



**Australasian Evaluation Society International Conference
By Melissa Koch, Rural Health Team, Mid North of SA**

It is with great pleasure that I was sponsored to attend the Australasian Evaluation Society International Conference from the 2nd to the 4th of September 2009.

As a Health Promotion Manager it was refreshing to hear that a process we take for granted (i.e. evaluation) has a growing support base. I had no idea that so many people were so passionate about evaluation or that it was an “industry” in itself.....

The conference theme was Evaluation and Evidence. This theme led discussions throughout the conference and the major topic debated was what constitutes credible evidence, how much evidence is enough and how to make evidence available useful and meaningful. The hierarchy of evidence was debated at length particularly the value and usefulness of “qualitative evidence”. It was however, refreshing to hear that qualitative evidence and methods of collecting data have a growing support base and are now viewed as quite legitimate.

One workshop that has stuck in my mind was presented by Joan Young and was titled “Revolution for evolution – a new approach to road safety advertising and more significant role for social marketing research”. This workshop highlighted the role of using market research methods to better target advertising campaigns about health and wellbeing issues. It was also about using a behaviour modification approach to ensure that social marketing messages are appropriate for where people are within the behaviour change process. This provided a useful insight into the planning and research needed to ensure that social marketing strategies are effective.

This was a very interesting and useful conference and provided many models and techniques that can be applied to health promotion program evaluation.