



EXTENSIONNET

October 2003
Vol. 11 No. 1

Newsletter of the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (Inc)

A0029919P ISSN 1445-2111 Contact: 07 4160 0725 Australia Post approved PP347637000014

APEN Tassie forum set to impress

APEN members and others flock to Tasmanian forum

by Prof Frank Vanclay
Forum Co-ordinator, Tasmania

How do we 'extend extension'? What can we do to push the boundaries of our traditional extension roles and make them even more relevant to the social, ecological and industrial needs of the 21st century? What will someone in 'extension' be doing in 10 years' time?

The APEN 2003 Forum in Hobart will help answer some of these questions and, of course, many more. More than 120 people, from within APEN and further afield, have already registered and the standard of papers received has been excellent. As an extension professional, can you afford to miss out on this top-shelf networking event?

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Apple a day? Tasmania no longer uses the 'apple image' exclusively to promote itself. Maybe there's a lesson there for APEN. At the National Forum in Tasmania, meet peers, develop networks, and hear how others 'do extension'. Not to be missed! Haven't registered yet? Hurry!

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From the editor

This edition is overflowing with Forum news! The Tassie team have done a great job in putting the forum together. Hope you also enjoy the stories from Bob Macadam and Neale Price ... some insightful and well constructed arguments. *Darren Schmidt*



Slow to register?

You can still register for the APEN Hobart Forum, but you'll need to be quick. Email Amabel Fulton on naom.rds@bigpond.net.au, or check out the Forum corner on the APEN webpage. Deadlines for papers and posters have now closed.

APEN is pleased to acknowledge the support of:





The Forum Convenor is APEN member Professor Frank Vanclay, a Professorial Fellow in rural sociology at the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research University of Tasmania.

Induction workshop for the "New Extensionist"

Remember the first time you ever went to a conference? Or to an APEN activity? Did you feel out of your depth? A bit unsure of who to talk to and what questions to ask? To make sure newcomers feel welcome, the School of Agricultural Science at the University of Tasmania will host a special workshop for 'new' extensionists on Wednesday November 26 preceding the Extending Extension forum in Hobart.

The aim of the meeting is to give first timers to either conferences, or to extension, an opportunity to find out how to make the most of the APEN forum. Participants will be given an overview of the conference, and an introduction to some of the key people and other newcomers.

Topics to be covered: networking, jargon busting, getting the most out of conferences, and who's who at the APEN forum.

Participants will be allocated to mentors who will be available throughout the forum to help newcomers make sense of what is going on. The free workshop runs from 12.30 to 4pm and includes lunch. All forum delegates will be given an opportunity to register for this workshop.

APEN Hobart forum looking good! (cont'd from p1)

A number of 'themes' (what might be called 'business drivers' in the corporate world) will underline the structure and process of the Hobart Forum. These 'business drivers' will reflect the needs of the sorts of people that conventionally practise extension:

The nature of the beast

What do we do? Can we provoke some thinking about *our business* and to improve our practice: about what it is, the way we do it, and what works? We can address these questions along a range of parameters, but it is the process of active reflection that is important here, and the one that probably separates the good extensionists from the also-rans. No extension forum ever leaves out the question: 'What is extension?' - what does that say about our capacity for reflection?

Ying and yang

There will be a balance of small group activities and large sessions and there'll be ample time for networking and with social events peppered with the taste of Tasmania. Extension people are usually 'people' people - why spend all the time sitting down and taking notes when most of us want to get out for a coffee and an animated chat?

Shouldn't they call you an extension officer?


Part of the forum discussions will reflect the reality that other fields we are connected to and linked with also practise 'extension' under a host of different labels. Invited speakers will be drawn largely from outside traditional extension circles thereby exposing us to other but related disciplines and thinkings: outreach, interpretation, change management, community development,

public participation, adult education, environmental education, communication, evaluation, PR and marketing, health promotion, tourism promotion, organisational learning and the media. Listen for case studies illustrating best practice in our business.

Hobart, Tasmania - you're standing in it

Delegates will *know* they're in Tasmania! The taste and feel of Tasmania will extend from the selection of the venue and range of accommodation available through to the provision of food and refreshments, as well as through the optional field trips and sightseeing opportunities. Extension takes place 'on the ground'; so too should forums that focus on extension.

How to become a 'pracademic'

'Pracademia' is sometimes colloquially used to describe the thought that academic pursuits can also be solidly grounded in practice and needn't be high-flown or abstract to the point of uselessness. For many extensionists, this is not a new concept and most of our best use solid theory backed up by long practical experience virtually every day. However, the goal posts always change and the 'theory' of extension is no longer restricted to the realms of adult learning and agri-economic development. Consider these competing claims: public/private, farm/business, farmer/customer/client, opinion leaders/champions, change management/technology transfer/capacity building, extend/empower, agriculture/community ... see? Priorities change, systems change and extension changes. Grab your board, catch the wave ... it'll be a fun ride! 

Fun bits

Wednesday

Derwent Valley tour (extension focus)
'Tassie Day' - how do they 'do extension' in the Apple Isle?

'Induction Workshop' - new to extension?
This is your special event! (see column left)

Thursday

Cruise the Derwent on the historic MS Cartella for the conference dinner (see p9).

Friday

John Glover exhibition opening at the Tassie gallery. Extraordinary colonial art

Saturday-Sunday

East Coast weekender (post-forum) diverse farming systems focus. Top notch tucker, too.

The beautiful Derwent River



The baby and the bathwater

Why APEN should keep playing in the rural playground

By Associate Professor Bob Macadam

Rural Enablers, NSW

I pressed the point during an APEN Extension Policy workshop at the Women's College in Sydney in July this year that APEN should retain its rural focus. Being the good editor he is, Darren Schmidt asked me to put the case for this in writing (*flattery gets you everywhere - Ed*). Here are my thoughts on the subject. They draw heavily on recent work with my Rural Enablers colleagues on the link between rural capacity building and institutional arrangements¹ - Bob Macadam

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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APEN is a network of people who share two broad interests. The first is their involvement in extension. The second is their knowledge of and commitment to improving the situation of rural people and places.

I see APEN as the champion of improving the lot of rural people through the provision and facilitation among them of learning opportunities. The latter captures my appreciation of the purpose of extension and the former my notion of its context as far as APEN's mission is concerned.

A counter argument in recent years has APEN as a network of professional change agents - without regard to the context of their work. The underlying rationale is that the potential membership of APEN is then both larger and more diverse. Larger in the sense that it draws in the many change agents working in urban contexts, and more diverse because it sweeps in 'non-aggies'. My concern with this argument is that it may be a case of "throwing the baby out with the bath water".

The "baby" I see is the provision and facilitation of learning opportunities among rural people. This is still in its infancy, and owes much to its agricultural extension and adult education parents. The dirt in the "bath water" is the residue of a pre-occupation with agriculture and increased agricultural productivity as the goal of extension, and an implied belief that rural and agricultural are somehow synonymous.

Rural capacity building is a concept with the potential to accelerate the growth and development of the "baby" and APEN can play a leadership role in nurturing it. An underlying premise is that rural people are confronting challenges which are similar to but different to their urban counterparts. These can be summarised as a common interest in improving:

- business profitability and sustainability;
- industry profitability and sustainability;
- the ecological health of catchments;
- the well-being of residents; and of their communities.

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