



Australian Government

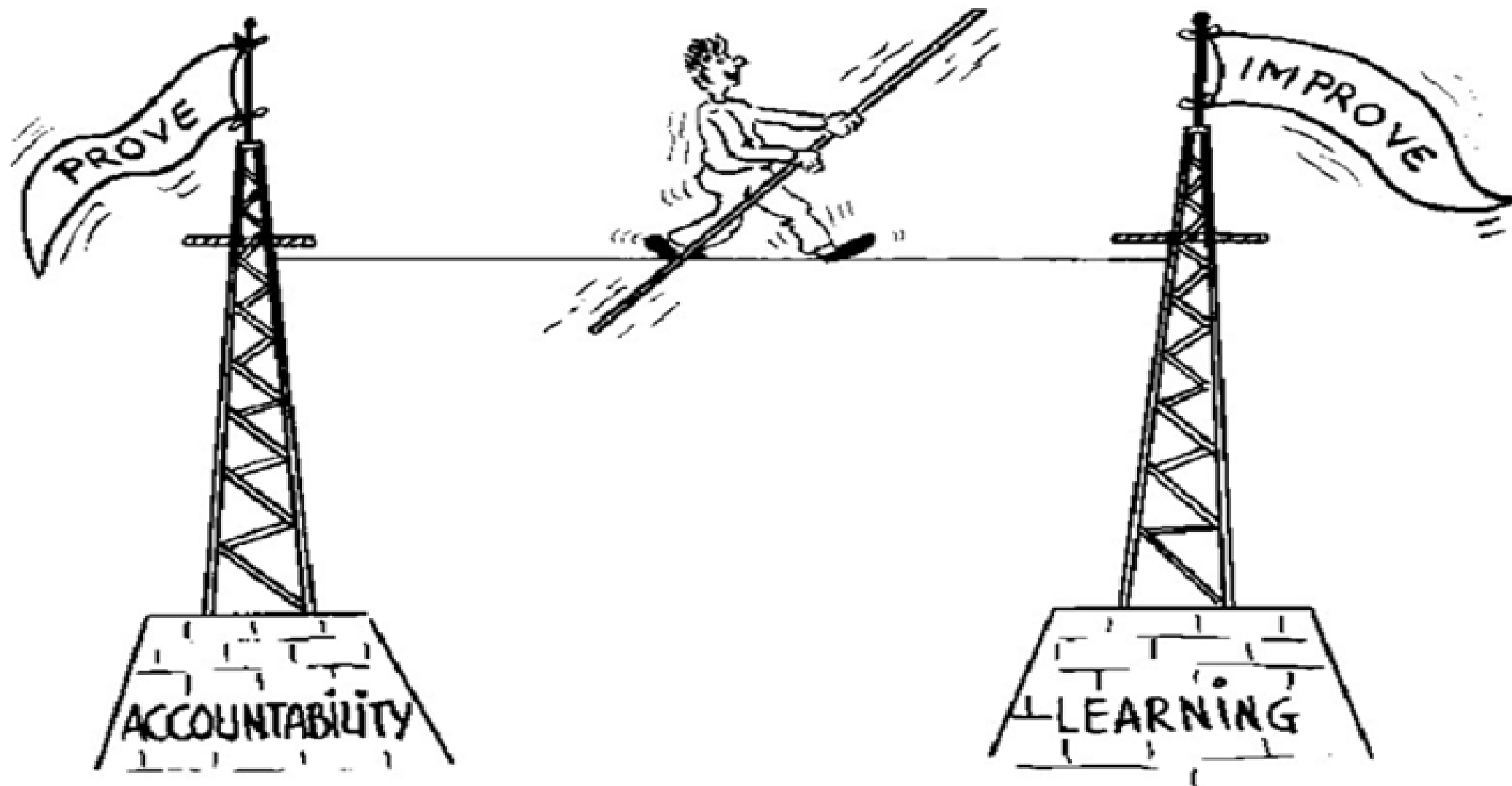
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT: BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE INTERNAL EVALUATION FUNCTION FOR AUSTRALIA'S FOREIGN AID PROGRAM

David Slattery: Director, Office of Development Effectiveness, DFAT &

Wendy Jarvie: Member, Independent Evaluation Committee, DFAT

Presentation to the Australian Evaluation Society Conference AES 17, 4 September 2017, Canberra



Source: Terry Smutyla & Daniel Morales-Gomez

STRUCTURE OF PRESENTATION

- Why was the model was established?
- How does the model work?
- What impact has it had?
- Why did it work?
- Why should other organisations consider it?

WHY WAS THE MODEL ESTABLISHED?

- Evaluation function criticised for lacking independence
- Early optimism following establishment of ODE
- Disappointment
 - *“Where have all the evaluations gone?”*
 - Is ODE a ‘constructive critic’ or ‘agency advocate’?

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF AID EFFECTIVENESS 2011

- The evaluation dimension is not working well
- A disconnected evaluation agency is one with little influence.
- But increased independence is important.



HOW DOES THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION COMMITTEE MODEL WORK?



Mr Jim Adams
IEC Chair



Dr Wendy Jarvie
**Independent
Member**



Mr Stephen Creese
**Independent
Member**



**Mr Ewen
McDonald**
(DFAT) member

HOW DOES THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION COMMITTEE MODEL WORK?

- Very simple model.
- Meets three times a year. Reviews papers out of session.
- It reviews and provides comments on all of ODE's work, including the annual workplan, TORs, evaluation plans, and evaluation reports.
- It endorses the workplan and reports prior to publication focussing on overall quality and credibility. *It doesn't have to agree every detail.*

HOW DOES THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION COMMITTEE MODEL WORK?

- Members participate in biannual seminars held at Development Policy Centre at ANU where ODE reports are discussed with academics and others.
- Also provides advice to DFAT on the *Performance of Australian Aid* report – a part of DFAT's accountability under the PGPA Act.

Note:

- ⁸ • it's an *Advisory* committee only.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF THE MODEL?



Average number of
evaluations published
2006 - 2013

Average number
evaluations published
2014 - 2017

2014

AES Awards for Excellence in Evaluation
Public Sector Evaluation
Award

WINNER

Evaluation of the Australian
Volunteers for International
Development (AVID)
program

Office of Development Effectiveness
January 2014

2016

AES Awards for Excellence in Evaluation
Public Sector Evaluation
Award

WINNER

Evaluation of the Australian NGO
Cooperation Program Final Report

Office of Development Effectiveness
August 2015

WHY DOES IT WORK?

- Because the Government agrees it (and ODE) is useful
- Because it provides encouragement and direction to ODE
- Because of the quality and nature of the advice it provides, and
- DFAT's attitude to Independent members

WHY SHOULD OTHERS CONSIDER IT?

- Evaluation functions within government often struggle eg to get reports published, particularly ones in conflicted policy spaces, and to have external credibility.
- This model strengthens internal evaluation functions – without losing the advantages of internal evaluations
- Provides a useful accountability role under PGPA Act.

But it relies on

- Careful choice of members, particularly the Chair
- Clear understanding of its role and its limits

- An organisation culture that can deal with bad news from time to time

QUESTIONS?

COMMENTS?



Australian Government
Department of
Foreign Affairs and Trade



[DFAT.GOV.AU/ODE](https://dfat.gov.au/ode)

The credibility of evaluation hinges in large part on its governance, that is, on the set up of independent evaluation units that report to country legislatures or to governing bodies—or other independent verification mechanisms. This prerequisite of credibility is missing in the evaluation systems used by most governments, companies, and development agencies. The frequent option of resorting to consultants does not guarantee independence.