approach to assist the AES by using ITS’s good offices to gain support from the Inst. of Municipal Management to build on their development of ALGIS and met many of the development costs themselves. They had the vision to see the potential for sponsorship to offset many of the costs and sought to assist through their subsidiary AIMS to develop an array of sponsorship packages. The AES Board, consisting of volunteers, did not have enough people with sufficient knowledge, entrepreneurial flair or time to pursue sponsorship and there was disagreement over how far to expect commercial support from the increasing number of small consultant firms versus using sponsors outside evaluation. To exacerbate the situation other factors also impinged including: the major losses from the Melbourne Conference which forced the realisation that the AES was living above its means and a number of hard decisions were required; the incident as returning officer; the impending introduction of GST; the audit committee view that the financial management system needed replacing by a computerised double entry book keeping system and constant pressure to extract more financial management information I believe all led to ITS’s resignation. I often wonder what would have happened if Evalnet had been picked up as Peter originally envisaged as an international evaluation research tool with a much wider base of support and potential users.

Much of the rest of the time meant hectic work by a small group of Sue, Barry and Anthea to find new support services and to manage the transition. At the same time other activities had to be drawn together for the AGM and a new Board. Investigation supported by audit and legal advice led to recommending the AES reconstitute under new Australian Corporate Law applying to incorporated bodies whether profit or non-profit. The Associations Incorporate Act would now focus on small local organisations and not provide the legal framework for larger or national societies. Provisions allowed the constitution to roll over to the new Act.

There were some strong reactions to the decision to cease the Journal and it was decided to defer this for the new Board to explore possibilities of an electronic journal, combining with other evaluation journals and picking up an offer by Colin Sharp to be editor. Subsequently it was decided to combine with the magazine but to include a section of refereed papers. This was similar to the approach taken by some other smaller professional bodies.

Feed back on the competencies indicated they were being used in a facilitative manner to guide training and development, assist with shaping project teams, and developing position descriptions. They would be refined and put on the web.

Discussions were under way on a new award for environmental evaluations.

It was hoped to finalise the Code of Ethics and related policy in the next year. Meantime for the Perth Conference ’99 a hypothetical had been prepared to demonstrate the use of the Guidelines for Conducting Ethical Evaluations.
On the **International** front the Kellogg Foundation and the Caribbean Development Bank would fund a four day residential workshop to advance international partnership among evaluation societies.

The Perth Conference '99, with the theme of "**Evaluation: Challenging the Boundaries**", exceeded expectations with an attendance of around 230. The interest in and quality of workshops was particularly high with over 300 attending around 10 sessions. The international speakers keynote addresses were all challenging if not in some aspects controversial. Prof. Blaine Worthen spoke on **Critical Challenges that Confront Evaluation in the Next Millennium** based on evaluating the content of seven major world wide evaluation journals over the last 10 years. These included:

1. Negotiating truces between paradigm wars - they are usually complementary.
2. Use a scientific method intelligently.
4. Reduce bias & conflicts of interest which are often present
5. Agree to standards & ethics
6. Cope with political pressure impinging on evaluations
7. Appreciate the rationale for selection of method
8. Use meta-evaluation to improve quality
9. For professional recognition control entrants in the field
10. Prevent accidental or intentional action of gatekeeper from exerting influence.
11. Avoid destructive imbalances in gender and racial and ethnic groups
12. Technological improvements made without compromising ethical situations.

Dr Maria Barrados spoke on **Evaluation and the Challenge of Cultural Relevance** drawing on evaluations at the federal and provincial levels and with the first nations. She identified five lessons.

1. The importance of recognising and understanding the cultural dynamics of a situation.
2. Determining the interest & commitments of the community and institutional leaders to evaluation.
3. Beware of talking at cross purposes.
4. Ensure common understanding of requirements from within and from those imposed externally.
5. Allow time to bring about reconciliation.

Prof. Nick Tilley spoke on **Evaluation and Evidence (mis)led Policy**. There is a need to recognise that evaluations can often mislead by:

1. Being done on a shoe string so technically unsatisfactory
2. Being done under pressure
3. Neglecting contextual variation
4. Misconstruing programmes
5. Interpretation of success or failure findings
6. Asking the wrong questions.

He suggested there may be a role for evaluation societies in preparing model contracts and better reporting and more self evaluation may reduce misconceptions.

Sue Funnell in her final Presidential Address highlighted the range of topics evaluated and reminded of Scriven's four-step approach to evaluation logic involving: determining criteria; identifying standards; undertaking synthesis and making judgements. Approaches taken to these steps in different evaluations may be transferable to others. Evaluation is dominated by the public sector increasingly contracting to academics and consultants and more recently extending to community based evaluation. Evaluators are increasingly becoming facilitators. The boundaries between audit and evaluation are breaking down with the latter increasingly being used for risk management. She noted there were now 23 evaluation societies a 3-4 fold increase in two years. Donor driven evaluations are now moving toward local based evaluation and many projects will require on-going evaluation by their communities to continue.
Sue ended two notable years of ups and downs. She had to grapple with difficulties of getting recognition of living above our means and cutting cloth to suit resources; of trying to steer a path through divergent views about Evalnet and the Journal and the breakdown in relations with ITS. Any one of these would have been enough to handle let alone all three. Nor should they detract from her major achievements particularly the innovation of developing and gaining support for explicit Values and Principles for Board Decision Making; the most in depth stock-take of all aspects of strategy and management forced by the first losses of an annual conference; and her perspicacity and vision in providing leadership at an international level in the evolving development of a partnership between regional and national evaluation societies. Sue, I think, along with Anona Armstrong, are the only presidents to be self employed and her business would have been seriously impacted by AES activities which must have taken at least 35-45% of her time and during some of the issues substantially more.

Asked by several to stand for President I had a good appreciation of the role as for a few periods when Sue had been working overseas I acted in the role for several weeks. We also had a very close relationship and a number of the major papers to the Board had been worked on together. After 10 years at the centre I was feeling drained with all my innovative ideas and efforts having been contributed especially over the previous two years as vice president. I could also foresee difficulties in the role without the support of an organisation in the background which my retirement after 41 years in the workforce precluded. It was time to pass over to new blood.

POST 1999
I was fortunate in being contracted to attend and report on the AEA semi-international conference at Honolulu in 2000. Although its normal annual event the location and marketing attracted a large international attendance with over 1200 from 19 countries. In any time slot there were 18 simultaneous sessions leading to about 350 sessions over the conference. It was preceded and followed by four days of workshops. The conference was run on a low cost basis with none of the frills expected by AES attendees. No lunches, satchels, pens, paper and no abstracts or proceedings of papers. It also highlighted for me a number of differences between the birthplace of evaluation and the Antipodes. The widespread application of evaluation at all levels (national to local) and across all sectors to ascertain that goals are being or have been met; the huge impact of foundations in using and supporting evaluation; the prominence of universities not only in teaching but in brokerage, facilitation and quality assurance; many partnerships involving universities (both staff and students) whether for government funded projects, NGO’s or often working with communities; the openness of information often with masses of practical guidance on the Internet and with feedback sought so that material can be improved; the huge market for independent assessment and QA of internal evaluations which allows a wide range in size, scope and specialisation of widespread consultancies; and the apparent importance of communities in the US, especially those disadvantaged, giving the impression of a reasonably widespread social conscience among movers and shakers.

The AEA makes full use of its Topic Interest Groups (TIGs) which balance a strong drive for support in specific sectors of evaluation whilst still valuing and working through the AEA as a whole. These organise large sections of the conference programme, ensure effective networking and to some extent almost provide a Cabinet system of expertise and organisation. I was surprised at unabashed and
openly run agendas by minority groups and at the openness of lobbying by some of the now 32 evaluation societies.

A meeting of the AES members at this conference led to re-activation of work on Standards by a small group over 2000-01 led by Doug Fraser. This built on a paper prepared by him and Jerome Winston with help from Patricia Rogers who presented it at the Perth Conference '99. This developed a series of standards for application in Australasia and took the approach of following through the stages of managing an evaluation. It is a very good paper. Over a period of about 18 months this group spent time discussing and debating whether such an approach was the best to use or whether it should be based on a series of principles or underpinning concepts such as the four used in the Joint Committee Standards (JCS) described above and, if the latter, what should they be. Unfortunately because of the commitments of most of the Team the activity was rather spasmodic. I think the majority believed some linkage to the JCS would be useful and some underpinning principles would provide a firm foundation. But none emerged which gained quick or strong support and there was some concern that the simplicity and practicality of the Perth paper was in danger of being lost. The work was pulled together for a workshop at the Geelong Conference '01 in a matrix which compared the Perth suggestions against the JCS main concepts slightly modified to better suit use of language in this part of the world and also to show linkages with the Guidelines for Conducting Ethical Evaluations. The workshop was unable to give a clear guidance on preferences or alternatively whether a local version was required or some form of commentary to be used with the JCS. Changing personal circumstances and his important work in editing the new Journal/Magazine meant Doug had to give up as convenor and nobody else at present has the motivation or zeal to re-activate the project. Meantime the Perth paper is a useful guide for evaluators from the Antipodes although it carries no AES endorsement.

Also late in 2000 Chris Milne finalised and gained endorsement for the revised Code of Ethics, which was published, and for the associated policy on its operation.

COMMENTARY

What does it actually take - to provide a professional support society?

To return to our original question and one of the objectives of this paper. After reflecting on over ten years involvement in the AES at both regional and central positions there are some points which clearly emerge.

1. Vision The Society would not exist nor have accomplished its many achievements without the vision of a number of people. All the Presidents I have served with have had vision although it has varied in its breadth and depth from that which is broad and far reaching to that which is narrower but intense in focus.

2. Leadership Particularly the ability to embrace a vision, whether self originated or evolved with others, and to communicate it to others so that they embrace it and together strive to implement it. In my experience the greatest leaders have risen to unexpected challenges and dug deep to find the ability to deal with difficult and sometimes crisis situations. My experience suggests this attribute is not common and an organisation like ours is unlikely to find sufficient for all office bearers and key committee chairs. We have been fortunate that most boards have had two or three and occasionally more with this ability. Similarly most regions usually manage one or two for the local committee but there are examples where their absence has led regions to go into recess until another emerges. This discussion
on leadership becomes more critical in the context of the Australasian scene compared to the older and larger evaluation societies. At the same time it probably provides a bridge of understanding with the recent plethora of new small national evaluation societies, several of which are in developing countries.

3. **Critical mass** This is very important to provide the range of skills, experience and personal attributes along with the necessary wherewithal to make things happen. Although much was achieved in the early days when AES was small the range of professional services we now expect could not really be contemplated until membership exceeded 300-400. For this reason I personally believe NZ is better to stay as part of a regional society than go on its own. It also brings much more experience and networking to bear, particularly, for sub sectoral special interest groups. *We have a long way to go to catch up with the utility that the AEA and CES get from their equivalents.*

4. **Recognition of professional expectations** - This is necessary both from those having a professional interest and from the public. The former expect at least some form of newsletter and many a learned journal subject to peer review and usually some form of professional development or maintenance. The public expect professionals keep up to date, as well as operate to a code of ethics and disciplinary procedures. Often some form of indemnity protection is expected by the public from groups professing to behave professionally. At the same time these expectations must be realistic as it is impossible to do everything at once and over reaching can create problems.

5. **Good communications** This must be multi-directional and at least at two levels - up and down within the organisation; in and out of it, and within or around the regions and the corporate management. These days the electronic media have added a different and almost instantaneous dimension. Maintaining good communications, at low cost, in a federation of regions is a critical component.

6. **Good organisational dynamics** which balance: good representation with efficiency; innovation with solid experience; and the needs of individuals, the regions, firms, the public and the collective professional interest.

7. **Adequate records and clearly recorded policies** This should ensure consistency over time and location, facilitate quick responses and should reduce re-litigation and reduce reinventing the wheel. The AES Compendium of Board Policies was the envy of some of the other evaluation societies.

8. **(Especially) Dedicated people** Without such people willing to give of themselves little would be accomplished, particularly for key positions of responsibility. Ideally they would bring a range of skills and experience, an ability to see different sides of an issue, recognise the importance of identifying and debating options and most important be willing to work hard for the common good.

A **final comment.** An oft quoted characteristic of professional bodies is that they should be self governing, particularly of their standards of practice. One approach used by some professional bodies is to recognise a register of consultants judged as worthy by their peers. This is not a chartering approach which precludes those from practising who do not wish to undergo such peer review. Instead it is a mix of showing professional maturity and advertising an endorsement of peers for an uninformed public. Some also link it to a commitment to ongoing professional development and/or public liability protection. In my view this is a step our most experienced consultants who are critical to the supply side of the AES brokering role and the Board should consider.

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APPENDICIES These are available separately.


Appendix 2: Schedule of National Evaluation Conferences, 1990-2002. Includes locations, fees, chairs of organising committees, theme, attendance, overseas speakers etc where information was available.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


