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Linking policy analysis and program evaluation: The Canberra syringe vending machine trial

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Policy analysis and program evaluation are two of the eight or so stages of the policy cycle model of public policy processes. The policy cycle model is generally portrayed as a number of stages from issues identification, to policy analysis, to decision-making, to program implementation and then on to program evaluation. The manifestations and contributions of evaluation are different at different stages of the cycle, with a useful conceptualisation being to differentiate between evaluation *for* policy, on the one hand, and evaluation *of* policy, on the other.

The differences between evaluation *for* policy and evaluation *of* policy are illustrated by evaluation's role in Canberra's 2005-2006 trial of Syringe Vending Machines. In this case the evaluator, an external contractor to a government instrumentality, was responsible for both conducting the initial policy analysis and then for evaluating the resulting program's implementation and outcomes, with the findings of the program evaluation feeding back into the policy cycle.

The contested issues of the 'independent evaluator', and of the desirability or otherwise of including recommendations in the findings of evaluations, are illustrated in this case. They have particular saliency where the same evaluator fills multiple roles in the policy cycle (including analysis for policy and analysis of policy), a familiar situation in small and under-resourced organisations in developing nations of the Asia-Pacific region.