

# Poor evaluations undermining public policy initiatives, report finds

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Governments are making decisions based on incomplete information and evidence that's often not subjected to adequate scrutiny, a Policy Brief prepared by the University of Melbourne has warned.

Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark—from the University's Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research—assessed the quality of policy evaluations commissioned by the Commonwealth and state governments.

"Sound, independent program evaluation is crucial to ensuring taxpayers receive value for money, but the current evaluation system generally

produces poor-quality evaluations that don't tell us very much," she said.

The report is the first of the Melbourne Institute's new Policy Briefs Series that will examine current policy issues and provide an independent platform for [public debate](#).

"The results of these evaluations are typically not independent, transparent or widely distributed," according to Professor Cobb-Clark.

"Unlike medical trials which must be registered, the results of economic and social policy evaluations are often buried when they do not suit politicians or policymakers. This makes it impossible to know what works and what does not."

Professor Cobb-Clark is calling for all policy evaluations to be made public as a matter of course.

"All evaluations conducted by or commissioned through the government should be published externally, perhaps with a short embargo period for journalists and [stakeholders](#) to consider the findings," she said.

"The current lack of a willingness to commit to the publication of results has meant that Australian academics are increasingly disengaged from evaluations of major economic and social initiatives."

"This can lead to poor policy."

The full report, 'The Case for Making Public Policy Evaluations [Public](#)', is available [here](#).

Provided by University of Melbourne

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