



My strategy was to print off the session program before getting on the plane and taking my time in carefully planning a route through the various presentations I'd attend. I knew of course this might be thrown out if during morning tea the next day a fellow presenter's enthusiasm enticed me to their particular slot. But that's one thing I like about the AES conferences, the freedom to change your mind at the last minute and have your curiosity rewarded by pertinent insights provided by evaluators' addressing topic areas which may be quite different to your own specialty or usual interests. Evaluation, like 'research' or 'methodology' envelops an infinity of subject areas and myriad approaches and when presented with such a smorgasbord it's nice to have the opportunity and time to sample something different, even if occasionally the quail's egg turns out to be an incognito pickled onion! My presentation was time tabled in the first slot of the first day and I planned that once relieved of the burden I would happily skip between presentation rooms like an unleashed Wiggle! Actually, I enjoyed my 40 minute slot which allowed a lot of questions and discussion; too often conferences herd together presentations in frustratingly short 'bites'. Highlights for me were William Trochim's opening plenary and Stewart Donaldson's long paper, both addressing evaluation and evidence based practice, John Owen's knowledge of evaluation is always impressive, and I enjoyed listening to Gill Westthorpe's Realist Evaluation presentations. It was also great to meet up again with my fellow fellow from PHCRED in Catherine, Phil Entwistle. The AES conference is always enjoyable and I always come away eager to read more, in this case I've ordered a new book critiquing RCTs... a welcome addition to the qualitative researcher's bookshelf!

Paul Aylward.
University of Adelaide