

ExtensionNet

Vol. 1

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALASIA-PACIFIC EXTENSION NETWORK

No. 2

Turning ideas into reality

This my second chairman's report to you as we strive to turn a good idea into a reality. Already 280 people have responded to the first Newsletter and the positive feedback indicates that there is a lot of support for the network at the grassroots level.

The steering committee's target is 600 people subscribing to the network by July. We are again circulating this newsletter widely to encourage interest. The core working group believes that we need a membership of 1000 to be viable. This is the target for December 1994.

The core working group has been progressing the network as fast as possible. We held a two-day workshop in Sydney on December 22 and 23 based on the information we received from the first newsletter survey.

The output from this workshop was circulated to the interim steering committee members who strongly concurred with the outcomes.

Some key issues from the process were:

Funding for the Network

At the preferred cost of \$40 for a subscription, the Network will not be self funding. Ian Simpson and I then spent a day in Canberra promoting the concept of the Extension Network to the Department of Primary Industry and Energy and some of the R&D Corporations.

We received some strong messages about reinventing wheels, and the need to be able to show concrete outcomes that the Extension Network will deliver. The Network must be able to show that it will assist in developing a more productive, more profitable and environmentally conscious rural sector

in Australia. All of the likely sources of funds are looking for pay offs for their investments - esoteric arguments about what the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network can do for rural development do not excite them.

Extension lacks focus

One of the key insights from our planning meeting was that the extension profession lacks focus. There is no body of theory that has been integrated into extension practice to inform that practice. There is

By
**TERRY
MAKIN**

*Chairman Interim
Steering Committee,
APEN.*



help make this happen. Please contact your steering committee representative if you care about your chosen profession and want to contribute at this critical time to its development.



Conference speakers getting together at AusPac Extension 93 on the Gold Coast are Bood Hickson, Melinda Downs, Cloncurry, Q, Prof John McCaffrey, chairman, Queensland Cancer Fund's Medical and Scientific Advisory Committee, and Dennis Purcell, director, World Bank Evaluation Unit, Washington DC.

no organisation that looks after its professional development and promotes its interests, or that important policy makers can communicate with.

We have a lot to do

With this in mind then, we are starting to form our state or regional branches or chapters. The steering committee is looking for people with some fire in their bellies to

The core working group is encouraging women to join the network and make sure that the Network is responsive to their needs. I believe that women, who are 50 percent of rural Australia, will have an increasingly important part to play in the development and change that is going on in the country. This role needs to be given increasing recognition.

This is a critical time in the establishment of the Network. Our future success now depends on individual extension officers taking three actions. Firstly you need to fill in the form in this

newsletter, if you have not replied to our first questionnaire. Secondly you need to encourage others to join. Please photocopy the form as often as you need. Thirdly you need to let your chapter representative know that you are willing to help set up your local chapter and what contribution you can make.

Successful Networks depend on local action. It is up to you to make our Network a success.

FUTURE NEWSLETTERS . . . ANY VOLUNTEERS?

FROM THE EDITOR

of the Australasian-Pacific area.

To achieve that, I propose that Chapters take turns in producing future newsletters. Many respondents are interested in the practices, research, politics and other matters in places where they do things differently, for instance in New Zealand, Papua New Guinea or Western Australia. In addition, some newsletters could be dedicated to special interests which cross Chapter boundaries, especially some that go beyond the narrow confines of agriculture.

This newsletter contains a lot of organisational matters, which is unavoidable at this formative stage. This material came from many future Chapters, which is great.

We fortunately received one practical article by Keryn Hunt, (who just happens to work two desks away from me) and a report on future research by Jeff Coutts in Gatton. Both concentrate on what is happening in Queensland.

However, the returned questionnaires strongly suggest that the Newsletter needs to have a strong emphasis on practical articles and be representative of all parts

A small section of each newsletter would need to cover Network matters, but the bulk would be material for and by practitioners from all places. There are competent people everywhere who would probably enjoy putting together a newsletter and a chance to 'show off' their country or state. Printing and distribution would still be done centrally. Apart from lightening my workload, it would also be democratic and conform with the findings from the questionnaires.

Victoria has volunteered to do the April issue. Who will do the next one?

Saltwatch Environmental action program

Saltwatch is an environmental action program that helps students and their communities better understand salinity as one of a number of land degradation problems. The program is jointly facilitated by the Departments of Primary Industries (DPI) and Education and is partly funded by National Landcare Program.

Saltwatch Queensland is a modified version of the Victorian Saltwatch Program and began in Queensland in 1991.

Schools and community groups (e.g. Landcare groups) are invited to participate. In 1993, 308 registrations were received.

During Saltwatch fortnight in May, water is collected from a variety of sources and tested to determine its salt content. These results are forwarded, by computer disk, to the DPI which compiles Statewide maps and adds the data to a salinity databank for Queensland.

Saltwatch participants are supported with Resource kits, Inservice sessions, some



Saltwatch coordinator Ernie Van Gilst and students from Harlin State School, 100km north of Ipswich in the Brisbane Valley, collect water samples in Turtle Creek. Two years ago, Ernie, a local landholder and parent, arrived at the conclusion of a Saltwatch Inservice session. After being involved in the last session of the inservice program, Ernie was so interested in Saltwatch he became the school's Saltwatch coordinator organising field trips to collect samples, water testing and some classroom activities — one of the many examples of the Saltwatch program involving the whole community in monitoring natural resources.

Townsville. Students, who will be day visitors to these centres, will be involved in the same hands-on activities and water testing as those involved in Saltwatch fortnight.

The Saltwatch program's hands-on approach and the breadth of curriculum it covers makes it a favourite with students, teachers and other community members.

The four main activities in this program are:

- 1. City to the Country Data Collection Day.** Students assist DPI officers to collect and then analyse trial data on a farm 1 hour from Brisbane. Trials include measuring of gully head advancement; measuring of soil salinity in a revegetation area; and monitoring of water tables in a catchment undergoing rehabilitation.



State Saltwatch coordinator Keryn Hunt, based at Ipswich DPI.

- 2. School Grounds Planning** (similar to Property Management Planning Program for landholders).

Students identify and analyse the current characteristics of their school grounds, create a vision for the school grounds and plan a strategy for achieving that vision, culminating with presentations to the school council and the greater school community.

- 3. Land Degradation Bus Trips.** Hands-on activities are conducted during a bus tour which may visit farms, gully erosion and salinity sites. The tour route varies depending upon areas of interest.

- 4. Classroom Lessons on Land Degradation.**

Presentations are adapted to suit particular year levels and subject matter.

Contact: Keryn Hunt, State Saltwatch Coordinator and Land Conservationist, Department of Primary Industries, PO Box 96, IPSWICH QLD 4305. Tel: (07) 280 1894 Fax: (07) 812 1715

EXTENSION AT WORK

testing equipment and opportunities to network with other schools and community groups involved in the program.

Before and after this fortnight, schools are involved in many activities including making Saltwatch posters, doing science experiments, writing salinity poems, designing plans to help control salinity problems in and around schools, going on excursions and assisting Landcare groups with projects.

Saltwatch is soon to be a permanent activity located at two centres in Brisbane and

Proceedings: Future Directions for Agricultural Education, Extension and Training



September 30, October 1 & 2, 1992

These proceedings include all papers presented at the Conference held at UWS -Hawkesbury as well as those submitted by other participants. Collectively they reflect the diversity of responses to the challenges encountered in agricultural education, extension and training as practitioners attempt to address a range of questions such as:

How can we involve the community in education that builds the capacity to manage change? How can we make learning challenging and absorbing? Is 'technology transfer' an adequate response? How can we achieve more with less dollars?

Copies of these proceedings are now available at \$30.00 ea. from:

Lin Mohammed
School of Agriculture and Rural Development
University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury
Richmond. 2753
Ph: 045 701 374 Fax: 045 885 538

Please make cheques payable to the
School of Agriculture and Rural Development.

WHAT THE QUESTIONNAIRES TOLD US ...

We are greatly encouraged by the response to our questionnaire on the proposed Australasia-Pacific Extension Network which went out with Newsletter No.1.

A total of 278 questionnaires were returned, 252 from within Australia: ACT 3, NSW 47, Northern Territory 20, Queensland 50, South Australia 41, Tasmania 2, Victoria 71, and Western Australia 18. Twenty-six from overseas represented New Zealand 11, Ethiopia 1, Fiji 1, Ghana 1, India 6, Indonesia 3, Tanzania 2, and Thailand 1.

Not all are included in the following analysis as some arrived recently.

Mission and outcomes

People agree strongly about the mission and purposes of the Network: to improve the practice and profession of extension and raise its profile by lobbying; to act as an information resource by sharing, pooling, accessing skills and experiences; to provide communication, reduce isolation, establish linkages, form networks between individuals, institutions, states and overseas; and to support new approaches and encourage innovation.

To justify its existence, the Network must contribute to the following outcomes in the outside world: improved extension practices, projects and programs; increased awareness of new issues and trends; development and use of new skills and methodologies; wider discussions and debates about rural issues; and a growing common understanding of the purpose and value of extension.

Core activities

Suggested core activities of the Network which may result in those outcomes are: produce a newsletter and a Journal, and arrange other mechanisms for publishing; conduct group discussions, forums, workshops and seminars, with emphasis on 'local'; organise conferences for chapters, as well as national and international ones; compile a register of names, experiences, expertise and sources of information; set up bulletin boards and organise E-mail network; encourage employee exchange; and co-ordinate visits by overseas and local extension leaders.

Desirable characteristics

People want to see a Network, with a flat, democratic, interactive and non-hierarchical structure, consisting of easily 'contactable' groups, be they on regional, state or special interest. It should be broadly based beyond agricultural, state or institutional boundaries. It should be highly visible by being active and 'user-friendly', have a 'practical' orientation, and avoid, where possible, academic language. It needs to be cost effective.

Strong support for mission and purposes of the Network

By
PETER VAN BEEK

Principal Extension Specialist (Systems), DPI Queensland.



The structure

A total of 203 people supported "largely autonomous local chapters", while 22 suggested some changes. Five suggested another structure. Comments related to the strongly felt need for interaction and communication between chapters, and the need to remain outward looking, and to avoid parochial attitudes.

Many stressed the need to have a strong central "engine" in addition to local chapters, to keep the momentum going and look after network business. The Network should also encourage special interest groups across chapter boundaries, based on industry (e.g. the National Pig Extension Network), interest (e.g. salinity), or outcome (e.g. rural health or conservation). These three suggestions are totally compatible.

A total of 221 people supported the proposed composition of the steering group, namely two representatives from each Chapter. Others commented on its size (seen as rather big), the need for a strong influence from practitioners, for democratic election of representatives, for some authority, and for continuity amongst office bearers.

Adequate representation from outside Australia was mentioned several times as a challenge which we have not yet met. An alternative suggestion was to base the Steering Group not on geography, but on specialised skills. Another suggestion was to have two or more task groups to get things moving fast.

Also, 224 people endorsed the proposal to draw a small core working group from the Steering group to run the Network on a day-to-day basis. Some commented on the need for a minimum of two years and a maximum of four years 'in office'. Members of the core working group should not also hold positions in local chapters.

Suggestions were made to use other organisations such as AIAS for administrative work (we are looking into that) and to involve many others in actually doing the work and prevent 'burn-out'; (see the editorial and volunteer!). The absence of a woman and of 'on-the-ground' extension officers in the current core group was noted. (The current core group will be replaced as soon as the Network will be established).

The name

The name Australasia-Pacific Extension Network is supported by more than 213 people. Most alternatives were largely minor variations on this name. Others were: Co-operative Change Network, Rural Co-ordinators Association and Agribusiness Network.

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Australia-Pacific Extension Conference

FULL PROCEEDINGS AVAILABLE NOW

All three volumes of the Proceedings of the Australia-Pacific Extension Conference are now available from the Book Distribution Centre, Department of Primary Industries, Queensland, GPO Box 46, Brisbane, Q 4001.

Cost is \$75 plus mailing cost.

They include the address by Michael Patton and other keynote speakers and a unique overview of what is happening in Extension in Australia, New Zealand and other countries.

Any profit from the sale of the proceedings will go to the Network, courtesy of the DPI.