Benchmarking in Federal Systems

Roundtable Proceedings

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Edited by:
Alan Fenna & Felix Knüpling
Foreword

Federal systems of government generally give rise to greater coordination problems and transaction costs than unitary states. Yet they can also yield important benefits, through the opportunities they provide for policy experimentation and learning across constituent jurisdictions. However, the latent potential for such inter-jurisdictional learning cannot be fully realised without relevant and accessible information. Australia has made some significant advances in this respect, but so too have other countries, which provides an opportunity for further learning at the international level.

The Productivity Commission was therefore pleased to join with the Forum of Federations to hold an international roundtable on *Benchmarking in Federal Systems*. The Roundtable took place in Melbourne in late 2010, bringing together government officials, academics and practitioners from Australia and a number of other countries. This volume provides updated and elaborated versions of the papers presented at the Roundtable.

The Roundtable provided the opportunity to compare Australian approaches to ‘benchmarking’ with those followed in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Germany, as well as at the European Union level. An introductory chapter by Professor Alan Fenna, who also co-edited the volume, provides a conceptual framework against which the different approaches can be considered.

The Commission is grateful to the Forum of Federations for the invitation to co-host the Roundtable, and to the participants, whose contributions made the Roundtable, and the production of this volume, a valuable exercise.

Gary Banks AO
Chairman

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Contents

Foreword iii
Introduction 1

Felix Knüpling

1 Benchmarking in federal systems 11

Alan Fenna

Part I: International contributions

2 From the improvement end of the telescope: benchmarking and accountability in UK local government 41

Clive Grace

3 The implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act: toward performance-based federalism in US education policy 61

Kenneth K. Wong

4 Benchmarking health care in federal systems: the Canadian experience 89

Patricia Baranek, Jeremy Veillard and John Wright

5 Towards benchmarking in Germany 111

Gottfried Konzendorf and Rabea Hathaway

6 Benchmarking sustainable development in the Swiss confederation 123

Daniel Wachter

7 Benchmarking social Europe a decade on: demystifying the OMC’s learning tools 145

Bart Vanhercke and Peter Lelie

Part II: Australian contributions

8 Australia’s federal context 187

Gary Banks, Alan Fenna and Lawrence McDonald
9 Benchmarking and Australia’s Report on Government Services 199
   Gary Banks and Lawrence McDonald

10 Benchmarking, competitive federalism and devolution: how the COAG reform agenda will lead to better services 227
   Ben Rimmer

11 Benchmarking and accountability: the role of the COAG Reform Council 247
   Mary Ann O’Loughlin

12 Australian perspectives on benchmarking: the case of school education 267
   Peter Dawkins

13 Benchmarking in federal systems: the Queensland experience 281
   Sharon Bailey and Ken Smith

Dinner address

14 Commonwealth–State benchmarking and the state of Australian Federalism 295
   Helen Silver

Appendixes

A Roundtable program 301
B Roundtable participants 303