COVID-19 update from Australian Evaluation Society (27/03/2020)

The AES is very aware of the current challenges and uncertainty you, your community and the evaluation community is facing.

The AES Board met last weekend to consider how we can best support our members and the evaluation community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Board would like you to know that:

- the needs, health, and safety of our members, volunteers, staff and the wider community are paramount,
- we are in a position to continue operating and to provide support and services to our members, and will be adaptive and innovative in an effort to provide that support as the pandemic unfolds, whilst ensuring that your society continues to trade sustainably,
- work is currently underway to enable us to pivot operations to respond to ongoing and emerging members’ needs in a manner that complies with all health directives

In terms of first steps:

- the AES office remains open and operating virtually (its physical location at the University of Melbourne is currently closed). Bill Wallace, CEO and Michelle Wightwick, Events and Membership Officer are available via phone and email, and I thank them for their efforts and dedication.
- to protect the health and well-being of our volunteers, members, and the broader community our aes20 International Evaluation Conference scheduled to be held in Brisbane during September 2020 has been postponed to 2021.
- the aes21 International Evaluation Conference Through the Lens will be held at the Brisbane Convention Centre from 27 September to 1 October 2021.
- we will work with our committees and members to identify and pursue additional activities to support you at this time, including exploring providing online forums for members, online training, and virtual seminars and events
- to support this work the the planned digital strategic project is being accelerated.
- in addition to the AES Finance & Risk Committee meeting regularly to monitor the COVID-19 situation, a cross-cutting Member Working Group drawing its membership from all AES Board Advisory Committees will be established to help identify and advise on the needs of members as the pandemic unfolds.

I would like to particularly acknowledge the hard work, creativity and commitment of the 2020 Brisbane Conference Committee. The postponement decision has been made with some regret but it was important that they (and indeed, all our volunteers and members) are able to focus their time and energies on more immediate and existentially important matters. The Brisbane Conference Committee will retain the vision and theme of the 2020 conference in 2021, and later this year the sub-themes will be reviewed in light of the emergent environment.
If you’re looking for additional information on the support that is available for individuals, families, and businesses, the following sites may be of use:

**Australia**
https://www.australia.gov.au

**New Zealand**
https://covid19.govt.nz

We will keep you informed as the AES response develops. In the interim, be safe, please follow all advice and direction of authorities in your area and we sincerely hope you, your family, friends and community remain well.

Kindest regards,

*John Stoney*
AES President