

EXTENSIONNET

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALASIA-PACIFIC
EXTENSION NETWORK (INC)

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From the Editor

Dale Williams

Warm greetings to all members! This is one of the more different issues of *ExtensionNet*. It is a larger issue. It is probably the first of the new breed of quarterly issues (more on that later). Its content is, in large part, different to previous issues. This one focuses much on APEN, its functions and those who carry out those functions. We felt it could be informative to share organisational aspects, given new and changing membership.

I do apologise for not getting a November-December issue to you. I am intrigued that we did not have one article supplied on the suggested theme.

Let us transform ExtensionNet into a significant and topical **dialogue**. Claire, David and Horrie have given us an example in sharing their reflections of last December's Forum. Have courage to critique what is said by others. Disagree. Discuss. Otherwise *ExtensionNet* will be little more than information and opinion transfer. Where possible, link critique and theory to realities of personal experience. No-one has all the answers 'wrapped up'. You may rather pose thoughtful questions and dilemmas. Use a letter to the Editor or write a fuller article ... better still, organise an edition around an issue of your extension interest. Please take the initiative and discuss your plans with me. The Editorial Committee will support you. Like APEN overall, *ExtensionNet* is your publication. It grows or withers depending on the degree of member participation.

I am concerned that the perspectives of this issue are overwhelming male. There are implications in that for us all



Garren Knell (Agriculture WA) and Adrian Kennelly (DNRE, Vic) networking in front of the poster display at the APEN "Beyond Technology Transfer" Forum December 1996

about broadening our perspectives, our approaches to dialogue, our ways of learning and in getting in touch with the different experiences of others. Our articles also tend to regularly come from 'professional' extensionists. So I am all the more happy for Claire's contribution.

Thanks Janice Timms, ensuring articles on behalf of APEN sponsor, Qld Dept of Primary Industries. We have QDPI sponsor articles in this issue by Richard Clark & Gavin Graham and by Gerry Roberts.

The Tasmanian Chapter will provide the major contribution to the April-June issue. Editorial copy is required by 23rd May; July-September issue by 1st August; and October-December 24th October.

Please respond to the short questionnaire on page 14 about the purpose, character and frequency of ExtensionNet.

From the Chair

John Bourne

The APEN Forum "*Beyond Technology Transfer*" was held in Melbourne on 5th and 6th December 1996. It was a very stimulating two days for me. I would first like to congratulate the Melbourne Chapter, and in particular David Beckingsale, for an excellent program and a venue that encouraged good networking for participants.

Participants represented a range of locations, organisational affiliations and age groups. Mixing with people on the first morning immediately reinforced the value of APEN as a network. It was great to meet people who had only been names before, as well as to catch up with old friends.

The balance of presentations and case studies from both an institutional and practitioners' perspectives was very effective, as was the poster session

which allowed an even wider group of attendees to share a message. Mike Stephens' hypothetical on the Thursday evening was magic. It brought out some very innovative strategies on how to approach the customer who although faced with the right information, still didn't adopt.

The discussion sessions on Friday were very competently handled by group leaders. We were left with some good directions on what extra skills were needed to go 'Beyond the Technology

Transfer' paradigm, and where to look for them.

As incoming Chair, I am looking forward to the opportunities 1997 will bring, in particular the Conference in Albury-Wodonga. I am sure that you would also like me to express appreciation on behalf of all of us to **Terry Makin**, for his leadership of APEN since its emergence at the breakfast meeting during Aust-Pacific Extension conference at Surfer's Paradise on the Gold Coast in 1993. He

has worked hard to put APEN on the map and I am sure we all agree he has achieved that goal - **many thanks Terry**. Your efforts are much appreciated. (See his President's Report to the 1996 AGM, page 11).

The new Committee of Management met during the Melbourne Forum. It expressed a commitment to look for ways to continually improve networking and communication mechanisms within APEN. I expect to report more on that in the future. ❖

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SPONSOR'S MESSAGE:
The Challenges in Designing Learning and Information Systems in Extension

Richard Clark & Gavin Graham, Qld DPI.

In the agricultural knowledge and information system there is a large 'stockpile' of information (and knowledge) which could be utilised to improve agricultural practices. This information and knowledge has largely been developed by primary producers. Primary producers operate in an environment where time and money are at a premium. These people, like many urban business managers, are motivated by profit and lifestyle.

Our experience working with agricultural producers in Central Queensland indicates a relatively small proportion of primary producers have well-formulated questions about opportunities to improve their production systems. Those who do have them 'know what they want to know'. They are motivated to find answers and to access information and knowledge through a variety of methods and systems. However, from our experience, the greater proportion of producers may be:

* aware of opportunities or information, but do not know what questions to ask

* aware of opportunities or information

or knowledge, but they perceive there is an 'overload' of information and they do not know which opportunity or information is worth following up to significantly improve their enterprise

* unaware of opportunities or information. They do not know what they do not know

* they may not be motivated to pursue opportunities, information or knowledge.

The challenge for extension is to develop learning and information systems that meet this range of situations. We have been considering this issue and are developing a conceptual framework for the design of learning and information systems in extension. We would appreciate any comments from you on these points.

Richard Clark, Regional Extension Specialist
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Attention: Members who joined by coming to "Beyond Technology Transfer"

If you haven't returned the membership application form in your Conference folder, could you please send it to Rosemary at the Secretariat.

APEN'S New Committee of Management

John Bourne

It is important that members understand the role and activities of this committee, now that we have started a new year and have a new committee of management (CoM) in place. While much of the action of APEN happens within the Chapters through local meetings, seminars and workshops, it is the central committee who initiates activities and networking at a national level, across state boundaries, to the benefit of all of us.

The major activities of the CoM include:

* Teleconferences throughout the year to discuss and implement support mechanisms for the chapters, as well as monitoring finances.

A good example of this is the new **APEN Home Page** on the Web. This was discussed at several CoM meetings before finally approaching Charles Sturt University to assist us to get it up and running. This is only the start, of course, and we hope to pursue lots more electronic opportunities to improve our networking.

* Convening of an annual Extension Forum and National AGM jointly with a sponsoring Chapter.

18 to 21 November 1997

2nd Australasia Pacific Extension Conference

**Managing change
- building knowledge
and skills**

By committing ourselves to this each year we are able to provide a vehicle for extension people across Australia to meet, swap ideas and share experiences. Each year this event has brought new members into APEN and is helping us grow into a body that effectively represents the discipline of extension. This year we will have a **major conference in Albury**, instead of running a Forum. It will have an international flavour. It is five years since the initial APEN conference on the Gold Coast, so it is time to look at things again from a broader perspective.

* Publishing of *ExtensionNet*

This is probably the most visible action of the CoM to most members and is certainly a very valuable one. Much of the work is carried out by the Editorial working group lead by Dale Williams and Elwin Turnbull from UWS-Hawkesbury, while the printing and distribution is arranged by Rosemary Currie at the APEN Secretariat. However, to be effective, *ExtensionNet* relies on input from the Chapters. If you haven't put in an article recently or offered to act as a guest editor then I would urge you contact Dale.

* Seeking of sponsorship and other funding support for APEN.

We appreciate the support of our corporate sponsors (**Queensland Dept of Primary Industries, NSW Dept of Land & Water Conservation and Victorian Dept of Natural Resources and Environment**) and corporate members. We aim to be responsive to their needs, as well as continually aiming to put our activities and achievements before the wider public.

The CoM will continue to seek funding support from the Rural Research and Development Corporations where that is appropriate. Of course, activities such as seeking sponsorship are not just confined to the CoM. Many Chapters have already been very pro-active and successful in seeking support.

In order to be an effective committee it is critical that the members of the CoM represent extension activities across all states in both the private and public sectors. This year we have a good spread of members which will ensure that extension interests are well represented.

