

James Rankin Oration: The Research-Policy-Practice Interfaces in the Alcohol & Other Drugs Field, Past, Present & Future

DAVID McDONALD^{1,2}

¹Research School of Population Health, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, ²Social Research & Evaluation Pty Limited, Wamboin, NSW, Australia

Presenter's email: david.mcdonald@socialresearch.com.au

Forty years ago, when APSAD was created with Dr James Rankin as its inaugural President, most of the members of its Board of Directors were prominent medical professionals. The intention of the founders was that the Society should '... be primarily a medically-oriented organisation established to meet the needs of medical scientists and practitioners. Since then, both the Society, and the alcohol and other drugs field in Australia, have grown significantly in size, scope, and impacts. In parallel, the discipline of policy sciences has developed, leading to far more sophisticated understandings of the interfaces between research, public policy, and practice. Under Australia's National Drug Strategy, we have seen much diversity in the arrangements put in place to manage, and strengthen, these interfaces. Some have been structural while others have focused more on processes. In recent years, academic and practitioner activity in research translation has become more prominent. In this context, it has been fascinating to see the proliferation of two sets of how-to-do-it research translation guidelines, one directed towards the producers of new knowledge, and the other directed towards its intended consumers. Despite this, significant challenges remain at the interfaces between research, public policy, and practice in the alcohol and other drugs field. Policy sciences scholars are reflecting on these interfaces in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the implications of creating and implementing public policy on the run, accessing and using evidence, and attempting to control the public policy process. The implications, for the alcohol and other drugs field, of this new policy sciences thinking are discussed.

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