



**Australian Government**  
**Productivity Commission**

# Strengthening Evidence-based Policy in the Australian Federation

Roundtable Proceedings



Canberra, 17-18 August 2009  
*Volume 1: Proceedings*

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***The Productivity Commission***

The Productivity Commission is the Australian Government's independent research and advisory body on a range of economic, social and environmental issues affecting the welfare of Australians. Its role, expressed most simply, is to help governments make better policies, in the long term interest of the Australian community.

The Commission's independence is underpinned by an Act of Parliament. Its processes and outputs are open to public scrutiny and are driven by concern for the wellbeing of the community as a whole.

Further information on the Productivity Commission can be obtained from the Commission's website ([www.pc.gov.au](http://www.pc.gov.au)) or by contacting Media and Publications on (03) 9653 2244 or email: [maps@pc.gov.au](mailto:maps@pc.gov.au)

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# Foreword

The Productivity Commission's 2009 roundtable was organised around the topic *Strengthening Evidence-Based Policy in the Australian Federation*, and held at Old Parliament House in Canberra on 17-18 August. Participants included government officials, academics, consultants and representatives of non-government organisations. Keynote addresses were presented by Dr Ron Haskins, Senior Fellow of the Brookings Institution, and Professor Jeffrey Smith of the University of Michigan.

The Commission has long grappled with how best to bring available evidence to bear in informing policy. Some months after coming to power, Prime Minister Rudd said: 'evidence-based policy making is at the heart of being a reformist government', foreshadowing an intensified interest in making the best use of evidence, and implying questions about how to deepen the pool of experienced evaluators and build institutions to facilitate good use of evidence.

The roundtable commenced by discussing the principles of the evidence-based policy movement and reviewed how well Australian use of evidence conformed to best practice. It then considered how to improve the availability of quality evidence, and reviewed possible institutional developments to embed good use of evidence more firmly into policy-making.

The roundtable proceedings are being published to enable a wider audience access to the information and insights that emerged. This volume includes papers by the speakers and a summary of the key points covered in the discussion sessions. A second volume is a background paper prepared by Commission staff and provided to roundtable participants.

The Commission is grateful to the speakers and other participants whose contributions made the roundtable such a valuable exercise.

Gary Banks AO

Chairman

March 2010



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