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Institute for Safety, Compensation
and Recovery Research

“You go in there and fight the good fight”

Factors impacting policy & project development & use of evidence in an Australian health policy environment

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Use of evidence in health policy

- Interventions for increasing evidence use in health *policy* environments are lacking
- Only 8-15% research translation efforts in health environments are effective
- Interventions need to be informed by context specific research

Use of evidence in a specific public health policy context

Workplace and transport injury prevention and rehabilitation compensation in Australia

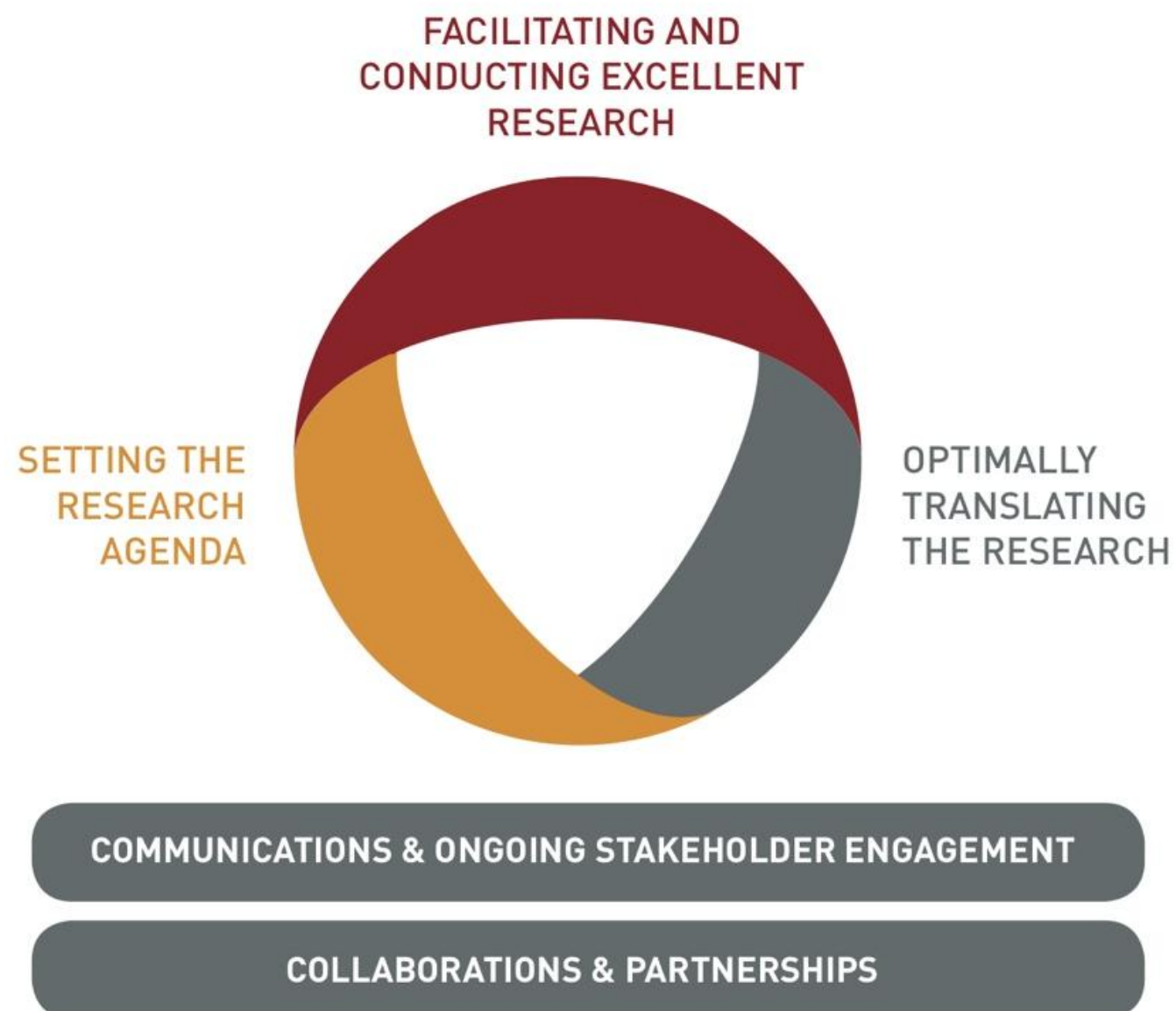
- Workplace injury and illness compensation:
 - In 2009/10: 127 620 serious workers' compensation claims
 - In 2008/09: total economic cost \$60.6 billion, 4.8% of GDP
- Transport accident injury and illness compensation:
 - In 2008/09: 53,406 persons seriously injured due to land transport injury, 34% car; 27% motor cycle; 18% cyclists
 - Total economic cost \$27 billion per annum

Use of evidence in a specific public health policy context



- In the Australian state of Victoria alone:
 - N=40,000 new workers compensation claims per annum.
 - N=16,000 new transport compensation claims per annum.
- WorkSafe Victoria and the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) are government organisations responsible for workplace and transport injury prevention and rehabilitation compensation in Victoria
- WorkSafe and TAC policy and projects affect access to health services for those injured at work or as a result of a transport accident

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Researching use of evidence

- ISCRR has a Research Translation program
- Evaluation of capacity for use of evidence
 - ISCRR PhD project
- Evaluation is comprised of 4 parts
 - Part 1: Literature review
 - Part 2: Quantitative policy content analysis
 - **Part 3: Qualitative interviews**
 - Part 4: Quantitative survey



Research
to
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Qualitative interview aims

- Map the process of policy and program decision-making specific to this context
- Identify types of evidence used and for what purpose
- Identify organisational and external factors that affect policy and program decision-making process in this context
- Identify factors affecting use of academic research evidence

Qualitative interview method and analysis

- 33 participants, semi-structured interview
 - 17 senior managers, 9 managers and 7 non-managers
- Interviews undertaken Jul 2011 – Jan 2012
- In-depth interviews of 30min-1hr+
- Thematic analysis
 - Open coding > categorisation of codes> identification of key themes
 - Reviewed by research team in Nvivo 9.0

External factors affecting policy and program decision making

External Processes and Structures	Quotes	No
<p>Stakeholder feedback and action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer groups/associations • Health service providers • Trade/labour unions • Private insurers 	<p><i>“For example, our Employer and Employee reps, our Unions and Employer groups can really help us deliver our programs and refine them, but they also may not”</i></p> <p><i>“all the external stakeholders... can be both supportive and issues at times”</i></p>	26
<p>Ministerial and government input</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministers input and public complaint or query to the minister • Federal and state departments and governing parties 	<p><i>“If you’re a public servant, then you are at the behest of the government of the day, and our job is to implement the policy of the government of the day”.</i></p> <p><i>“if the government says... ‘we’re not going to do X, Y, Z’, then so be it, get on with it, don’t worry about it”</i></p>	18
<p>Legal feedback and action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lawyers representing injured persons • Legal consulting 	<p><i>“They’re more about ‘how should we treat this particular instance, or this particular worker’...they don’t care about the strategic changes”</i></p> <p><i>“our legal stakeholders, if they don’t like what we’re doing they can certainly make life quite difficult for us”</i></p>	11

External factors affecting policy and program decision making

External Agents and Agency	Quotes	No
Injured persons claiming compensation	<p><i>The number of conversations I've had with clients where I've talked about evidence bases. And their conclusion to the whole thing is: "Yes, but I just want it."</i></p> <p><i>I think about...the projects that have got up and the driver behind that and it's about ultimately... 'how's this going to benefit our client?'</i></p>	8
Media involvement	<p><i>"No, it's not the media, it's...fear of bad press, bad publicity or politics, political pressure"</i></p> <p><i>"(stakeholders) sometimes go to the media to report their dissatisfaction with an aspect of the scheme"</i></p>	5

Organisational factors affecting policy and program decision making

Processes and Structures	Quotes	No.
The way things OUGHT to be done		
Practicability-implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPIs 	<i>“I often get a lot of good information when you’re out there talking with people who are at the coal face, so delivering the services...particularly in terms of implementation of our policies because if it’s a good policy that can’t be implemented, it’s pretty useless and I’d rather have a bad policy that we can implement”.</i>	9
Quality control proper process	<i>“you’ve got to hunt around to find someone who’s either a friendly agreeable type person, or agrees with you and there’s no process for any of that. Now in one sense that’s fine, that’s called networking and that’s okay; but it’s networking in the dark with guns instead of doing it in any sort of overt way where it’s encouraged, I mean god forbid that we should actually encourage people to say ‘hey what’s wrong with this place?’ ”.</i>	8
Commercial versus public interests	<i>“the fundamental tension in our scheme is this: that we are required to pay adequate and just compensation and minimise the cost of the scheme. Okay so we’re supposed to pay lots of bucks to workers who are entitled but we’ve got to minimise the cost of the scheme, stay in the black, don’t embarrass the government etc and that’s a huge tension”</i>	5

Organisational factors affecting policy and program decision making

Processes and Structures	Quotes	No
The way things ARE done		
Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems-infrastructure • Skills • Time • Budget • Staffing 	<p><i>“Resources is also a very big issue because some teams with a low need seem to be able to get good resources and other teams with incredibly high needs really, really struggle to get the resources that they need”.</i></p> <p><i>“If the ombudsman’s ringing up and wants something urgently you can’t perhaps do the same level of rigour you might for an assignment you’re writing on the weekend for a piece of study you’re doing. So there’s this time factor”.</i></p>	16 11 11 6 5
Internal Info sharing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal data and reports • experience/advice/feedback • Internal meetings and forums 	<p><i>“there are definitely people that we can call upon who have been involved in projects before. I think the TAC have a culture in where people are happy to share information and their knowledge and assist where they can”</i></p>	12 8 6
History and tradition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal focus 	<p><i>We can certainly do with some improvement here, I have sort of inherited this team where still the old processes which I was not involved with but still sort of dominate...which I am sort of now trying to change a bit, but that is sort a slow processes.</i></p>	8 5
Relationships-networks	<p><i>“people are protective of their turf, and don’t like others to look in their backyard”.</i></p>	5

Organisational factors affecting policy and program decision making

Agents and Agency	Quotes	No.
Decision Making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influential individuals and groups • Confirmation by consultant 	<p><i>“In our area there would probably need to be a direct targeting of our executive director because he very much dominates the scene...to get anything done you need to influence him”.</i></p> <p><i>“Indirectly I would say the community and particularly in our case sources, and how they’re reacting. Internally you know and in a direct way it would be those in a leadership areas”.</i></p>	23 8
Management and staff engagement	<p><i>“by and large managers provide support...it’s a learning organisation that allows that rigor to be assessed”.</i></p> <p><i>“We tend to give an issue to someone and say well you want it, do what you want and if you do a great job, beaut and if you don’t do a great job well no one is probably going to know anyway”.</i></p>	21
Politics-ideology	<p><i>Politics is definitely important because you need to know the right people to have onside in order to get a project up.</i></p>	12
Priorities competing	<p><i>“There’s also always that ‘what’s the priority’, and so that sort of feels political as well in that ‘is mental health number one?’ or ‘is attendant care number one?’ or ‘is hospitals number one?’, and everyone’s vying for the priority I guess, and therefore the resources”</i></p>	8
Conflicts of interest	<p><i>“they are overloaded with information and phone calls and blah, blah, blah... we have got a lot of competing interests within our organisation...Policy is just one of the many things that take up everyone’s day and time”.</i></p>	8

Factors affecting research push

Research Push	Quotes	No.
Communicating research evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face • Shorter faster simpler docs • Tools, processes & strategies • Actionable recommendations • Forums and conferences 	<p><i>“Oh it’s got to be evidence bites really, you probably know what I mean the truncated version of a long piece, that’s probably the best way to communicate it”.</i></p> <p><i>“Someone coming to our group and telling us, giving us half an hour or whatever and just verbalising what the findings are, so that we hear it and actually spend the time, put our minds to it rather than letting things get buried a lot... Face to face definitely”.</i></p> <p><i>“going to a full day or half days, you sit there saying am I going to lose a whole day to go away with one great concept or idea?”</i></p>	25 22 12 9 2
Relevance-implement ability	<i>“It would be a case by case basis, again coming back to whether the research would be relevant to the actual project”.</i>	28
Access	<i>It is fine to talk about policy or a body of evidence, like where is it? how do look into it?... it is sort of the fundamental stuff.</i>	21
Awareness	<i>“I think we tend to rely on the data a lot, our internal data where we may not know that academic research could assist”</i>	16
Benefit visibility	<i>“We need to be provided with clear examples of where the use of evidence has resulted in better and effective policy, otherwise it...just adds to the... number of stakeholders and people we have to involve in getting your job done”.</i>	9
Credibility of the source	<i>“Well I think the fact that we do fund it, it has some profile, it’s not a high profile but it has some profile”.</i>	8
Risks in using research evidence	<i>“The thing with academic research, there is probably three conflicting opinions, so if you take two, you can quote the two and ignore the third. That’s the risk, I suppose”.</i>	4

Factors affecting research pull

Research Pull	Quotes	No
Resourcing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs-finance • Staffing • Structure-process • Time • Supporting area or role • Skills 	<p>Researcher: “is use of research evidence valued in your organisation?” A: <i>“From my perspective no. It’s said that it is but it’s not really...because their favourite resources are not provided to it. There’s too much work on”</i></p> <p><i>“the real benefit is being able to move something into practice that’s based in evidence...There’s probably some need for a knowledge broker somewhere to do a bit of translating for people along the way”.</i></p>	3 6 6 20 23 29
Political and policy processes	<i>“the processes of politics sometimes don’t deliver to you the policy outcome you want”</i>	10
Management support	<i>“ensuring that middle management are aware of the huge world of stuff that’s out there and the... resource and dedication there is in the place”.</i>	9
Internally focused	<i>“the structure and the personnel that we've got...wouldn't be receptive... very focused on data and their own views as opposed to other views”</i>	7
Competing interests	<i>“in operational environment you’re always competing with spot fires”</i>	7
Not my role	<i>“it is just not something that is in front of mind because those questions we farm off”</i>	7
Networks-relationships	<i>The fact is that you’ll (researchers) fight for your independence to the death so to speak and that can sometimes be a cause of some tension.</i>	6
Information overload	<i>simply the information overload...access to information and knowledge is just fantastic...I can’t possibly work my way through it all</i>	4
Autonomy	<i>“I just wonder whether other people feel that they could if they wanted to just grab an initiative, drive it through and get support around it”.</i>	2

Implications for effective implementation

- Factors acting as barriers and facilitators varied from team to team and issue to issue within and across organisations.
- As factors affecting effective implementation are context dependent – context specific research is necessary
- Intervention design must identify and address contextual factors that affect policy and project development processes that research evidence must fit within.
 - Management and staff engagement;
 - Resources: Time; Skills; Systems and infrastructure; Budget and finance, Staffing;
 - Information overload;
 - Competing priorities;
 - Implement-ability;
 - Internal focus;
 - Relationships and networks;
 - Forums for info sharing;
 - Politics and ideology; and
 - Policy and project process quality.

Summary & Conclusion

- Government policy and project development is challenging, complex and interdependent
 - And this is without trying to bring research evidence into the mix
- ‘Structures and Process’ and ‘Agents and Agency’ affected decision making from within and outside of these organisations
 - External factors are critical yet often not addressed in intervention design
- Use of research evidence was affected by ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors
 - These need to be targeted in intervention design and implementation
- Context specific research is critical to effective intervention design and relationship and network building
 - In-depth qualitative research is effective for identifying and examining factors affecting decision making in any given context