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Establishing an internal government evaluation support unit

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In late 2005, the Victorian Department of Human Services Metropolitan Health and Aged Care Services Division commenced operation an Evaluation Support Unit. The aim of the unit was to improve the quality of information available for program management and policy-related decision-making. Approval for the Unit was based upon a perceived need for higher quality evaluation activities and a better connection between the outcomes of evaluation activities and the needs of different program areas. Models of internal consultancy and organisational change have facilitated the introduction, acceptance, and uptake of unit activities. Key activities undertaken by the Unit are discussed, emphasising the strategic and operational directions for internal development of policy and program evaluation. Methods of outcome monitoring are presented, outlining short and long-term indicators for effective change in the quality of evaluation activities undertaken within the Division. Implications for internal and external evaluators are presented to facilitate discussion.