



# Beyond the Policy Cycle

The policy process in Australia || Edited by H.K. Colebatch

**It is common** - and comforting - to see public policy as the result of careful craft work by expert officials. They recognise a problem, identify and evaluate possible responses, and choose the most appropriate strategy - this is the 'policy cycle'. The reality is more complex and challenging. Many hands are involved in policy-making, not all of them official; they are not all addressing the same problem, they have different ideas about what would be a good answer, and the process is rarely brought to a neat close by a clear decision. The development of policy can resemble firefighting, with players rushing to react to demands for action in areas that are already in crisis, or it can be a less frenetic process of weaving, as they search for an outcome which reflects the concerns of all the stakeholders. Effective participation in the policy process calls for a clear understanding of this complexity and ambiguity.

**Beyond the Policy Cycle** sets policy in this wider context. It recognises that participants in the process are drawn from both government and diverse areas outside government, and looks not at a 'model' process but rather at how the game is played: how issues rise to prominence, who is actually doing the work, and exactly what it is that they are doing.

With detailed Australian case studies, and examining the implications of recent trends in policy such as the outsourcing of service provision, **Beyond the Policy Cycle** offers students and practitioners a critical and engaged look at the activity of policy that reflects the reality of the policy experience.



1741148731 A\$39.95 PB 336pp Jul 2006

'There is a need for an empirically grounded but theoretically informed examination of the work of policy in Australia.'

*H.K. Colebatch*



**Hal K. Colebatch** has taught and researched public policy and administration in Australia, Papua New Guinea, East Africa and Southeast Asia, and is currently a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Clinical Management Development, University of Durham and a member of the School of Social Science and Policy at the University of New South Wales. He is Vice-Chair of the International Political Science Association's Research Committee on Public Policy and Administration, and is a leading author on policy, with his work having been translated into several languages.

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