



**MONASH** University  
Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences

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# **Translating diverse forms of evidence: The Victorian experience**

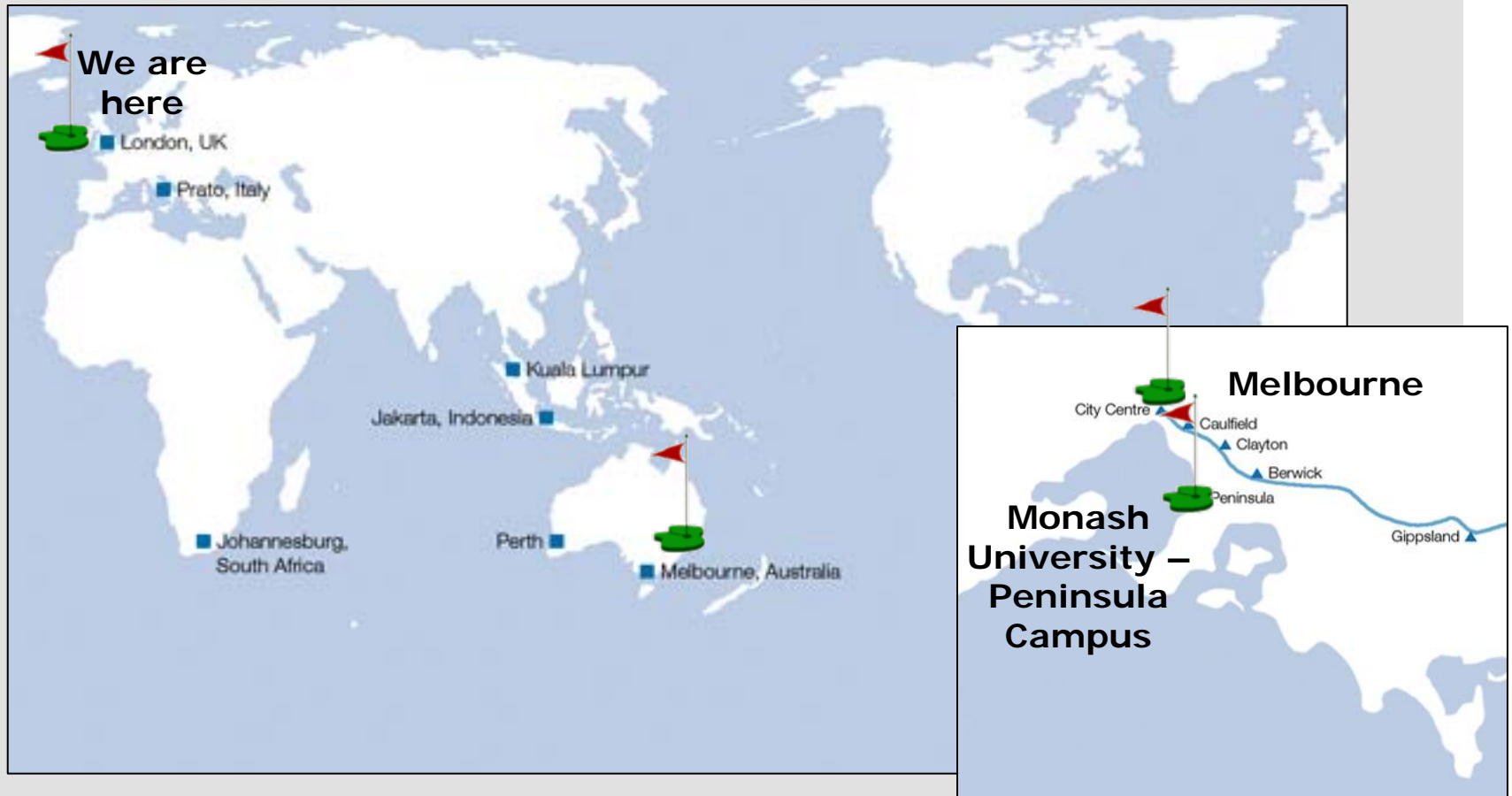
# Travelogue...



**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?



# HTA 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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