As researchers we need to spend at least as much effort, time, and intellect to bridge the gap between policy research and policy change as we spend in generating the research findings themselves.

Thanks to C-MARC especially Peter Palamara and Prof Lynn Meuleners for the invitation.

Acknowledgments:
James Fetherston, Rina Cercarelli, Melanie Bettenay,
Other members of the Repeat Drink Driver’s working Group
Bridging the research-policy gap: Contributing to repeat drink driving countermeasures in WA

Simon Lenton  PhD MPsych(clin)

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Why I’m interested in this:

- I am a novice, not an expert
- Research evidence, evaluation and modelling are all important to policy change
- But they are not enough to produce change
- Evidence-based policy options need political actors to put them into action
- As researchers we need to do more to bridge the policy research – policy practice gap
- Researcher frustration ‘evidence ignored’
- Reflecting on our experience in research and policy change
- Began to explore some useful models from world of public policy and administration
What is ‘public policy’?

“Public policy is how politicians make a difference. Politicians are the elected decision makers with formal responsibility for complex, intricate subsystems of participants and players. Policy is the instrument of governance, the decisions that direct resources in one direction but not another. It is the outcome of the competition between ideas, interests and ideologies that impels our political system.”

(Althaus, Bridgman & Davis, 2007, p.5)

“the decisions taken by government officials—politicians and bureaucrats—in determining legislation, regulations and the allocation of program resources”  

(Ritter & Bammer, 2010)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREVENTION ACTIVITY</th>
<th>MECHANISMS OF ACTION</th>
<th>COMMUNITY LEVEL</th>
<th>CONTEXT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIPLOMACY</td>
<td>Treaties &amp; conventions</td>
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<td>TREATY NEGOTIATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>EXPERT ADVICE &amp; CONSULTANCY</td>
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<td>Health and welfare levels &amp; structures</td>
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<td>HEALTH PROMOTION</td>
<td>Taxes and excise</td>
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<td>Employment &amp; education levels</td>
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<td>PUBLIC EDUCATION</td>
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<td>SUPPORTING COMMUNITY ACTION</td>
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<td>SUPPORTING TREATMENT STAFF TO DO PREVENTION</td>
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<td>Outreach</td>
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<td>RESEARCH</td>
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<td>Word of mouth</td>
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<td>INTERACTION</td>
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<td>Materials:</td>
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<td>Immediate social &amp; Physical context</td>
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<td>Disposal</td>
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<td>Negotiations</td>
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(Lenton, 1996, 2005)
‘Evidence’ in the policy process

But first, a quote…

- Competing ‘evidence based’ policy alternatives
- ‘Research evidence’ only one small factor
- Academe is about evidence and argument
- Politics is about perceptions and bargaining
- Research evidence will be used or ignored as policy makers see fit
The Repeat Drink Driver’s study (2002)  
(Fetherston, Lenton & Cercarelli, 2002)

**Background**

- November 1999, following a string of serious drink driving accidents, a WA magistrate called for the revision of drink-driving sentencing options after having had no option but to jail four repeat, drink-driving offenders who already had outstanding fines (Gibson, 1999)
- Soon after, the State Government, through the Road Safety Council (RSC), asked the Task Force on Drink, Drugs and Driving (TFDDDD) to advise on increasing penalties for repeat, drink-driving offenders.
- The Task Force responded that the first step should be a study of repeat drink-driving so as to improve understanding of the individual and situational factors involved.
- In March 2000, in response to a call from the RSC, a proposal was submitted by two members (Lenton & Cercarelli) of the TFDDDD to conduct a study of repeat drink-driving.
The Repeat Drink Driver’s study (2002)  
(Fetherston, Lenton & Cercarelli, 2002)

The study commenced in April 2001 and involved three components:

- review of the international literature on drink-driving,
- analysis of data on repeat drink-drivers in WA,
- in-depth interviews with 40 repeat drink-drivers

The report concluded that there were no strong grounds for recommending harsher penalties for drink-driving.

**Made 21 Recommendations re improving existing and exploring new countermeasures.**

**The main ones being:**

- That an expert working group be established by government under the auspices of the TFDDD, in recognition that this was only one study,
- The working group should review the research and advise the RSC regarding its policy implications and the implementation of specific recommendations.

The working group should:

- be given a **finite time-frame** of 3-4 months to report;
- include an independent road safety expert from outside WA;
- be provided with adequate human resources to support its activities;
- include a number of specific stakeholder agencies from across and outside govt.
The Repeat Drink Driver’s study (2002)  
(Fetherston, Lenton & Cercarelli, 2002)

Recommendations re improving existing and exploring new countermeasures.

- While acknowledging the deterrent value of licence suspension in countering drink-driving amongst the majority of drivers, strategies aimed at repeat drink-drivers needed to consider the high rates of unlicensed driving in this group.
- Carrot and stick approach - Any strategies adopted should aim to keep these offenders operating within the law wherever possible in order to limit the incidence of unlicensed driving.
- The report also recommended that alcohol-interlock devices be introduced as an option for those offenders under licence suspension.
- Drink drivers of low income, who may not afford to have a interlock fitted, may be the group where the community would get the greatest road safety benefit if an interlock was installed. 
- To address this flexible options were recommended including waiving fines to offset the cost of installing and maintaining interlocks.
- As some 90% of repeat offenders had a serious alcohol problem, the report recommended that responses include an assessment and referral to alcohol treatment as appropriate.
- Policy issues regarding the difficulties associated with public transport and taxis for intoxicated patrons, and the role of security staff, were also raised.
Repeat drink driver’s project timeline

- 2001-02 study of Repeat Drink Drivers
- Consultations with key policy makers - strategies to progress into action
- Fetherston, Lenton & Cercarelli (2002) recommend working group established
- Report launched by Police Minister Jan 2003
- Jan 2003 Working Group set up by Govt. as recommended
- Delays in implementation: Budgetary, 2 x Elections, a number of Changes of Minister
- May 2014 Bill tabled in Parliament
- There have already been a number of changes from the original (2003) plan
- Yet to see what further changes through parliamentary process, regulations or implementation
- Compromise: VW vs Rolls Royce

Booze lock plan to stop drink-drivers
The Repeat Drink Driving Program (2003)

**GOAL**
To reduce repeat drink-driving and the associated harm to the community

**AIM**
To establish and monitor an integrated, coordinated, state-wide program for drink-driving offenders across government agencies and private-sector services with appropriate legislation and supporting policies

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES**
- Evidenced based and informed by best-practice principles;
- Provide graduated sanctions and remedial options tailored to individual need;
- Aim to engage all those deemed eligible to participate;
- Aim to keep offenders operating within the system of formal controls and reduce the number who drive without a valid licence;
- Non-discriminatory and address needs of the socially or economically disadvantaged;
- Maximise early and voluntary participation wherever possible;
- Accessible in regional and remote areas;
- Subject to ongoing monitoring and review.
The Repeat Drink Driving Program (2003)

- A statewide alcohol-interlock which would:
  - Provide for mandated interlocks as a condition of re-licence for all repeat offenders and for first-time offenders with high BACs with options for lower-risk offenders to participate voluntarily;
  - Require participants that demonstrate non-compliance to attend alcohol treatment and before exit;
  - Allow that interlock installation provides for a significant reduction in the licence disqualification period for early voluntarily participation;
  - Operate on a user-pays basis with the option for fines to be deferred to offset interlock costs upon successful program completion;
  - Require 6 mths ‘clean driving’ on the interlock before approval for an unrestricted licence is provided.

- A rehabilitation program to be integrated with other countermeasures (such as alcohol interlocks) to maximise outcomes.

- Initiatives to limit unlicensed driving and driving outside licence conditions to maintain the integrity of drink-driving countermeasures including:
  - Compulsory carriage of licence for all drivers and riders;
  - Increased use of random licence checks by police; and
  - New penalties for unlicensed driving including vehicle sanctions with provision for immediate roadside vehicle impoundment for first offenders and court-imposed vehicle confiscation for repeat offenders.

- Additional recommendations specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
EXCLUSIVE
Gabrielle Knowles

Thousands of West Australians will have breath-testing immobilisers fitted to their cars under a State Government plan to cut the drink-driving death toll.

The alcohol interlock system would be fitted to cars driven by anyone caught with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.05 anyone who had more than one 0.05 offence in five years and anyone who refused a breath test.

There were about 2000 people caught above 0.05 last year. The Government predicts another 2000 would be caught for being over 0.05 for at least the second time.

Drivers would have to blow into a tube fitted to their car's ignition system, which would work only if they registered under 0.02.

To prevent drink-drivers getting friends to blow for them, the system would be calibrated to need another breath test at random intervals during the journey. Failure to provide the second sample could trigger the airbags, lights or horns to attract attention of other drivers or the police.

Every 25 days, drivers would have to submit their interlock system to the Department of Transport, which would download its memory. This would show whether they had been attempting to tamper with the system or whether a driver had tried to drive with a blood alcohol level above 0.02. For many, this is less than one standard drink.

Those who had made three or more attempts to drive over 0.02 would be compelled to attend an alcohol intervention program to be run by the Drug and Alcohol Office.

Drivers will still have to pay fines and will have the interlock devices fitted for at least six months after serving their suspensions. Extraordinary licenses will be granted only if the interlock system is used.

It would also be compulsory for drivers whose licence had a zero-alcohol restriction such as heavy bags, tax or provision drivers but who had been caught above 0.02.

If a driver had involved in the scheme driving a car not fitted with the device, the vehicle would be impounded for a minimum of 30 days.

Police Minister Lisa Harvey said mandatory interlocks were one of the best deterrents for repeat drink drivers who often blamed drinking bars, young people and drivers who drank driving.

Road Safety Council chairman Murray Lempard said the devices would make WA roads safer.

"The use of these devices sends a very strong message that we will not tolerate this aberrant behaviour," he said.

OPINION
Drunk locks too long coming

The move to install breath-test immobilisers in cars of repeat drink drivers has been a long time coming in WA. The alcohol interlock devices have been on the agenda for at least a decade, with both sides of politics talking about them, but Police Minister Lisa Harvey’s announcement that she planned to introduce a Bill next year to allow for their use in WA is the clearest sign yet that the talk is over. The interlocks require a driver to have a negative breath-test result for alcohol before a car will start. When they have been used elsewhere, there has been a significant fall in repeat drink driving. They could be a useful weapon in the drink-driving battle and the Government must ensure it finally follows through on this plan.
Theories, models, accounts of the policy process

- There is a whole discipline – Public Policy and Administration – dedicated to this topic
- We are only going to touch on it here today
- Hopefully this will stimulate your reading and thinking
- I am not an ‘expert’ in the area
Theories, models, accounts of the policy process

Include:

- Technical, rational models
  (e.g. Institutional Rational Choice, Ostrom, 1986)
- Power and Interest group models (e.g. Weiss)
- Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier, 1988)
- Multiple Streams (Kingdon, 1984, 1995)
- Other approaches:
  - Policy Diffusion Framework (Berry & Berry, 1999)
  - Enlightenment Model (Weiss, 1977)
  - Punctuated Equilibrium (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993)
Multiple Streams
John W. Kingdon

Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan


His research:

247 qual. & quant. interviews
Over 4 waves 1976 - 79
Health (133) Transportation (144) 23 case studies

Who? Those inside and outside government

Questions: Major issues? Why?
Front burner? Why?
Not prominent? Why?
Overview: Kingdon’s Model (plus)

PROBLEM STREAM

POLICY STREAM

POLITICS STREAM

POLICY WINDOW

IMPLEMENTATION
(Support, evaluate, monitor, review)

AGENDA SETTING

SOFTENING UP PHASE

COUPLING PHASE

ENACTMENT

IMPLEMENTATION
Overview: Kingdon’s Model (plus)

PROBLEM STREAM
(Conditions defined as unacceptable)
Conflict with values/comparisons/conceptualisations
Visible participants affect the agenda

POLICY STREAM

POLITICS STREAM

POLICY WINDOW

IMPLEMENTATION
(Support, evaluate, monitor, review)

AGENDA SETTING

SOFTENING UP PHASE

COUPLING PHASE

ENACTMENT

IMPLEMENTATION
Overview: Kingdon’s Model (plus)

PROBLEM STREAM
(Conditions defined as unacceptable)
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Visible participants affect the agenda

POLICY STREAM

POLICY WINDOW

IMPLEMENTATION
(Support, evaluate, monitor, review)

POLITICS STREAM
(Swings in national mood/electoral cycles/change of gov’t etc.)
Consensus by bargaining

AGENDA SETTING

SOFTENING UP PHASE  COUPLING PHASE  ENACTMENT  IMPLEMENTATION
Overview: Kingdon’s Model (plus)

PROBLEM STREAM
(Conditions defined as unacceptable)
Conflict with values/comparisons/conceptualisations
Visible participants affect the agenda

POLICY STREAM
(Specification of alternative solutions)
Working parties/briefing papers/advice/conferences
largely ‘hidden’ participants
Consensus by persuasive argument

POLITICS STREAM
(Swings in national mood/electoral cycles/change of gov’t etc.)
Consensus by bargaining

AGENDA SETTING

SOFTWAREING UP PHASE

COUPLING PHASE

ENACTMENT

IMPLEMENTATION

POLICY WINDOW

IMPLEMENTATION
(Support, evaluate, monitor, review)
Watching for Policy Windows

- **Punctuations** in long periods of equilibrium
- Need **long term time scale**
- When policy **window shut** still put findings ‘out there’
- But be ready to ‘**jump in**’ when opportunities arise
- Watch **political stream & problem stream**
Policy entrepreneurs

- Those willing to **invest resources to further policies they favour**
- Crucial to the policy process
- Those who **broker people and ideas** are more important than inventors
- Can:
  - push concerns about problems
  - push pet proposals in the softening up phase
  - make the couplings as policy windows open
- **Bring 3 things** to the process:
  - Claims to a hearing (credibility)
  - Political connections & negotiation skills
  - Sheer persistence
Policy entrepreneurs cont.

when the wave of policy opportunity comes along...

‘like a surfer, entrepreneurs are ready to paddle, and their readiness combined with their sense for riding the wave and using forces beyond their control contributes to success’

(Kingdon, 1995, p.181)
Why policy makers may seek input from researchers

Weiss (1999)

They may:

- **Want a better sense of the issues** – honestly seeking info to guide the best course of action
- **Distrust information** that is being fed to them by the bureaucracy or interest groups and turn to researchers as a corrective
- **Want to provide a general sense of legitimacy** for political action and cloak it in evidence to provide an aura of integrity
- **Want to use research evidence** to support their predetermined position to bolster support and counter arguments of opposition
- **Want to be seen as basing their decisions on the ‘best available evidence’**, be modern, up-to-date
How do drug policy makers access research evidence?

Ritter (2009)

Table 1
Reported resources accessed by policy-makers ($N = 31$, 18 group interviews)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source for research evidence</th>
<th>$N$</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consult an expert</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult technical reports, monographs and bulletins</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access the internet</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use statistical data</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult policy makers in other jurisdictions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use academic literature</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use internal expertise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use government policy documents</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employ a consultant</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“I read 1–2% of what comes across the desk”.

“A policy maker only reads the executive summary”

“[Ask] colleagues from other jurisdictions—other people have faced similar problems”

“[I] talk to people who know something, and to those who don’t but have strong opinions”.
Should researchers advocate for research evidence?

- Not for everyone
- Risk of compromising perceived ‘objectivity’

Strategies:
- Stick to the research evidence
- Recognise its limitations
- Ensure a balanced stance
- Use colleagues to reality test
- Use other advocates where appropriate

Researchers may be best advocates
- Where they have skill and experience
- Their credibility makes them best messengers

Lavis et al. (2003)
Making drug policy research more potent

No point doing policy research if no-one knows about it

DISSEMINATE RESEARCH FINDINGS:

- Academic publications – researchers and practitioners
- Policy advice & submissions – government
- Joining government working parties
- Media commentary – public and policy makers

Most policy makers don’t read research reports, but they do read newspapers

GET MEDIA TRAINING & SUPPORT
Consider your audience

- Target values of the policy makers
- Involve policy makers in the research from start to finish
- Recognise vacuums as opportunities
- Offer assistance in helping them translate findings into policy action
- What are the barriers? How can they be addressed?
- Who are other stakeholders? What are their views? Who Co-opt? Who brief? Who Involve?
Relationships, Trust, Track Record

- **Relationships and trust** are central
- Enable both **formal and informal channels**
- Some **long standing**, some through **working groups**
- **Governmental working groups, committees etc**
  - Apparent ‘time wasters’ can bear fruit in longer term
  - Membership promote - ‘decision relevant’ thinking
- **Reputation and track record** can provide claim to a hearing
- **Being helpful** is valued
- **Persistence** – don’t underestimate it!
Outside or inside policy making? Dilemmas & Opportunities

Outside government / policy making
- Speak freely, openly, publicly
- But have little direct influence on policy

When invited into government / policy making
- Influence on policy can be considerable
- But probably have to:
  - keep discussions confidential
  - Curtail public comments
  - Make compromises to stay in the game

Requires constant weighing up of costs & benefits
Other factors

- Working Parties – lessons (another story)
- Legislative (Laws) Vs administrative change (Regs.)
- Relative complexity – change puts pressure elsewhere
- Financial factors – publicly defensible
- Timeliness – electoral cycles etc.
- Implementation issues – critical

Good laws are essential, but good implementation is also needed ... simply having the laws on the books is not sufficient ... Strong implementation requires continued commitment from key actors, constant monitoring by advocates and continuous problem solving.

(Sweedler & Stewart, 2006, pp. 3-4)
Policy broker / advocate

- Sometimes a policy broker advocate can follow process from genesis to implementation
- Move fluidly from inside to outside govt. as need arises
- Hard to find skills, experience, access in one person
  - Understand research & policy process
  - Good communicator/negotiator
  - Well networked
  - Valued by others to achieve their ends

*Hold a (covert) core commitment to the reform project & the public interest*

Questions re funded & by whom?
Demonstrating policy impact

We have used a case study approach including:

- Citations in government reports
- Citations in Hansard (Parliamentary transcripts)
- Media statements by government members
- Political party policy statements
- Official correspondence and invitations onto working parties
- Testimonials from Government members and other stakeholders
- Copies of media releases, media articles and letters to the editor

Allow for long term time scale - 10 years or more
As researchers we need to spend at least as much effort, time, and intellect to bridge the gap between policy research and policy change as we spend in generating the research findings themselves.

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Questions? And some references


