



MONASH University
Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences

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Translating diverse forms of evidence: The Victorian experience

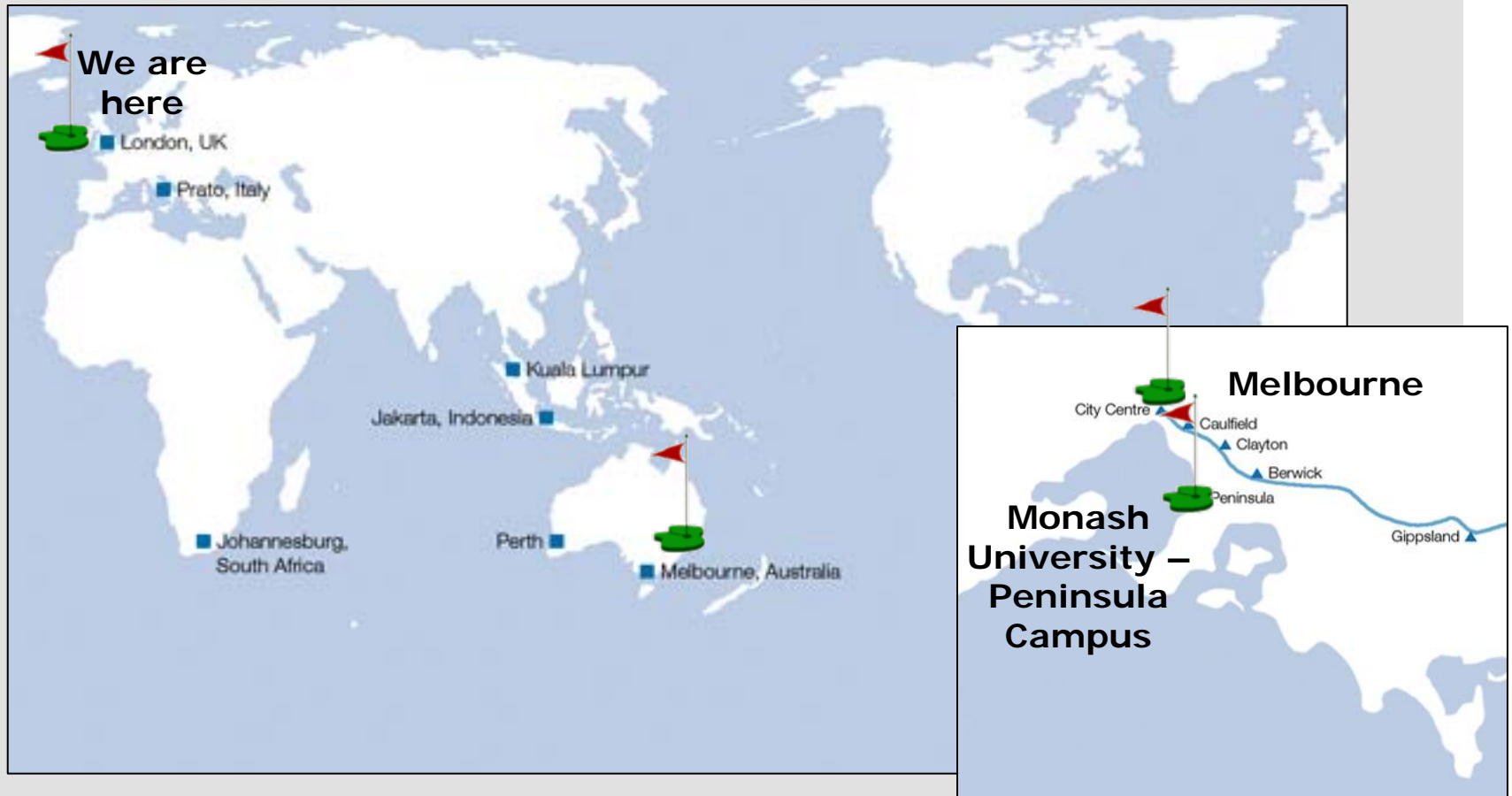
Travelogue...



**Melbourne
Australia**



Around the world...



Outline of presentation

- **Victorian policy context**
- **HIA in Victoria – the landscape**
- **Rationale for *'another'* evidence guide**
- **Developing the guide**
- **Lessons learnt**

Victorian policy context

- Before 1988, social model of health not apparent at any level of gov't
- 1988 - Amendment to State Health Act mandates Municipal Public Health Plans
- BUT traditional mindset prevails (roads, rates & rubbish...)
- Public health unit (State Gov't) eager to broaden role of local gov't in promoting health
 - Municipal public health planning framework
 - HIA?



HI A landscape in Victoria

- **Increased recognition of its use in a diverse range of sectors**
- **Recognition that it can promote evidence-informed decision-making**
 - ‘evidence’ remains a highly contested concept
 - valuing of evidence and the judgments that are made about using it to assist decision-making can be points of disagreement.
- **Collecting, collating and assessing the quality of evidence**
 - be time-consuming
 - an unfamiliar academic exercise
- **Local and state governments - demanding and pragmatic environments**

Rationale for evidence guide

Work undertaken recently has highlighted:

- The complexities of the contextual and operational conditions needed for HIA in Victoria
- Substantial challenges for Local Gov't staff on a daily basis
 - new ways of working inter-sectorally;
 - new styles of planning that require a broader understanding of health

Therefore:

Unique ways of supporting staff are required to enable health to be considered and planned for in policy making

Rationale for evidence guide

- **Identified barriers to positioning HIA in Victorian local gov't (Blau & Mahoney, 2005)**
 - Fear that HIA is time and resource intensive
 - Fear that staff don't have the skills
 - > Collecting and using evidence is too academic
 - Fear that staff don't know how to find evidence
 - > Only limited range of evidence, used only occasionally, by very few
 - > Can access only limited range of databases

Developing an evidence guide

Characteristics of evidence guide ... relevant to Victoria

- Short
- Simple language (no assumptions, no jargon)
- User friendly style
- Column format with text broken by charts and boxes, hints and advice
- Include case study
- Provide resources list
- Focus on evidence that is 'useful' for HIA

Developing an evidence guide

What is 'evidence' that is useful for HIA?

Avoid qualitative vs quantitative debates

Other excellent guides available



Developing an evidence guide

What is 'useful' evidence for HIA?

- Can influence Gov't decision-makers (policies, programs & projects) whose decisions are informed by:
 - Research
 - Local knowledge
 - Contextual information
 - Ideas & interests
 - Beliefs & values
 - Economics
 - Politics

HIA is both an art and a science

Developing an evidence guide

- **Pragmatic requirements of Gov't decision-makers**
 - Show there is a need for action
 - > It should be done
 - Show effective means of implementation
 - > It can be done
 - Show effectiveness
 - > It works
 - Show cost-effectiveness
 - > It is feasible and may even save money

Developing an evidence guide

Evidence that is useful for HIA

- Be clear about what you are searching for and why
- How to search for it
- Where to find it
- Who can assist
- Differences between different types and different levels of HIA

Developing an evidence guide

- **Pragmatic decision**

- Minimal resources available
 - > 0.3 staff member for 6 months
 - > 0.5 staff member
- Opportunity to trial evidence guide
 - > State Gov't project funding - 2 HIA demonstration projects
 - Local gov't staff
 - Regional public health teams
 - > State Gov't Project steering group members

Developing an evidence guide

- **Initial draft focused on different steps of HIA and use of evidence at each step**
 - Confronted complex issue of valuing and judging quality of quantitative evidence and qualitative evidence

Lessons learnt

- **Essential attributes of an 'evidence' guide in Victoria**
 - 'nuts and bolts about how to source and use evidence'
 - 'hands-on direction with reviewing the quality of evidence'
 - Examples populated...'so we can see how another search may have been done'
 - '...lose the jargon'

Copies of the evidence guide are available upon request!

Please email me:

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