

# ABSTRACT

## How critical is science in designing environmental policy?

Environmental management presents policy problems that are scientifically, socially and politically complex. Policy solutions that fail to consider and accommodate this complexity will inevitably fail to achieve their desired outcomes.

Across public policy, from aged care to the environment, Governments are demanding that the public sector develop robust evidence-based policy options; that is, policy options that are built on rigorously established objective evidence. In the context of environmental management it would be easy to assume that evidence-based policy design should fundamentally be a science-driven process. This would, however, be a mistake.

Science is just one of class of evidence used in policy formulation. There are clearly legitimate and important roles for scientific knowledge in evidence-based environmental policy design. Scientific knowledge informs the policy debate; it helps identify and articulate potential policy solutions and informs the likely outcomes of a chosen policy solution.

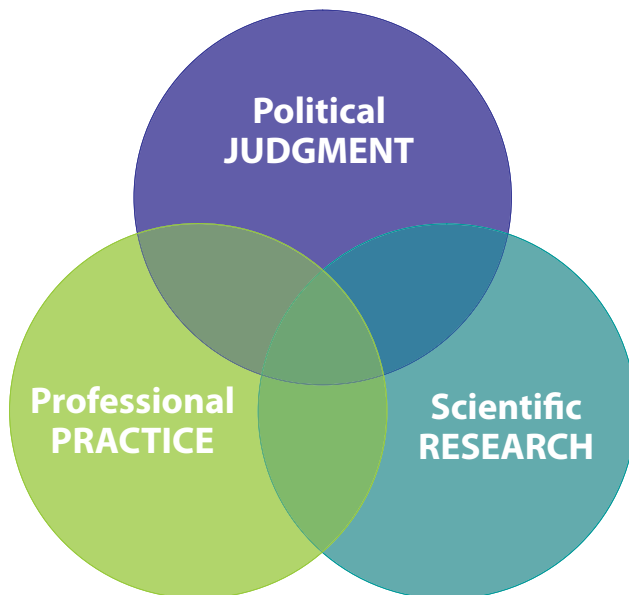
Ensuring that scientific knowledge is appropriately considered requires more than just doing relevant research: it demands that those who manage scientific knowledge clearly understand the policy development process and the roles that they can play in that process. Building on from the previous paper by Charlie Zammit I will draw on recent examples of the role of scientific knowledge in the environmental policy decision-making process.

### Relevant publications

Head B (2008) Evidence-based policy: three lenses. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 67(1) pp 1-11.

Marston G and Watts R (2003) Tampering with the Evidence: A Critical Appraisal of Evidence-Based Policy-Making. *The Drawing Board: An Australian Review of Public Affairs* 3(3) 143-163.

Rudd K (2008) Address to Heads of Agencies and Members of Senior Executive Service, Canberra. <[www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech\\_0226.cfm](http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0226.cfm)>.



Head (2008).



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### Take-home messages:

- Effective environmental policy must take into account the scientific, social and political complexity of the issue.
- Scientific knowledge is only one source of evidence used to design evidence-based environmental policy.
- The managers of scientific knowledge need to understand the policy development process and the roles that they can legitimately play if they are to participate effectively in the design of environmental policy.