AES17 International Conference

Evaluation Report

Conducted by
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2017

Main Messages

- The conference was positively received by the majority of participants and achieved the conference organising committee's desire to stimulate discussion and debate.

- The geographic location of the conference was optimised as a showcase for the AES in the presence of government representatives who are key consumers and commissioners of evaluation services. The conference demonstrated the AES's ability to deliver a professional conference featuring high profile speakers and provocative presentations. Delegates also benefited from the opportunity to attend presentations delivered by government representatives.

- The selection of high profile keynote speakers and their challenging messages set a confident tone for the conference. If the controversial provocations or content made in some of the keynotes represented a risk for the organising committee, it was a risk well rewarded. These presentations were widely embraced and celebrated by conference participants.

- Insights gained through the keynote messages and a range of concurrent sessions inspired delegates to share their learning with their colleagues or clients. Delegates reported a generous degree of sharing which potentially increased the reach of the conference.

- Panel, interactive and skills-based concurrent sessions were popular, along with sessions by government representatives, and sessions which introduced new concepts to evaluators such as design and evaluation. Concurrent sessions which were more didactic in nature were least valued.

- Presentations by indigenous communities and indigenous evaluators were popular. The keynote speech in relation to inter-generational trauma was frequently reported as one of the most memorable presentations.

- The conference program was extensive which presented a challenge for some participants who struggled to decide which sessions to attend. This was exacerbated for some who reported dissatisfaction with the mixed and shorter timed sessions.

- For many of the AES17 Conference attendees attending the conference represented a large proportion of their professional budget and yet most felt that the conference was good value for money. A small number of participants reported finding the cost of the conference difficult to justify or cover.

- Overall there was a high level of satisfaction with the organisation of the conference including issues which are universal to conferences such as registration, catering and venue.

- Future conferences will benefit from a greater emphasis on interactive learning opportunities, skills-based presentations and a return to longer-form concurrent sessions. The successful elements of the 2017 AES International conference, including provocative keynote speeches should be carried into

future conferences.

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Executive Summary

This report communicates the approach, methodologies and findings of the evaluation of the 2017 AES International Conference. The evaluation was conducted by a solo evaluator, Jen Thompson, a student of Melbourne University's Master of Evaluation. The AES was the commissioner of this evaluation and the author was hosted as an intern while completing the evaluation and post-Capstone obligations.

Two key evaluation questions (KEQ) and nine sub-questions were developed in consultation with the AES2017 conference organisation committee. The KEQs asked *"Did the conference satisfy the professional interests of conference delegates?"* and *"Did the conference satisfy the strategic interest of the AES Board?".*

A mixed method research approach was employed which included two data collection points; 20 at-conference interviews and a post-conference on-line survey of 215 participants. The evaluation primarily explored merit (quality) and worth (value) of the conference as it was perceived by participants and expressed in terms of satisfaction levels.

Key evaluation question 1: The majority of survey and interview participants reported high levels of satisfaction particularly with keynote presentations. Other presentations that were popular included presentations on indigenous perspectives, those delivered by government representatives, practical and methodological sessions and interactive (panel) sessions. Presentations reported as being of least value were those of a didactic 'chalk and talk' format. There was an expressed desire for more interactive and engaging presentations.

Respondents reported relatively high levels of satisfaction in regard to value for time and money expended on attending the conference. There were some respondents who felt the conference was too expensive and difficult to finance for people from the not-for-profit sector. A large proportion of attendees expended 50 per cent or more of their annual professional development income on attending the conference.

The organising committee's intent to promote engagement and discussion seems to have been realised. The keynotes and conference theme were acknowledged for stimulating discussion. Interview and survey participants provided many examples of having shared new concepts and methods from the conference with colleagues.

Key evaluation question 2: The AES 17 conference successfully aligned and supported many of the AES strategic priorities, particularly translating a commitment to building cultural capacity into a program of popular workshops on Indigenous perspectives and evaluation. The organising committee's approach to the conference was recognised by the Board for engaging with senior bureaucrats and supporting the strategic priority of influence. The conference also generated a profit for the AES, supporting the strategic priority of organisational stability. In a short-term context, the conference was successful in meeting the Board's strategic interests. Board members interviewed recognised that there will be challenges to ensure future conferences remains relevant and the conference value proposition sustained.

Background

This report communicates the approach, methodologies and findings of the evaluation of the 2017 AES International Conference. The AES 2017 International Conference was held at the Canberra Convention Centre between 4 and 6 September.   The conference represented the culmination of many months of planning by the conference organising committee and AES staff.

One of the intrinsic tensions to consider when evaluating a conference is the limited control organising committees have over conference presentations; presenters differ in their presentation style and abilities. Traditional conference formats do rely, to a large extent, on the willingness of professionals and peers, to provide almost three days of content for limited financial reward. The evaluation of the AES17 conference is focussed on the substantial aspects of the conference that were within the remit of the AES and particularly influenced by the 2017 organising committee. There is limited focus on issues universal to conferences such as catering, venue and organisation.

The organising committee were particularly interested in promoting engagement and discourse, introduction of concurrent sessions of mixed lengths, and the recruitment of high profile keynote speakers. Viewed in this context the evaluation is primarily summative in nature. The evaluation also serves a formative purpose. The evaluation was approached with the intent of informing planning for future conferences.

Purpose and mandate

The evaluation was undertaken on behalf of the AES by a solo evaluator, Jen Thompson, a student of the Melbourne University Masters of Program Evaluation. The AES was the commissioner of this evaluation and the author is hosted as an intern while completing the evaluation and post-Capstone obligations. The AES was represented by two volunteer members of the AES 2017 conference organising committee who took on the role of clients for briefing and engagement purposes. A Capstone research fellow, Mr Dan Borg, was appointed by the AES to provide critical support to the project. The initial proposition for the AES Capstone evaluation was posted to the University of Melbourne, Master of Evaluation Capstone web site.   The scope was refined through a series of conversations with the clients to ensure it was commensurate with the limited time and resources available.

Performance criteria

This evaluation primarily explored merit (quality) and worth (value) of the conference as it was perceived by participants and expressed in terms of satisfaction levels. The author acknowledges the limitation of relying on a single performance measure (participant satisfaction) while also recognising that in situations where quality of such a service is an abstraction[1], that participant satisfaction levels are meaningful. A comparative analysis of performance against previous conferences has not been undertaken due to time and resource constraints and variation in methodologies.

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[1] Lee, C., & Nowell, B. (2015). A Framework for Assessing the Performance of Nonprofit Organizations. *American Journal of Evaluation, 36*(3). p.307

The absence of a monitoring and evaluation framework to support this evaluation made selecting performance measures and clarifying the evaluation questions more time consuming. It also reduced the ability of the organisation to monitor progress year to year. These constraints may be mitigated in future through the development of an AES conference monitoring and evaluation framework, providing the scaffolding to support comparative analysis.

Key evaluation Questions

Evaluation questions were developed primarily through surfacing of client objectives, review of previous AES conference evaluations and consideration of the interests of the primary stakeholders; delegates (including AES members), future conference organising committees and the Board of the AES.

KEQ One: Did the conference satisfy the professional interests of conference delegates?

Sub-questions

1.1. Why did participants attend the conference?

1.2. Was attendance perceived to be a good use of time and money? What factors influenced their answer?

1.3. What proportion of participant professional development budget is allocated to the conference?

1.4. What elements of the conference were most valued?

1.5. What elements of the conference were least valued?

1.6. Did the format of the conference enable and promote engagement and discussion?

1.7. Did the conference inspire the application or sharing of new insights or methods?

1.8. Did the conference facilitate new professional partnerships or networks?

2.   KEQ Two: Did the conference satisfy the strategic interest of the AES Board?

Sub-question

2.1   Did the conference contribute to the AES strategic goals (priorities) of influence, relevance, professionalization and organizational stability?

Methodology

KEQs were developed and refined in consultation with the clients. An evaluation plan was developed along with a data collection plan (attachment 1) and refined through various iterations. In addition to the KEQs, this plan included the purpose of the questions and the methods that were to be used to support the evaluation.

A mixed methods approach was used which included semi-structured at-conference interviews and a post-conference on-line survey. Where possible, triangulation was used to assess thematic consistency and to provide more depth to either survey or interview findings.

Transcripts of all at-conference interviews were created and coded using Nvivo qualitative research software. Pre-determined codes were used to identify responses to specific interview questions and emergent codes were also identified (a complete list of codes is provided at Attachment 2). Findings from the interviews then supported the development of the on-line survey. The Survey Monkey analysis tool was used for analysing quantitative data. Where necessary, quantitative data was exported to Excel for further analysis or for graphic representation. Qualitative (free text responses) from the survey were exported to Nvivo, and coded in the same manner as the interview data. Qualitative data was then summarised in a framework matrix to support synthesis.

Data collection tools

The first data collection tool designed was the interview guide, along with a plain language guide and a consent form (Attachment 3). The on-line post-conference survey (Attachment 4) was designed to inform the KEQs and to further investigate themes identified during the early analysis of the semi-structured interviews such as an expressed desire for more emphasis on skills and interactive learning. An interview guide and consent sheet were also prepared for Board member interviews (attachment 5).

A number of data collection tools which feature in the original evaluation framework plan (attachment 1) were not utilised due to resource limitations and the suitability of the data. It was felt that the insights from conference demographics and the 'sched' real-time conference rating e-tool would add limited learning, while requiring a significant resource commitment to achieve meaningful analysis.

Sampling frame and demographics

The on-line survey sampling-frame included 505 people who attended the conference and provided an email address. All 505 were invited to participate in the on-line post-conference survey via email, of which almost 43 per cent accepted the invitation to provide input. The sample frame for the at-conference interviews included all conference attendees that were readily available to the evaluator.

Semi-structured interviews

Twenty semi-structured interviews were undertaken across three days of the conference using a mixture of convenience and purposive sampling. The initial goal was to conduct 15 interviews (approximately five per conference day). The number was increased at the conference to ensure a diverse sample was selected. Purposive sampling was then used to capture representatives of specific groups including government representatives, students and indigenous evaluators. All interviews were undertaken by the evaluator and recorded using a personal voice recorder.

Post-conference survey

Access to the AES Survey Monkey account was provided by the AES Chief Executive Officer. The survey design was developed over a period of three weeks with various iterations tested. The testing identified a number of errors for correction. Further errors were encountered after the survey was sent to the conference delegates and adjustments were made in the analysis phase to limit the use of misleading data. The survey questions are provided at Attachment 4.

The survey was sent by email to those people who registered for the conference and reminder emails sent on two occasions.

Board interviews

Three members of the AES Board participated in interviews. The interviews were the last of the data collection to be undertaken for the evaluation. The interview guide is at Attachment 6. Purposive sampling was used based on recommendations of the organising committee to ensure insights were received from board members who offered distinct perspectives including indigenous perspective, board members based in the New Zealand and a board member representative of the 2018 conference organising committee.

Ethics

Throughout the evaluation the author sought to comply with the AES Code of Ethics as it related to the ethical conduct of the evaluator and particularly in regard to research participants. The identity of people who participated was protected through the de-identification of data. Where it was possible that an individual's identifying characteristics may be revealed (for example the AES board members), this possibility was fully disclosed. A plain language statement and a consent form (Attachment 4) were produced which clearly articulated the purpose of the research, the way data would be used and provided the option of withdrawing consent.

Limitations

The following limitations are acknowledged. The sample for the at-conference interviews and the post-conference on-line survey cannot be considered representative of the conference cohort. The on-line survey did achieve a 43 per cent response rate, which provided an acceptable margin of error (5.07%) with a confidence interval of 95 per cent. However, on-line surveys can be subject to responder bias and there were two

questions that contained design errors through not including a 'not applicable' option. These errors were accounted for in the analysis.

Convenience and purposive sampling was used to recruit people for the at-conference interviews and the selection of subjects is likely to be biased by the interviewer and the availability of willing interviewees. It was also likely that people selected for the at-conference interviews may have also participated in the post-conference on-line survey, therefore amplifying their input.

A design fault with survey question 11 asked about social aspects of the conference and did not provide a 'not applicable' option for those that did not participate in the listed events. It can be assumed that many of the neutral responses to the question related to those respondents who did not participate in the social calendar. Therefore, data generated by question 11 was not used to support any evaluative conclusions.

Key Evaluation Question 1

Did the conference satisfy the professional interests of conference delegates?

Summary of findings

The AES 17 conference satisfied the professional interest of the majority of those who responded to the survey or participated in an at-conference interview. The presentations cited by interview and survey participants as being most valuable or memorable, were the keynote speeches, interactive and panel sessions, particularly those introducing new and challenging concepts.

Keynote speaker selection was one of the outstanding achievements of the conference. In addition, participation by government and evaluation commissioners was well received, as were panel discussions. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous perspectives on evaluation were also highly valued aspects of the conference.

The data strongly suggests that future organising committees promote and select more innovative and engaging presentations which support learning, methods and skill development. Some participant reactions to the conference theme suggest that it may not have achieved the outcomes intended and the use of themes in future may need to be reviewed. In addition, the adoption of a shorter presentation format was viewed as detrimental by some participants.

Analysis undertaken in regard to KeQ suggests there are some underlying motivators for attendance; the need for affiliation and the need for professional growth. When asked why they had attended, frequent responses included networking and education. There may be benefit for the AES in further exploring the human needs, which underpin membership and conference participation.

Exploring professional interest and motivations

Sub-Questions	Data Source
1.1. Why did participants attend the conference?	Data sources: Survey Q3 & Q Interview Q 2 & 13

Post-conference survey question 3 asked respondents to rate their level of professional satisfaction following the conference. The majority of responses were positive with 78 per cent of respondents choosing strongly agree or agree (Survey Q 3 – Figure 1). Professional interests were explored further by scrutinising survey and interview data for emergent themes related to professional interests.
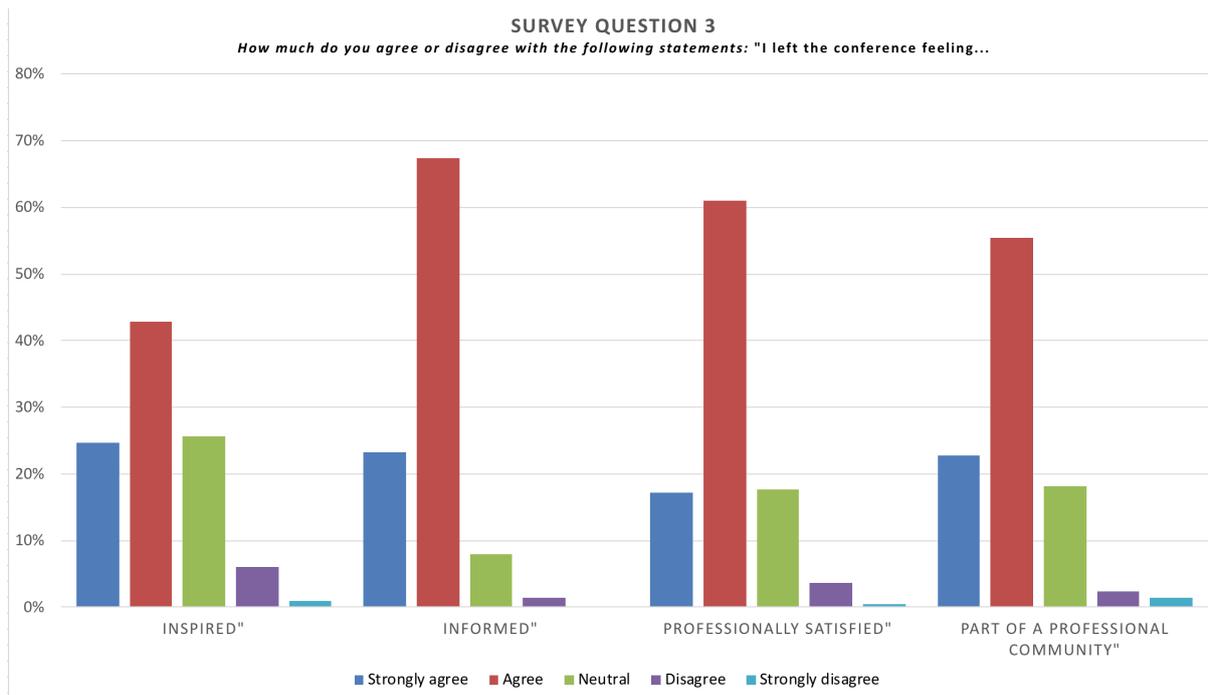
SURVEY QUESTION 3
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements: "I left the conference feeling...

Figure 1 - Survey Q 3

Interview participants were asked (Q2) to explain what had motivated them to attend the conference. The answers could be categorised as fitting into one of these themes;

1) commitment and engagement in the profession

2) knowledge acquisition and professional development

3) maintaining contact with what is happening in the field, and

4) networking.

> I'm now going to be responsible for the oversight of the monitoring and evaluation of a major investment that we've got coming into our organization. So I think it was an opportunity for me to sort of just touch base with the conversations that have happened in the evaluation space out there at the moment just so that I can and I guess what I'm doing is sucking out all the bits and pieces of lessons and gems and ideas that I think I can take and apply in the context of my project that I'll be overseeing the management.
>
> *Manager, Non-evaluator*

Knowledge was a frequently expressed motivator including expanding knowledge, acquiring new knowledge and learning about different approaches and what others were doing. Networking was a motivator but was mentioned less frequently than learning and knowledge development.

> "I need to stay abreast of the sector and what's happening in the sector and primarily I'm here for learning about different approaches and what others are doing. That's the primary reason I'm here."
>
> *Consultant, Advanced Evaluator*

Sub-Questions	Data Source
1.2. Was attendance perceived to be a good use of time and money? What factors influenced their answer?	Interview question 3, 4 & 13, survey question 5 & 6
1.3 What proportion of participant professional development budget is allocated to the conference?	

By scrutinising free text responses to survey question 8 – *Which of the AES 17 conference presentations were most memorable for you, and why?*, it became evident that presentations which were most positively received, were described using terms such as thought provoking, challenging, practical and interactive. The most valued aspects of the conference were explored in more detail at sub-question 1.4.

> *"The highlights for me were the plenary papers, and many of the more provocative presentations that 1) disrupted the norms of top-down evaluation and research strategy, and that 2) demonstrated novel ways of involving stakeholder in all phases of the evaluation"*
>
> *(online post conference survey respondent)*

It seemed plausible (although untested) that conference delegates seek to have two types of needs met; a need for professional growth and achievement and a need to be affiliated with others (to network and feel part of a professional community).

Exploring Perceptions of Value

These questions were intended to explore how delegates viewed the value gained from the time and money expended in attending the conference. When asked directly if attending the conference was of value, 96 per cent of survey respondents answered in the affirmative. Over half of the participants interviewed also agreed it had been a good investment in time and money. This was a strong result given that attending the conference represented, for many, a significant proportion of their annual professional development budget.

When asked if the conference 'represented value for money?', 64 per cent of survey respondents answered yes, 22 per cent were 'neutral' and 13 per cent said no. Question 5 was presented as a sliding scale, allowing respondents to indicate to what degree they felt the conference represented value for money. Overall most answers fell within the either positive or neutral range (Figure 2 – Survey Question 5).

Figure 2 - Survey Q5. Did the AES 17 International Conference represent value for money?

Question 13 of the post-conference survey provided respondents with an opportunity to add any comments in regard to this or future conferences.   A total of 94 responses were received with six respondents using this opportunity to raise issues about affordability.

The cost of the conference is always harsh for individuals (not corporate sponsored attendees), which limits funds for pre and post conference workshops. I've never been able to afford conference and a workshop - maybe I just need to earn more in a year! I understand the constraints but it has always been an issue for me. So I choose the conference, ignore the workshops and try to get additional learning from state CPD events.

Survey respondent

Interview responses

Just over half of those interviewed at the conference said the conference was a good investment in their professional development. Three interviewees said the conference was too expensive or described the cost as "off-putting".   The remainder withheld judgement or did not provide a response to this question. One respondent compared the cost of attending to that of an international holiday and another to the cost of attending the American Evaluation Association's conference:

Well I can't help but compare it to AEA, and I thought about the cost of coming here compared to going to that one this year and it wasn't much cheaper to stay in the country, so I think—I think the cost puts people off, especially if we're trying to attract people from Asian Pacific regions as well, because I think it's expensive as an Australian, but I work in the non-profit sector and so it's not like we're flush with cash either. So yeah I do think that cost is a little bit off-putting for some people, especially from developing countries.

Consultant, Advanced Evaluator

The conference was described as cost effective by a Melbourne based participant:

> "I don't find that this conference is an expensive conference to go to. Sometimes the workshop programs can cost as much as a three-day conference, so I find it pretty cost-effective. "

Time

When asked if attending the conference had been a good use of time, interview respondents were positive overall. Two participants noted that attending the conference afforded them an opportunity to take time from a busy schedule to reflect on their practice and another respondent said they were so enthused by the conference they had already decided they would attend the 2018 conference.

> So yeah here's been just a little bit of oxygen for me to think about stuff, so yeah it's been really good.
>
> Public Servant, Advanced Evaluator

Exploring the type of professional development and achievement that is valued

Sub-Questions	Data Source
1.4. What elements of the conference were most valued?	Data sources: Interview question 6 & 7, Survey quest 4, 8 , 9 & 13.
1.5. What elements of the conference were least valued?	

Most valued – keynotes, government and methods and skills sessions

There were 179 free text responses to Survey Q8, which asked respondents to list the most 'memorable' presentations. Over 90 responses highlighted the keynote (or plenary) presentations as being the most memorable. The language used to describe the keynote presentations was in the most positive and recalled for being thought provoking and challenging.

> The initial keynote was great, very thought provoking. It forced us to challenge ourselves as evaluators, think out of our evaluators box
>
> Survey respondent

> The plenary speakers - heard four of the five and they were brilliant - thank you so much. Sandra Matheson's opening plenary set the conference up beautifully by asking us to challenge our personal biases. Dugan Fraser was inspiring and practical: inclusion, dialogue, deliberation - already implementing that.
>
> Survey respondent

Approximately 30 of the free text survey responses recalled concurrent presentations that were memorable because they introduced new ideas and approaches that could be applied in evaluation practice. Examples of these comments include:

> *Duncan Rintoul & Alex Oo's session on cognitive bias - because it was interactive Liam Downing on creativity constraint - a bit more left field and ideas about looking at the potential positives of constraints in evaluation Ian Patrick on program theory and program logic - helped cement a few learnings Dugan's keynote - inspirational around idea of evaluation contributing to democracy Gill Westhorp's keynote - took away some practical ideas I could apply to my work Andy Rowe's keynote - alignment with my organisations interest in coupling of natural and social systems.*
>
> *Survey respondent*

> *I liked the session on design and evaluation - it opened my eyes as to possibilities in this area - between evaluators and programme designers*
>
> *Survey respondent*

Presentation by representatives of government agencies were also recalled frequently and positively in interviews and survey responses. Responses to survey question 8 included several positive mentions of presentations by representatives of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the New South Wales Department of Education. Nicholas Gruen's Evaluator General presentation was positively mentioned several times. It appears that these presentations were welcomed because they provided "…key insights into what other government departments are doing in this space, and their challenges and approaches".

Many survey and interview comments either applauded sessions that covered methodology and skill building or requested more of these types of sessions. These comments were supported by results from Survey Q.4 *Which of the following aspects of the conference would you like to have more or less of?* (Figure 3). Skill building, and methodology sessions was the only category that the majority of respondents wanted 'more of'.
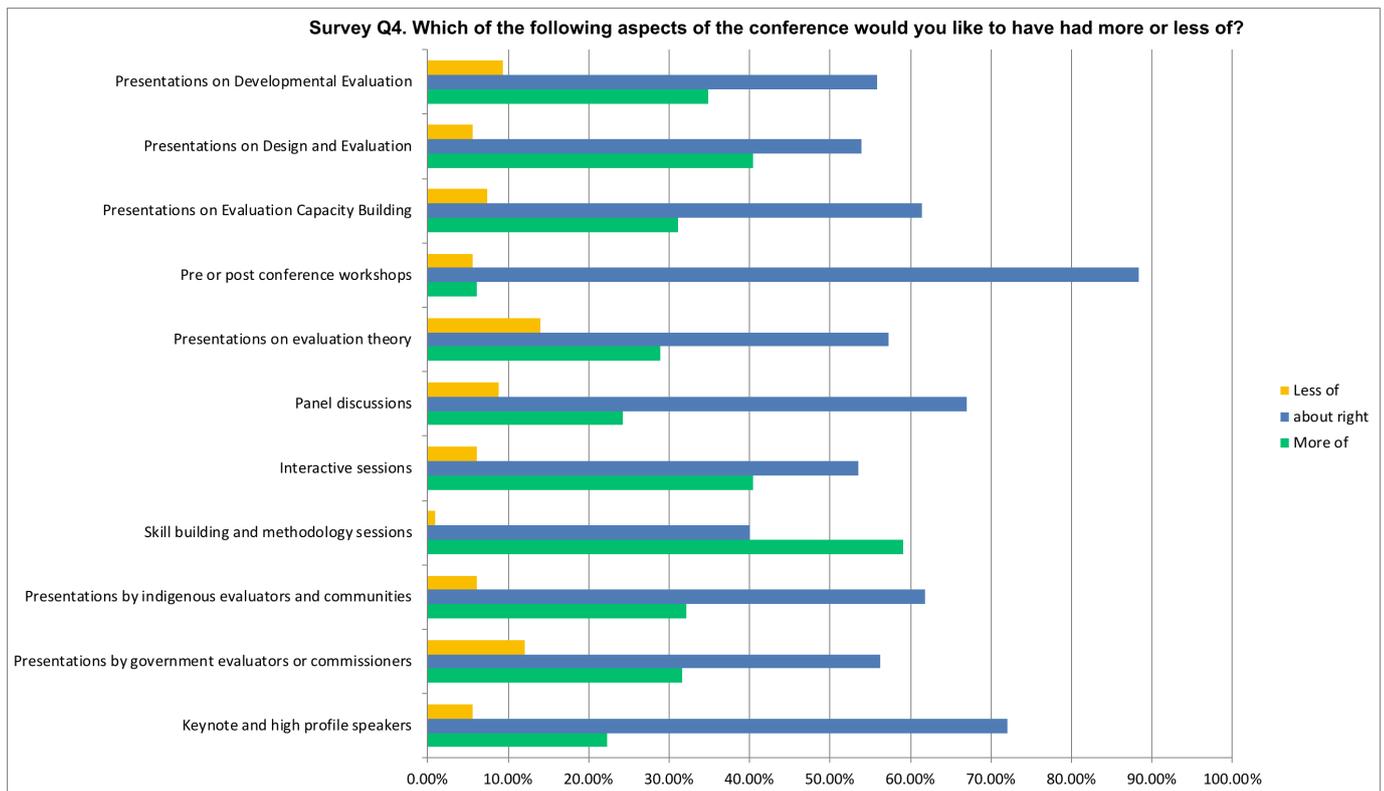

Figure 3 - Survey Q 4 - Which of the following would you like to have had more or less of?

Presentations that explored evaluation from an indigenous perspective were also highly valued and responses are discussed under KEQ 2 'cultural capacity' (page 22).

I preferred the presentations that were more practical in nature and focused on skills acquisition.

Survey respondent

Those that were less theoretical and more real world, pragmatic and therefore to me more useful. Those that looked at how evaluation interfaces with real world decision-making and organisational behaviour and discussed ways to strengthen impact of evaluation in these contexts. Those that were particularly memorable to me were Scott Bayley from DFAT discussing performance leadership and impact evaluation, Andrew Hawkins from ARTD discussing program logics, Martin Gould and Les Trudzik from ACIL Allen talking about how to present evaluation findings when not conclusive and Joanna Farmer Caroline Tomiczek from Urbis discussing evaluability

Survey respondent

Least valued - lecture format and short presentations

Negative statements from the same survey were also examined and revealed that didactic presentations were some of the least valuable aspects of the conference.

'just sit and listen and learn rather than share experiences...Not every session, the design thinking sessions not so much, but just even in the half hour, 25 minutes sort of presentation it's just, it's a straight up presentation right, and it feels like there's a disconnected from the point they're trying to convey…"
Survey respondent

The format of the Gala dinner was mentioned by three individuals in response to this question. All three mentioned that they did not value the speeches over dinner, preferring the emphasis be placed on networking.

"Quite frankly the most useless thing is actually most of the speeches last night at the dinner…If you're going to have another session, extend the day, don't work in the middle of a dinner."
Survey respondent

The survey did not include a question that directly asked respondents to identify the 'least valuable' aspect of the conference. However, it is possible to identify what aspects of the conference dissatisfied respondents from free text sections of Survey Q9 & 13. There was one primary theme which emerged and that was dissatisfaction with the length of the concurrent sessions. There were approximately 30 mentions that the time allocated for concurrent sessions was too short. This resulted in sessions being rushed, issues not being explored in detail and presenters becoming flustered.

30 minutes is too short for a presenter to really convey their messages clearly. Some of these shorter sessions were far too rushed with presenters hurrying through their material to quickly and therefore not covering some important information that would have helped the audience to better appreciate the presentation.

Survey respondent

It'd be good to have sessions that were longer to really dig deeper into the content. There were a few 'misses' for me, where I left the session because the presentation quality was not OK.

Survey respondent

In direct contrast to the 'most valued' presentation style, several survey respondents raised the issue with traditional 'chalk and talk' formats:

I don't understand the speakers who, every year, get up there and read directly from a paper. Why bother presenting your work in person if you are just going to read a paper that could be sent out to anyone to read themselves? Your role as a speaker is to present highlights from your knowledge and engage the audience by speaking directly to them. AES guidance for conference speakers should specifically encourage this.

Survey Respondent

The desire to move away from this format is also reflected in the responses to Survey Q4 (figure x) where over 40% of respondents state they would like to see 'more of' interactive sessions.

Exploring engagement, networking and affiliation

Sub-Questions	Data Source
1.6. Did the format of the conference enable and promote engagement and discussion?	Data sources: Interview questions 8 & 10, Survey Questions 3, 10 & 12.
1.8. Did the conference facilitate new professional partnerships or networks?	

The 2017 organising committee had set out to deliver a conference that promoted engagement and discussion. They selected a provocative theme and recruited high profile keynote speakers. In addition, social engagement was promoted through events such as the newcomers breakfast and the gala dinner. Overall, the interview and survey data suggests that the conference did promote engagement and discussion and supported the development of new professional partnerships.

Just under half of those interviewed immediately agreed the format helped to promote discussion and engagement. Those who didn't immediately respond in the affirmative reflected on limitations but were not altogether negative. In two interviews, the keynotes were identified as having instigated discussion among delegates:

> *"Yeah, I think its been quite well-done, I think its been systematically done. I don't know what was going on in the background but I certainly feel that the keynote speakers have set up that days kind of dialogue in a way…" (Consultant, Vic).*

The interactive sessions were acknowledged a number of times for generating discussion, while the theatre style rooms were noted a couple of times as a barrier. Almost three quarters of the interview respondents said they had built or were hoping to build new professional networks and survey results seemed to support the interview findings. When asked if they left the conference feeling they were members of a professional community, almost 80 per cent of said they strongly agreed or agreed (see Figure 3).

Conference theme

The use of the conference theme 'Evaluation Capital' was intended to provide a theoretical frame to the conference while also acknowledging the conference place in the Australian capital city. The data suggests that the theme was viewed with some scepticism by participants. Survey question 10 (see figure 4), asked respondents to what extent did the conference 'stimulate discussion and engagement' 'help to focus presentations', 'inspired new thinking', and 'reflected the interest of the profession'. Almost 60 per cent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the theme had stimulated discussion and engagement. This was the strongest result for survey question 10. A significant proportion of respondents were neutral (or negative) regarding 'inspired new thinking' (55 per cent) and 'reflected the interest of the profession' (50 per cent).
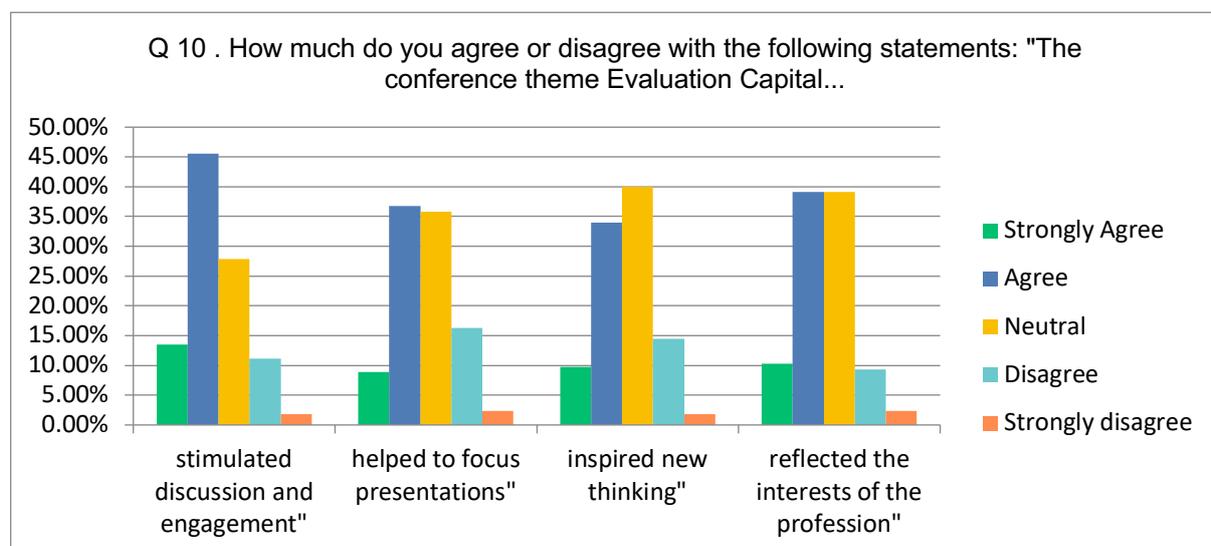

Figure 4 - Survey question 10

The conference theme was also raised in free text responses to on-line survey questions 9 and 13.

> *Please don't have such a strong theme that squeezes the content too tightly into a particular worldview or agenda. I don't think the conference committee planned the 'capital' theme to be so pervasive, and skewing people's content and vocabulary to fit the theme. But it is a risk when you with a theme, it can become an accidental frame which excludes other important ideas. (Q13)*
>
> *The use of 'capital' as a theme I think limited presentations, and made them far more uninteresting as they tried to shoehorn capital so they could get the presentation up.(Q9)*

Themes were raised in four of the interviews in response to question 8. One respondent said the themes had 'hit the nail on the head', another said 'yeah I think they were useful'. In contrast, the theme was described as 'my main beef' and 'a bit pretentious'. Another spoke positively about the use of the theme when applied as an analogy to support evaluation capacity building.

Exploring influence on profession and practice

Sub-Questions	Data Source
1.7. Did the conference inspire the application or sharing of new insights or methods?	Data sources: Interview question 9, survey question 12

The interview and survey data suggest that respondents were willing and enthusiastic about sharing evaluation concepts with colleagues and clients. Most people interviewed reflected on aspects of the conference that they would share with others or incorporate into their work. Keynotes were cited in five interviews as the source of new ideas including evaluation and social inclusion (Dugan Fraser), working with traumatised communities (Richard Weston) and environmental (Andy Rowe). The intention to take back specific ideas or approaches was mentioned by five people during interviews. Several concurrent sessions were mentioned including program logic and theory of change, evaluation capacity building, impact evaluation, developmental evaluation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander approaches and design and evaluation. Some indicated that the conference made them reflect on their own practice and profession.

> *"I will be thinking about how can I share some of this information to add value to the work what we are doing in my space in higher education" .*
>
> *"I'm sort of going to go back with the notion of a bit of an Evaluation strategy not to evaluate the program but think about how we should embed it into our organization and into our partner arrangements that we have."*

Survey data

65 per cent of respondents selected 'yes' to survey question 12 - *Did you learn about any evaluation related concepts at the conference that you've since shared with colleagues or clients?* Over 100 respondents opted to provide free text descriptions of what they had shared. The concepts which were most frequently mentioned included those that had been presented by keynote speakers, including intergenerational trauma, the democratisation of evaluation, speaking truth to the powerless, sustainability and realist evaluation. Other presentations mentioned in the survey include stakeholder inclusion, government presentations and approaches, capacity building and evaluation capital, theory-based presentations and evaluation and design.

Some respondents stated how they had shared the findings, for example:

> *"I've written a briefing note to our executive director with some notes about how we could improve our departments processes to support good quality evaluations. And I've emailed colleagues about stepping up our roles"*

Others had made presentations to colleagues or summarised keynote presentations and sent them to colleagues. One respondent noted that the conference had

> *Stimulated lots of discussion in our team about emerging ideas, new reflections on established ideas and how we might respond.*

Key Evaluation Question 2
Did the conference satisfy the strategic interests of the AES Board?

Summary of findings

The AES 17 conference successfully aligned and supported many of the AES strategic priorities.

Board members recognised that the conference provided an opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to developing **cultural capacity** of the organisation, and evaluators. In response, survey and interview respondents applauded the indigenous content of the conference and also identified cultural barriers that remain in place for indigenous evaluators.

The conference also provided an opportunity to demonstrate the AES's ability to deliver a **professional** conference and to **influence evaluation** and evaluative thinking in Canberra. The Board recognised the organising committee had used the proximity to senior bureaucrats as an opportunity to further the influence of the AES. The sharing of new insights and methods by participants also demonstrated a degree of influence emerging from the conference through the expanded knowledge of participants.

The conference generated a profit for the AES supporting the strategic priority of **organisational stability**. The **relevance** of the organisation (value proposition) seems to be immediately supported by positive participant perceptions of value reported earlier (see sub-questions 1.2 & 1.3). Perceptions of value may be undermined by competitive offerings by other professional bodies and education providers. In addition, an economic down-turn may undermine the willingness for some participants and / or their employers to invest a significant proportion of their professional development budget to attending the conference.

Board members recognise there is a need to expand beyond traditional conference formats to preserve and sustain relevance. Navigating the balance between risk taking (trialling new formats) and organisational stability will require stewardship by the AES Board, a challenge they seem to have already recognised and accepted.

Exploring alignment and contribution with the AES Strategic Goals

AES Strategic Goals	Data Source
Cultural Capacity – Strengthen and build Indigenous and non-indigenous capacity in culturally safe evaluation theory, practice and use.	Board member interviews x 3, at-conference interviews and Survey Q7 & Q8.
Influence – promote the use of evaluation and evaluative thinking by agencies and organisations.	
Relevance – Strengthen the value proposition of AES membership.	
Professionalisation – strengthen the capacity and professionalism of the evaluation sector.	
Organisational stability – Maintain good governance and broaden our revenue base.	

The conference's contribution to the AES strategic priorities 2016-2019 were used as the focus for KEQ Two. These questions were included to establish the conference's contribution and alignment with the AES broader goals and objects. To answer KEQ Two, data collected for KEQ One is used, along with data from three AES Board member interviews.

Cultural capacity

Strengthen and build Indigenous and non-indigenous capacity in culturally safe evaluation theory, practice and use

Board member interviews revealed that the conference provides an opportunity to reinforce the importance of cultural capacity and culturally safe evaluation. Participant interview and survey responses appear to support and endorse the manifestation of this in the conference program.

Board members were the only participants to be asked directly about cultural capacity, and this was within the context of the strategic interest of the AES Board. Interview participants and survey respondents frequently cited Indigenous perspectives as some of the most highly valued presentations. The keynote presentation regarding inter-generational trauma and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities was frequently mentioned as a memorable presentation. The Welcome to Country was mentioned by many as a valuable presentation and was described by one participant as "…the most heartfelt and genuine Welcome to Country that I've ever heard".

There were approximately 20 or so comments by survey respondents applauding the presentations on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous perspectives. These resonated with respondents for several reasons including the presentation style, the presentation of new ideas and for highlighting cultural divide. One survey respondent shared the following experience of the Evaluation and the Indigenous voice presentation:

"I was blown away by this session, and it brought up a lot of emotions. I think we need to work a lot harder at providing opportunities for interaction and conversations on an equal footing because for many of us, we never have this and it passes us by in our city lives. It doesn't come naturally at all due to the environment we function in. I was struck by how alternative world views from Indigenous people, particularly from remote areas can help us completely rethink our own lives, work and our own approaches to evaluation".

Survey respondent

One at-conference interview participant who identified themselves as Aboriginal said they were pleased to see the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content, singling out Richard Weston's keynote presentation and the presentation from the East Arnhem Land community members. One of the AES Board members who is also Aboriginal and spoke positively about the welcome to country and acknowledgement of traditional owners throughout the concurrent and plenary sessions. Another AES Board member noted that by asking all presenters to do an acknowledgement of country sends a clear message to the membership and those in attendance to see the Board are serious about cultural capacity building. It was revealed that in previous years there had been concern raised about some members attitudes toward Aboriginal members. "I think the conference is also really important for the leaders to push back when behaviour isn't what we would expect".

In speaking about cultural capacity, a board member acknowledged a shift in cultural capacity 'oh between one and ten, I suppose when I look, if you consider the base line I suppose it would have been about a five when I first started but now I reckon they're up around a seven or an eight… There's still a lot of work to go….".

The need to continue work on cultural capacity was also mentioned by survey respondents. One singled out access to the conference support package and the fact that is was biased against some Indigenous communities who do not have access to computers. Another mentioned that Indigenous-led presentations should not be constrained by PowerPoint and lectern delivery formats.

An evaluator from PNG was interviewed and expressed a degree of being overwhelmed at the technical nature of the sessions they had attended. The most valuable aspects of the conference for them had been the opportunity to share experience with evaluators in similar circumstances. An AES board member interviewed suggested that while there were increasing numbers of Indigenous grant recipients, the nature of the conference material may not be suitable. This was noted as an area for further development.

Some respondents said they found the presentations in regard to evaluation and Indigenous communities were least valuable, explaining that their work did not involve working with these communities.

Influence and professionalisation

Influence – *promote the use of evaluation and evaluative thinking by agencies and organisations.*

Professionalisation – *strengthen the capacity and professionalism of the evaluation sector.*

The Canberra based conference provided an opportunity for the organising committee to showcase the AES's commitment to influencing evaluation and evaluative thinking. This was mentioned during interviews with AES board members who also noted that the conference demonstrated the AES's ability to deliver a professional conference with high profile speakers and provocative presentations. The members of the Canberra based committee were acknowledged by the board for being strategic and seeking out the participation of key government agencies and commissioners. Many of the presentations by key government representatives were also applauded by participants as 'most valued' presentations (see sub-question 1.4, page 16).

The Board also acknowledged the work of the AES staff in organising and presenting a professional conference. This view was supported by survey respondents (Q7) who were also largely satisfied by the registration, venue and other aspects of conference arrangements (see figure 5).
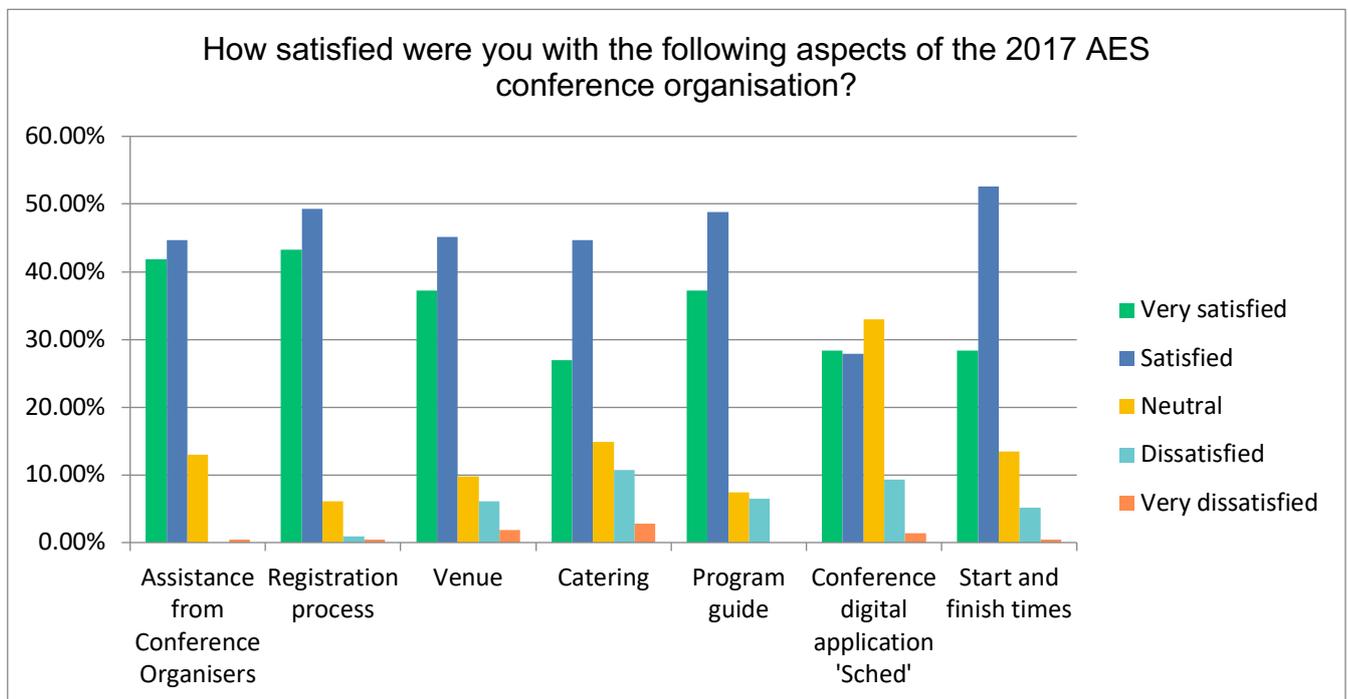

Figure 5 – Conference organisation

Sub-question 1.7 (page 20) demonstrates that there was significant sharing of conference experiences and learnings by survey respondents. Interview subjects also expressed intent to share new insights or lessons resulting from the conference.

Relevance and organisational Stability

Relevance – Strengthen the value proposition of AES membership.

Organisational stability – Maintain good governance and broaden our revenue base.

Interviews with Board members revealed strong alignment between the conference and the strategic priorities of relevance and organisational stability. The strong satisfaction level reported by participants and the profit generated indicate the conference has been a financial success for the AES. In the longer term, the relevance of the conference and the challenge to sustain and strengthen the value proposition represents a strategic challenge.

In regard to relevance, one AES board member expressed a desire to better understand and meet the needs of the 50 per cent of conference participants who have not previously attended an AES conference. "I'm not sure we're meeting that need… so that's the sort of keeping new members engaged and whether they'll come back…So maybe that's one area to strengthen". Board members recognised that there is more work to do "…understand more what people want to get out of the society and the conference. " It was noted that more seasoned evaluators are seeking strong keynote presentations and 'something new'. The question was raised as to whether or not in five or ten years people would still want to go to a conference, or choose an alternative approach to their professional development investment. This was raised as an issue for consideration.

Two board members expressed a desire to try different approaches, including introducing more interactive sessions to the conference and take more risks. Moving away from the 'talk and chalk' presentation format was also raised by a number of participants (see sub-question 1.5, page 16). Taking risks with the conference format was difficult when it was also a significant contributor toward organisational stability. The conference had generated a strong profit for the AES. Sheepherding alternative approaches while maintaining profitability is likely to be a significant challenge for future conference organising committees.

Annexes

Attachment 1   Evaluation and data collection plan

Key Evaluation Questions	Sub-questions	Purpose	Data collection method
1. Did the conference satisfy the professional interests of conference delegates?	1.1. Why did participants attend the conference?	To identify participant motivating factors	Post-conference survey Semi-structured interview Conference registration data (demographics)
	1.2. Was attendance perceived to be a good use of time and money? What factors influenced their answer?	Identify perceived value and opportunity cost of attending the conference	
	1.3. What proportion of participant professional development budget is allocated to the conference?		
	1.4. What elements of the conference were most valued?	To support learning for future conference and provide a relative measure against previous years	Post-conference survey Semi-structured interviews Smart phone app 'Sched' data collected post session. Conference registration data (demographics)
	1.5. What elements of the conference were least valued?		
	1.6. Did the format of the conference enable and promote engagement and discussion?	Identify if the intent of the organizing committee to promote better engagement has been achieved.	Participant observation Post-conference survey Semi-structured interviews Conference registration data (demographics)
	1.7. Did the conference inspire the application or sharing of new insights or methods?	To support learning for future conference and provide a relative measure against previous years.	Post-conference survey Conference registration data (demographics)
	1.8. Did the conference facilitate new professional partnerships or networks?	Identify if the intent of the organizing committee to promote better engagement and social calendar has been achieved.	Semi-structured interviews Post-conference survey Conference registration data (demographics)
2. Did the conference satisfy the strategic interest of the AES Board?	1.9. Did the conference contribute to the AES strategic goals of influence, relevance, professionalization and organizational stability?	Identify if the conference is support the AES's strategic goals	Semi-structured interviews with Board members and Executive Officer.

Data collection

	Data collection tool	Timing	Sampling	Ethical issues	Logistics
Semi-structured interviews (participants)	Interview guide, interview template (for non-recorded interviews), smart phone recorder, and participant consent documents.	Throughout conference	Convenience sampling Target of five interviews per day (=15 total)	Must provide participants with participant statement: - Include purpose of interviews - Disclose how the data will be used - Gain consent to record interview - Secure data - Ensure no identifying data is used Ensure interviews are relatively short (10 mins) to respect participant time.	Engage AES representatives to assist to recruit subjects and disseminate information regarding the interviews.
Semi-structured interviews (Board members)	Interview guide, interview template (for non-recorded interviews), smart phone recorder and participant consent documents.	One month after conference when data is analyzed to support informed discussion	Key informant interviews (three Board members – and EO)	Must provide participants with participant statement: - Include purpose of interviews - Secure data - Disclose how the data will be used - Gain consent to record interview Ensure interviews don't exceed 30 minutes.	Engage AES Board members through EO – consider scheduling to align with other AES related work.
Post-session feedback	Conference smart phone application 'Sched' offers post-	Throughout conference	Opt-in and self-selected sampling	Ensure 'Sched' includes appropriate notifications of the	Ensure presenters remind participants to rate sessions.

	session evaluation options: Happy, neutral, not happy. Conference registration data (demographics)			collection and use of the data.	
Post-conference on-line survey	Survey-monkey adapted from previous AES conference surveys Conference registration data (demographics)	Two weeks post-conference	All registered participants	Prepare covering email and survey preamble. Include statement regarding how information will be used. Keep survey short to respect participants time. (Incorporate workshop attendance).	Liaise with AES Executive Officer to align timing appropriately.
Participant observation	Undertake observations - "Observer-as-Participant role".	Throughout conference	Observations to be undertaken at all plenary sessions and two sessions from each stream. (Total ten sessions and five plenary sessions)	Advise session chair to notify participants of observations.	Develop and produce observation protocol and collection tools.

Attachment 2   List of codes extracted from Nvivo

Welcome to country
Venue
Conference themes
Sophistication
Session length
Selection of papers
Realist evaluation
Projection quality
Program
Problem with survey
Presentation skills
Practical ad theoretical
Panels
Networking
Negative comments
Methodology
Keynotes
Indigenous and culture
Government presentations
Food
Expectations of evaluation
Dinner speeches
Dinner
Developmental evaluation
Design
Debate
Conference program
Cognitive bias
Challenging
Capacity building
AGM
Ideas and approaches for practice
Promote discussion and engagement
Least valuable
Most valuable
Investment in professional development
Proportion of professional development budget
Investment in time
Motivation
Suggestions for 2018
Professional links and networks
Impressions of conference

Predetermined –
interview guide
questions

Attachment 3   Interview guide and plain English statement

Australasian Evaluation Society 2017 International Evaluation Conference

Conference Delegate Interview guide

Day	September 2017	Time Start		Time Finish	
Questions					
Can you describe your impressions of the AES 2017 conference so far?					
Can you explain what motivated you to attend the conference? (1.1)					
Do you think that attending the conference has been a good use of your time? Why? (1.2)					
Thinking about the amount of money you would normally spend on evaluation related professional development each year, what proportion of this goes toward the attending the evaluation conference? (1.3)					
Do you think attending the conference has been good investment in your professional development? Why? (1.2)					
Which elements of the conference are you finding most valuable? (1.4)				Element prompts: • The theme or sub-themes (streams) • Networking • Camaraderie • Interaction at the sessions • New insights or approaches • Keynotes • Venue • Food • Exhibit	
Which elements of the conference are you finding least valuable? (1.5)					
Has the conference format helped to promote discussion and engagement? Why? (1.6)					
Have you been exposed to any ideas or approaches at the conference that you think you'll share with others or incorporate into your own work? Examples? (1.7)					
Have you established any new professional links or networks so far? Do you think you will communicate with them on your return? Why? (1.8)					
Thinking about your experience at the conference so far, *What do you think the AES could do to make a better conference in 2018?*				Refer element prompts above, and: • Different format • Partnerships or collaborations	
Profile					
Occupation					
State / Country			AES Member?	Y	N
			Number of years of membership?		
Presenter 2017	Y	N	Do you identify as indigenous?	Y	N
Attended previous conference	Y	N	Year/s		
Level of expertise	Expert	Advanced	Intermediate Novice	No Background	

Interview #_____

Australasian Evaluation Society 2017 International Evaluation Conference

Evaluation Interviews – Participant Information Sheet

Introduction

Hello and thank you for taking the time to be interviewed as part of the evaluation of the 2017 AES International Evaluation Conference. The AES is committed to building evaluation capital and have engaged myself, Jen Thompson, to undertake an evaluation of this conference. This assignment is the subject of my 'Capstone' subject for the Masters of Program Evaluation with the University of Melbourne. I look forward to engaging with you during the conference.

Key Evaluation Questions

The conference evaluation will be focussed on answering two questions; Did the conference satisfy the professional interests of conference delegates? Did the conference satisfy the strategic interests of the AES Board?

Data collection

Short, semi-structured interviews are an important part of the conference evaluation methodology. Willing delegates will be interviewed throughout the conference. A web-based post-conference survey will also be sent to all delegates for completion. Participant observation will also be undertaken at selected conference workshops. These data collection activities will be complemented by the feedback that delegates provide throughout the conference via the Sched web portal or mobile website **https://aes17.sched.com/mobile.**

After the conference, semi-structured interviews will be undertaken with members of the AES Board.

Reporting the findings

The findings from this evaluation will support the AES shape the 2018 Conference. An evaluation report will be produced for use by the Board, the Conference Organising Committee and may be published by the AES for access by members and other interested parties. A separate but related report will also be submitted to the University of Melbourne to satisfy the requirements of the Capstone subject. The AES may use aspects of these evaluation reports in related communications materials.

Interview Participation

Participation in the interviews and survey is voluntary. Myself or another AES representative will conduct the interviews that will take approximately ten minutes of your time. With your consent, the interviews will be recorded using a smart phone or a computer based voice recording application. If you would prefer not to be recorded please advise myself or the other interviewers and we can take notes.

Use of interview content

The information you provide during the interview is confidential. Your name, the organisation you are representing and your role will not be reported. Some quotes captured during the interviews may be used in the evaluation report. These will not be attributed to an individual, but may be attributed to a general description of characteristics such as reason for attending the conference, town or country of residence and the number of conferences attended.

You are under no obligation to participate in an interview.

Option to withdraw

You can ask that the interview be stopped at any stage and you are not obliged to answer all of the questions.

If you participate in an interview and then wish to withdraw your consent, you may do so by contacting either the AES or myself. Every attempt will be made to remove any references to your interview but once reports are published, distributed reports or related communications cannot be amended.

Further information

If you have any concerns regarding the interviews or the Evaluation, I am available by telephone on M: 0425 776 291 or by email at jenannethompson@gmail.com. You are also welcome to raise any concerns or seek further information from the AES directly.

Australasian Evaluation Society 2017 International Evaluation Conference

Evaluation Interviews - Participant Consent Form

I, _____ agree to participate in an interview to contribute to the evaluation of the AES 2017 International Evaluation Conference. I have read the *Evaluation Interviews - Participant Information Sheet* and understand that comments made during the interview may be used, either directly, or in part, in the evaluation reports and related communications. I consent based on the understanding that my name, the organisation that I represent and my role will be excluded from any reporting associated with the evaluation of the conference.

Please confirm the nature of your participation:

☐   I agree to participate in an interview to contribute to the evaluation of the 2017 AES International Conference

☐   I agree to an audio-recording of this interview.

Signed	
Date	
Interviewer name	
Interview time	
Interview date	____ September 2017

Interview #_____

Attachment 4   On-line Survey tool

2017 AES Conference - survey of conference participants

Thank you for joining us in Canberra for the AES 2017 International Evaluation Conference and for taking the time to complete the post-conference survey. Results from this survey will be used to inform the 2017 conference evaluation and the planning of the 2018 conference.

We appreciate that you are busy and that the Conference may seem like a life-time ago, but we invite you to take the next ten minutes to cast your mind back and share your experience with us.

In addition to capturing your views on the conference, we do ask a few demographic questions, including the type of work you do, where you reside, your membership status and your level of expertise as an evaluator. Please be reassured that your answers will be de-identified.
If you have any questions or concerns you can contact us at evaluation@aes.asn.au.

So without further ado, let's get to the questions.

Yours truly
AES 2017 evaluator.

* 1. In what capacity did you attend the AES17 Conference? (you can choose more than one option if relevant)

- [ ] I was a conference participant
- [ ] I was a presenter
- [ ] I was an exhibitor
- [ ] I was an organiser
- [ ] I was a pre or post conference workshop attendee

* 2. Overall, did you find the AES17 Conference to be valuable?

- ◯ Yes, I did find the conference valuable
- ◯ Neither valuable or not valuable
- ◯ No, I did not find the conference valuable

1

* 3. How much do you **agree** or **disagree** with the following statements:

"I left the conference feeling...

|	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
inspired"	○	○	○	○	○
informed"	○	○	○	○	○
professionally satisfied"	○	○	○	○	○
part of a professional community"	○	○	○	○	○

* 4. Which of the following aspects of the conference would you like to have had **more** or **less** of?

	More of	about right	**Less of**
Keynote and high profile speakers	○	○	○
Presentations by government evaluators or commissioners	○	○	○
Presentations by indigenous evaluators and communities	○	○	○
Skill building and methodology sessions	○	○	○
Interactive sessions	○	○	○
Panel discussions	○	○	○
Presentations on evaluation theory	○	○	○
Pre or post conference workshops	○	○	○
Presentations on Evaluation Capacity Building	○	○	○
Presentations on Design and Evaluation	○	○	○
Presentations on Developmental Evaluation	○	○	○

Please use this section to add anything we may have missed in the above list, including any specific topics you'd like to see **more** or **less** of.
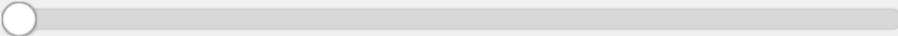
2

* 5. Did the AES 17 International Conference represent value for money?

Yes	Neutral	No	
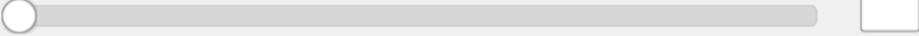
* 6. What percentage (approximately) of your annual professional development budget went toward attending the conference?

0	50	100

* 7. How satisfied were you with the following aspects of the 2017 AES conference **organisation**?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Assistance from Conference Organisers	○	○	○	○	○
Registration process	○	○	○	○	○
Venue	○	○	○	○	○
Catering	○	○	○	○	○
Program guide	○	○	○	○	○
Conference digital application 'Sched'	○	○	○	○	○
Start and finish times	○	○	○	○	○

Is there anything about the **conference organisation** you'd like to add?

8. Which of the AES17 conference presentations were most memorable for you, and why?

3

* 9. How satisfied were you with the following aspects of the AES17 conference **presentations**?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Keynote speakers	○	○	○	○	○
Breadth of presentations	○	○	○	○	○
Quality of presentations	○	○	○	○	○
Length of presentations	○	○	○	○	○

Is there anything about the **conference presentations** that you'd like to add?

* 10. How much do you **agree** or **disagree** with the following statements:

*"The conference theme **Evaluation Capital...***

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
stimulated discussion and engagement"	○	○	○	○	○
helped to focus presentations"	○	○	○	○	○
inspired new thinking"	○	○	○	○	○
reflected the interests of the profession"	○	○	○	○	○

4

* 11. How satisfied were you with the following **social** aspects of the AES17 conference?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Gala Dinner	○	○	○	○	○
Welcome drinks	○	○	○	○	○
Newcomers breakfast	○	○	○	○	○
Other optional social activities	○	○	○	○	○
Friendliness of other participants	○	○	○	○	○
Friendliness of venue staff	○	○	○	○	○

Is there anything about the **social aspects** of the conference you'd like to add?

* 12. Did you learn about any evaluation related concepts at the conference that you've since shared with colleagues or clients?

○ Yes

○ No

If yes, please describe:

13. Now its free text time! Please add any additional comments about the 2017 conference or about future conferences.

14. If you were granted **three wishes** by the conference genie, what would you like to see in the AES 2018 Evaluation Conference?

Wish 1

Wish 2

Wish 3

5

* 15. How do you describe your level of expertise in evaluation?

( ) No background   ( ) Advanced

( ) Novice   ( ) Expert

( ) Intermediate

Phew... we are nearly done. Now just some information about the most important person here. You!

* 16. What sector do you work in most of the time?

( ) Community or not for profit sector   ( ) Government - Federal

( ) Private sector / consultancy   ( ) Government - State or Local

( ) University (academic, student and non-academic staff)

( ) Other (please specify)

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* 17. At present, what is your main involvement in evaluation?

( ) Commissioning or contracting out evaluation projects   ( ) Teaching evaluation

( ) Reading / using evaluation reports and findings   ( ) Designing or conducting evaluations

( ) Running programs or projects that get evaluated by others ( ) Contributing data or information to evaluations

( ) Studying or learning about evaluation   ( ) None, no current involvement with evaluation

* 18. Where do you currently reside?

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* 19. How many AES Conferences have you attended?

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* 20. Are you a member of the AES?

( ) Yes, individual membership

( ) Yes, organisational membership

( ) No, but I am considering it

( ) Not interested

6

* 21. How was your attendance at the conference funded?

◯ Employer funded

◯ Self funded

◯ Other (please add comments below)

Other (please specify)

[   ]

7

Attachment 5   Board Member interview guide and consent form

Australasian Evaluation Society 2017 International Evaluation Conference

Evaluation Interviews – Board Member Participation Information Sheet

Dear AES Board member,

I am writing to you in regard to the evaluation of the 2017 AES International Evaluation Conference. This evaluation is the project I've chosen for my Capstone as part of the Master of Evaluation with Melbourne University.

I have to date completed 20 delegate interviews (at the conference) and distributed a post-conference survey. In addition, I have planned to interview three members of the AES Board. The interview questions are included in the following pages for your information.

Reporting

The findings form this evaluation will support the AES shape the 2018 Conference. An evaluation report will be produced for use by the Board, the Conference Organising Committee and may be published by the AES for access by members and other interested parties. A separate but related report will also be submitted to the University of Melbourne to satisfy the requirements of the Capstone subject. The AES may use aspects of these evaluation reports in related communication materials.

Interview Participation

Your participation in the Board interviews is voluntary. I will be conducting the interviews, which, with your consent will be recorded. If you prefer not to be recorded please let me know.

Identification

I will not use your name when reporting on the findings from the Board interview, however because there are only three board member interviews, it is possible that you will be identified. I will make every endeavour to ensure that any comments made are attributed only as 'AES Board member'.

Option to withdraw

If you participate in an interview and then wish to withdraw, you may do so by contacting either the AES Executive Officer or myself. Every attempt will be made to remove any references to your interview but once reports are published, distributed reports or related communications cannot be amended.

Further information

If you have any concerns regarding the interviews or the Evaluation, I am available by telephone on M: 0425 776 291 or by email at jenannethompson@gmail.com. You are also welcome to raise any concerns or seek further information from the AES directly.

Consent

To consent to this interview, please email me at jenannethompson@gmail.com and confirm you have read the above and are happy to participate and be recorded.

Australasian Evaluation Society 2017 International Evaluation Conference

Conference Delegate Interview guide

Day	October 2017	Time Start		Time Finish	

The views and perspectives of the Board members will provide insight and depth to the evaluation. There are two key evaluation questions, the second relates directly to the Board and the organisation's strategic objectives.

1. Did the conference satisfy the professional interests of conference delegates?

    and the second question, which is why I am speaking with you is;

2. Did the conference satisfy the strategic interest of the AES Board?

I'm really interested in understanding how you view the contribution of the annual conference in relationship to the organisation's greater purpose and strategic objectives.

With that in mind I'd first like to ask you about the conference itself.

Based on your experience and feedback you have received, would you describe the conference as a success?

Can you tell me what influenced your answer?

Do you think conference is beneficial to the AES as an organisation? And if yes, can you describe to me how it benefits the organisation.

	Prompts (strategic goals)
More specifically, how does this contribution relate to the AES Strategic Goals of….?	**Organisational stability** - Maintaining good governance and broaden our revenue base
	Cultural capacity - Strengthen and build indigenous and non-indigenous capacity in culturally safe evaluation theory, practice and use
	Professionalisation - Strengthen the capacity and professionalism of the evaluation sector
	Relevance - Strengthen the value proposition of AES membership
	Influence - Promote the use of evaluation and evaluative thinking by agencies and organisations.
What, if any, changes do want to see in regard to future conferences?	

Board Interview #1 / 2 /3