

Dr Jess Dart, CEO and founder

Overview of Expertise

Receiving the 2018 award for outstanding contribution to evaluation from the Australian Evaluation Society (AES), Dr Jess Dart is a recognised leader with over 25 years experience in strategy, design and evaluation for organisations in Australia and overseas. She specialises in collaborative evaluation, and design of initiatives with complex, intangible outcomes. As part of her PhD she adapted the 'Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique' and co-authored the User Guide with Rick Davies – now translated into 12 languages. She is passionate about ensuring that organisations deliver better and more equitable outcomes. In 2005 Jess founded Clear Horizon Consulting, a rapidly growing and successful company with 40 employees. Today she is CEO as well as being on the board of the Australasian Evaluation Society.

Career Highlights

- **Innovator of new techniques and approaches in evaluation.** Developed 'People-centred Program Logic', the 'Evaluation Summit Technique', and 'Collaborative Outcomes Reporting (COR) Technique'. Co-author of the Most Significant Change (MSC) User guide, Author of the "what else tool" for contribution analysis and 'Place-based Evaluation Framework' and 'Toolkit', commissioned by DSS and the Queensland Government (2019).
- **Highly experienced evaluator.** Has led several developmental evaluations, partner-led evaluations as well as conducting over 30 external evaluations in both public sector and non-Government sector environments, both nationally and internationally. Oversight responsibility for another 100+ evaluations conducted by Clear Horizon.
- **Experienced design facilitator.** Jess brings a wealth of experience to design. Jess works in the capacity of "design facilitator" – designing the process to be used; leading a team; developing engagement plans and working in a collaborative and facilitative way to create great innovative designs with clear theory of change.
- **Solid academic grounding in social science and the natural sciences.** PhD in program evaluation, an MSC in sustainable agriculture and an Honours degree in botany. A multidisciplinary background as well as a solid grounding in systems thinking and qualitative and quantitative research.
- **Substantial experience in facilitating large scale evaluation capacity building.** Experience with three large scale evaluation capacity development processes. This included helping to build an internal evaluation capacity for a large organisation (2,000 plus people) that won two prestigious awards for its evaluation work.
- **Highly demanded facilitator:** Having facilitated the development of over 200 strategic planning process (including the use of Theory of Change/ program logic) for programs and organisations, as well as numerous large group workshops, Jess is a highly demanded facilitator. She has led workshops in a wide variety of cultural settings from Ministers to grass roots community groups.

Professional Qualifications

- 2000 PhD in program evaluation at the Institute of Land and Food Resources, Melbourne University. The thesis focused on developing a new qualitative approach to evaluation. The field work for this thesis included implementing a one-year trial of a novel evaluation approach (the Most Significant Change technique) across the Target 10 Dairy Extension Project in the state of Victoria. Awarded a full Commonwealth Scholarship.
- 1993 MSC in Sustainable Agriculture, Wye College, University of London. Thesis topic was on the use of composted wastes. Overall distinction awarded.
- 1988 BSc (Hons) Botany, Liverpool University, England

Project Experience

Developmental Evaluation

- Lead Evaluator for a 5-year evaluation of “Collective ed.”, auspiced by the Beacon Foundation, (funded by Paul Ramsay Foundation and Tasmania State Government). Collective ed. is a ‘living lab’ aim at transform six Tasmanian school communities through human centred design and collective impact (2017-2021).
- Developmental Evaluator with the Commonwealth Department of Employment to provide developmental evaluation services in partnership with the Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) to support a user-centred design process to improve Indigenous Employment Outcomes (2017).
- Developmental Evaluation inputs for the Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) for 6 of their designs including: evaluating and developing theory of change for three prototypes for alternatives to fostering, development of an evaluation framework for Family-by-family pilot.
- Design specialist and developmental evaluation inputs to a one-year design process to develop a “facility” to build the capability of NGO’s across Indonesia. (2014- 2015), DFAT.
- Lead evaluator for a three year-long developmental evaluation of a national program to ensure that Aboriginal young people fulfil their potential, and gain entrance to University This involved developing the evaluation framework, the iterative co-development of the theory of change, playing the critical friend role, conducting observations and testing iterations of the school camp process and working with the team of implementers to (2011-2015).

External evaluations

Jess has over 30 external evaluations including 2 large scale multi-country evaluations. In 2017 she led an innovative partner-led evaluation of the ‘KNOWFOR’ programme -- a partnership between the UK government, Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Bank Programme of Forests (PROFOR). Titled “Improving the way knowledge on forests is understood and used internationally (2016-017). She was also team leader with the ‘Office of Development Effectiveness’ (ODE) strategic evaluation of AusAID’s engagement with civil society in PNG, Philippines and Vanuatu. Involved five activity level evaluations, a meta-synthesis of 60 evaluations, as well as two country level evaluations (2010-2011).

Design facilitation and Strategic planning

Jess has facilitated over 200 strategic planning and design processes for a wide variety of sectors, from community groups to high level planning organizations in large programs. She is experienced in human centred design, World Café, Scenario planning, Open Space Technology, Appreciative Inquiry, Future Search, Evaluation Summit Technique and strategic planning. Jess has led design processes for many different initiatives, and is a highly demanded facilitator and an excellent strategic thinker.

Organisational/ National Measurement Frameworks

Jess has developed organisational measurement Frameworks for over 20 organisations including lead author of the ‘Place-based evaluation framework” and tool kit. Commissioned by Department of Communities, Disability Services, and Seniors and Department of Social Services, in partnership with Logan Together (2018, Clear Horizon in partnership with TACSI). The framework was built using co-design & stakeholder consultation.

Program/project monitoring & evaluation frameworks

Jess has developed over 200 monitoring & evaluation frameworks for a wide variety of topics and sectors: from community placed-based initiatives to large scale international development programs.

Monitoring & Evaluation training courses

Jess has facilitated over 300 training courses (each for between two and five days in duration) on monitoring and evaluation including:

- Designed and delivered over 20 five-day long courses in Complexity-Aware Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Adaptation (CAMELA). (2008-2017).
- Designing and leading the foundational training module across AusAID/DFAT in monitoring and evaluation (16 x four-day long training courses commissioned between 2011 to 2013).
- Over 200 training workshops on Theory of Change/Program Logic.

Selection of Academic Publications

Dart, J. and Roberts, M. (2016) Invisible and Unbound: the challenge and practice of evaluating embedded facilitation in the case of Landcare in Australia, *New Directions for Evaluation*.

Davies R.J and Dart J.J. (2005) A User Guide for the Most Significant Change Technique. Available at www.clearhorizon.com.au

Dart, J. J. & Davies R.J. (2003) A dialogical story-based evaluation tool: the most significant change technique, *American Journal of Evaluation* 24, 137-155.