



Australian
Human Rights
Commission

WEST WOOD
SPICE

BETTER OUTCOMES • BETTER LIVES

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AES conference 2012

**Are we there yet?
2 years of evaluation
capacity building.**

Overview

- About the Commission
- About ECB
- Our story
- Our results: have we made a difference?
- What we have learnt/implications?
- What is our future direction?

Commission snapshot

What are human rights?

- Laws and systems/UN International/national treaties & covenants
- Principles and ideals

Our identity:

- National Human Rights Institution-Independent statutory
- Public service agency, small one (120 staff), small budget

Our work

- HR lens to HR issues...racism, gender & Indigenous inequality, discrimination based violence, asylum seeker policy, ageism, disability access

By

- Influencing national agendas
- Building human rights into Australian policy, law & practice
- Resolving discrimination & human rights complaints
- Monitoring and reporting
- Engaging internationally

ECB background

ECB is a context dependant, intentional system of guided processes to bring about and sustain quality evaluation and its use as ordinary and ongoing practices

Stockdill 2002 p7

- Rooted in utilisation theory debates (70s)
- Organisational culture impact (80s)
- Theory & practice evolves (90/00s)
- Now
 - Becoming evidenced based
 - Plausible theory of change
 - Multidisciplinary focus in the models
 - Growing demand, not-for-profit and public sectors
 - Real life examples over time are emerging

Alkin & Christie 2004, Preskill 1991, Labin et al 2012, Preskill & Boyle 2008, Garcia-Iriarte et al 2011, Suarez-Herrera 2009, Green et al 2008, Beere 2005, McDonald et al 2003, Prochaska & DiClemente 1983, Patton 1987,

Our story so far

2007

Changing public sector accountability
UN/NHRI accountability
Must do better
No action
No manual

2008

Seminal planning event.
Staff put evaluation on action agenda

2009/10

Restructure
New team with change mandate
Awareness of ECB models
Focus on measurable 2011-14
Strategic Plan

2010/11

Strategic Plan a success
ECB project resourced
Project planning diversion !
1st systems developed
1st internal depth project evaluation

2011/12

ECB project resourced
Systems refinement
Toolkit
More project evaluations
Eval FW developed

Banks (2009), Bycroft (2009), UN Evaluation Group (2005), Mertus (2010)

Starting point

- No evaluation capacity
- Unmeasurable strategic plan
- No line of sight - projects to goals
- No systematic resourcing for evaluation
- Ad hoc
- Lots of small teams (Policy, Complaints, Legal, Comms, Corporate)
- Lots of small budget projects with 1 staff lead.
- ECB initiative – policy team focused – needed!

Our approach

Targeted change:

- Staff capability
- Systems to support evaluation.
- Culture change.

Our model mix:

- Leadership
- Embedding in policy, systems & process
- External expert “critical friend”
- Champions group
- Training
- Participating & experiencing evaluations
- Extended time frame

Evaluation of our ECB

Mixed method design

- Action research
- ECB staff log
- Staff surveys, focus groups, interviews*

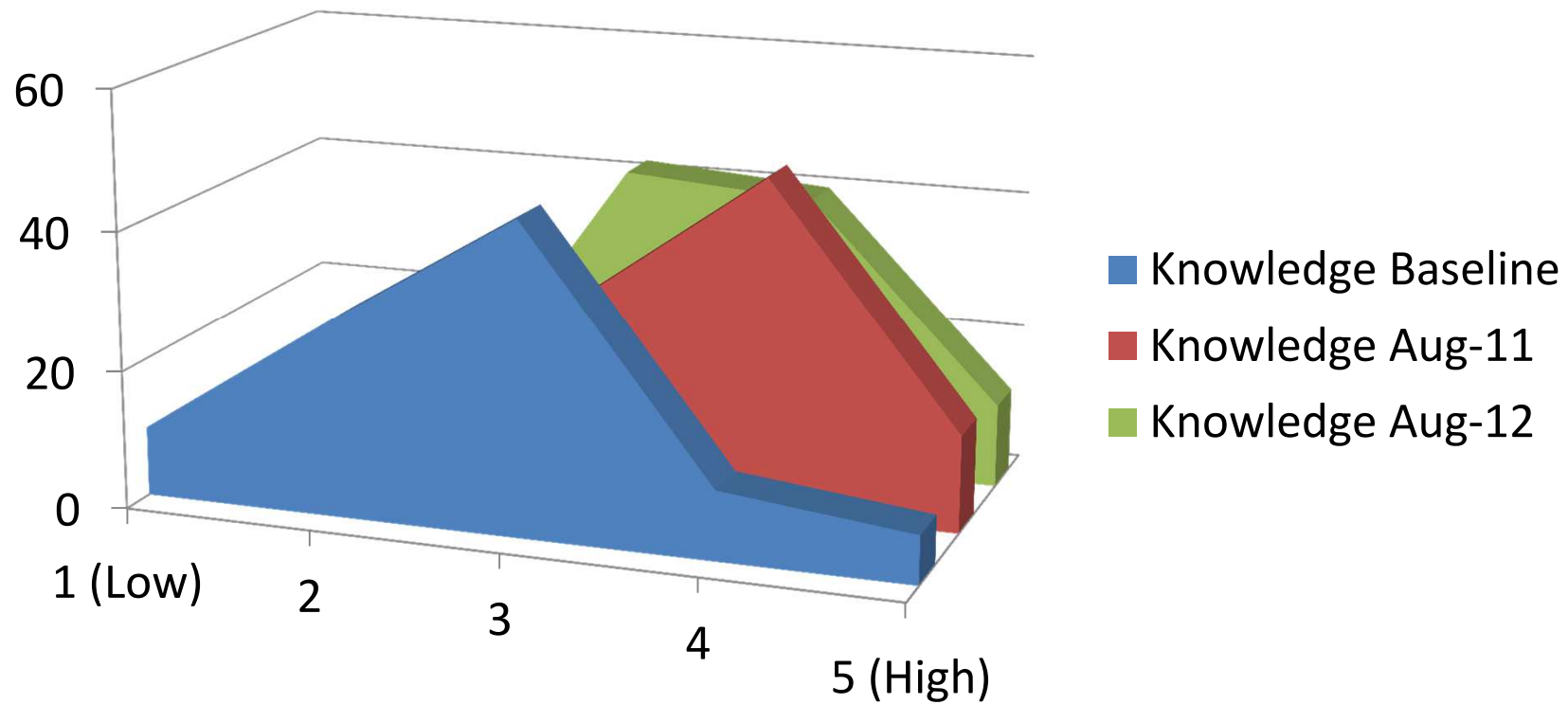
Limitations

- Internally led
- Small sample size
- Staff turnover
- Time constraints/competing priorities*

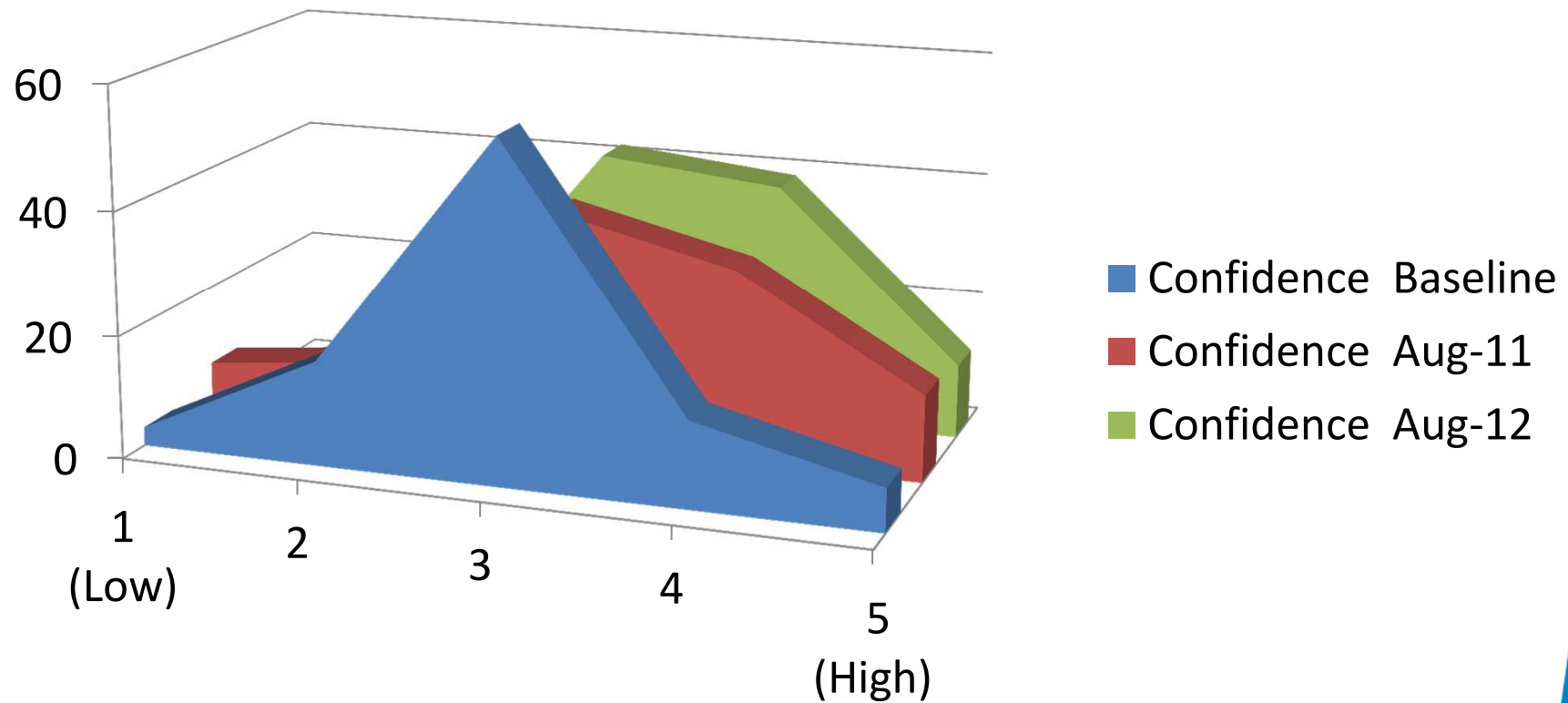
Staff survey

- Online
- Baseline, year 1, year 2
- Ave 60% participation rate
- Perceived knowledge, skills & confidence.
- Views on evaluation culture, most significant change.
- Positive & negative impacts
- Needs

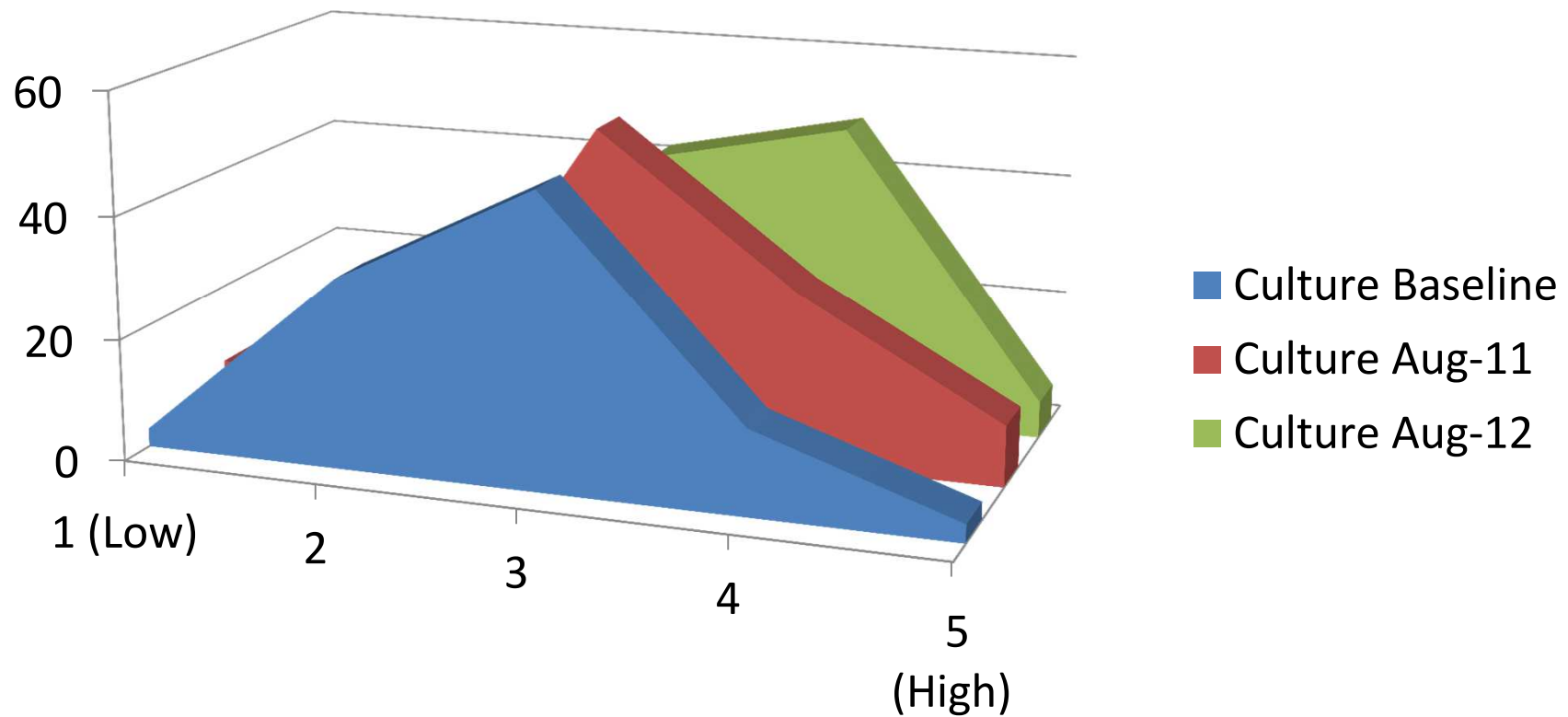
Staff views on how their knowledge has change



Staff views on how their confidence has changed



Staff views on how the Commission culture has changed



Qualitative results/staff comments

The culture of evaluation has changed massively since I started 2 years ago

Affirmation that our work has impact

Apart from building my skills and capacity, it now means that I look at all new and existing work with evaluation in mind

Achievements

Year 1

- New strategic plan
- ECB staff development
- New planning systems include eval
- First internally led structured evaluation

Year 2

- Staff champions grp works→
- New early adopters emerge
 - (M's story)
- Systems in place & used
- More project evals
- ECB staff move into coach role
- Critical friend moves to oversight
- Not a project anymore...its policy

Challenges

Year 1

- Initial diversion to planning
- Entrenched ways
- Theory & planning fatigue
- Keeping it simple
- Sub-cultures & politics
- Champions group a disaster
- Always capacity!

Year 2

- Re-building champions
- Negativity of 'laggards'
- Systems trial & error impact
- Resourcing reduced
- Ongoing need for ECB staff to be hands on
- Capacity again!

Rogers 1962

Year 3...challenges ahead

- Working with & across early adopters, majority, 'laggards'
 - ↑ leverage...champions
- Developing evaluation use in decision making (all levels)
- Keeping it simple & user friendly
- Maintaining momentum (with less capacity)
- Sustain, improve, embed further
- Articulating organisational impact on goals
- More qualitative inquiry to better understand learning & future direction

So, are we there yet? No, but on the way!

Objectives (yrs 1&2)

- Positive culture change ✓
- Systems & processes enabling evaluation ✓
- ↑ knowledge & skills of staff ✓
- ↑ confidence of staff to implement evaluation ✓
- ↑ implementation of eval ✓
- ↑ ability to demonstrate impact on strategic goals ✓

It's still slow but positive...

***evaluation culture change is best started slowly
and built over time***

McDonald 2003,

What we have learned

- Good program planning must be in place
- ECB can work with shoestring budget
- Core staff with interest & enthusiasm critical
- External expert critical
- Knowing culture [context matters]
- Wallpaper strategies
- Flexibility essential – iterative, action research model
- Staff turn over matters – many pros, some cons!
- Be prepared to invest time – celebrate small successes

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Thank you

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