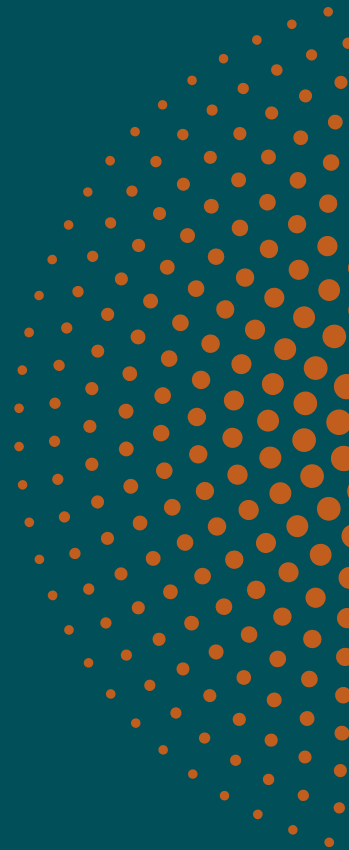


APEN 2025



APEN 2025 Conference Wrap Up

Editor:
Patricia Hamilton





Table of Contents

04	Message from the President	22	The Speakers
05	The Editors Corner	34	Around the Traps
07	Welcome from the Chair	47	The APEN BIG Fishbowl
10	Message from Conference Convenor	49	What's next?
12	Reliving APEN 2025 Conference	52	Thanks for the Chair

A message from the President.

Welcome to the Conference issue of the eBulletin.

As I continue to reflect on the messages shared at the APEN 2025 International Conference - Tech + Extension: A Powerful Partnership for Change, the question, 'What is Extension?' was raised frequently. Pat and I presented a poster on this particular question.

Our message, after much thought, was "Extension is about engagement, where we inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower, are dependent on the complexity of the change."

While I shared this message in a poster via the Whova conference app, I am happy to share my poster with anyone who is interested via president@apen.org.au I would also welcome feedback via [this link](#) as this shapes the messaging that we advocate through our social media in 2026.

This special issue of the eBulletin has captured many aspects of the involvement of so many conference participants. The wealth of shared experience, skills and knowledge will be welcomed from emerging practising extensionists through to the most experienced. There is always something to learn and challenge to grow.

Enjoy the read and continue to share with your extension community of practice. Enable change!

Warm regards,

Noel Ainsworth
APEN President

The Editor's Corner

Bringing a Snapshot of
the 2025 APEN
International Conference



Over the last 32 years, APEN has been the repository of a lot of hard-earned knowledge and wisdom about effective ways to collaborate, to seek positive relationships and to build capacity.

APEN, also, provides you, our members, with networking, professional development and representation opportunities.

Every two years APEN delivers an amazing International Conference. The 2025 APEN International Conference – Tech + Extension: A Powerful Partnership for Change brought together the drivers of change with new ways of doing things, new technology to test our adoption, opportunities to share our critical uncertainties, and challenged our values or beliefs.

After each APEN Conference, we have gathered a snapshot of highlights from delegates who participated to capture, “the importance of extension, the continual development of extension practice and the recognition of the contribution of extension to agriculture .“ [Ruth Nettle, 2017]

And so, we reached out to participants to share the highlights, and the determination to implement the learnings. The response has been overwhelming.

This APEN 2025 International Conference issue of the eBulletin takes you on a walk through the various activities, including the preconference master classes and the field trips, and networking events. The APEN 2025 Gala Dinner and Awards Night is more than a meal — it’s where we honour the heart and impact of extension. Whether you’re a long-time member or brand new to APEN, this conference was about recognising the people driving change — and making space for connection that lasts beyond the conference.

At home, when my passions took a rest after 2-3 days of absorbing all the incredible information, and sorting through just how much I can record in the eBulletin, my family reminded me, once again, that a human being is not a machine, which can run continuously for long periods on a single source of power. We need to not only re-energise our multi-dimensional, physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs but also to ensure our empathy, compassion, reflection and growth. [Really, I do try!]



I thank the many contributors, the organising team, the delegates (many came from afar) and the sponsors who have shared their experiences in a variety of ways. It was an event to remember! Once again, we can and will move positively, with passion, good governance, and build productive relationships to ensure APEN is the professional, dynamic network we value.

My deep appreciation to everyone who contributed to this snapshot of what was a fabulous conference. We encourage you to walk through the snapshot on your journey of enabling change as extensionists.

Warm regards,

Pat Hamilton
Editor



The welcome message from the Chair.

Hello and welcome. I am Caroline Coppo, Chair of the amazing program over the next two days.

What if... It was easy to encourage farmers to improve their farming practices, make farming practice changes because of research findings, environmental considerations, industry changes etc.

1. Imagine I'm an extension officer and I organise an on-farm meeting with graziers Bruce and Val:

Hi Guys. Let me share with you some great research that has just been completed about the benefits of ear tags to improve livestock management, pasture data and the overall profitability of grazing businesses.

After the discussion ... Can I make a few suggestions: that you implement the use of ear tags on your 500,000Ha property carrying 10,000 head of cattle.

Righty oh say Bruce and Val. That sounds like a great idea. Excuse us, as we've got a few things to do to make that happen.

2. Imagine I'm an extension officer and I organise an on-farm meeting with cane farmer Joe:

Hi Joe. Haven't seen you for a while but you must have seen all the news coverage about how cane farmers are destroying the Great Barrier Reef with all the extra fertiliser they are applying to their farms.

Can I make a few suggestions: that you change the brand of fertilisers you are using, the fertiliser application rates and timing of fertiliser, across your 500hectare Wet Tropics farm.

Righty oh says Joe. That sounds like a great idea. Excuse me, as I've got a few things to do to make that happen.

You get the picture. Imagine this scenario in your own line of work as an extension officer. If it were this easy to encourage farmers to make farming practice changes simply because of research findings, environmental considerations or industry changes, wouldn't that be great.

Unfortunately, perhaps, but realistically, agricultural industries are complex.

Farming is complex. Depending on its size an individual farm may exhibit a range of soil types and topographies and experience different micro-climates. Farming systems vary across agriculture, machinery varies, technologies vary. The field of extension is complex. Extension is about working with individuals and communities, in socially, economically and technically complex environments, in order to facilitate change. You've got the picture. It's complex.

Oh, but how could I forget the people involved. PEOPLE are complex!! Farmers, extension officers, everyone is complex. Just ask the social scientists and behavioural scientists who are part of this conference today. AND so, EXTENSION is Complex with many challenges.

Imagine if you had to fulfil your role as an extension professional alone. Understanding your audience, your farmers, the issues, the complexity and then how to develop effective extension activities all by yourself. Isolated by industry and/or issue and/or distance.

Fortunately, this is not the case. You are attending the 2025 APEN International Conference which will help you find solutions to your own extension challenges by learning and sharing with others who may be facing similar challenges.

You will learn... how others are working with various technologies to enhance extension and practice change outcomes including implementing ag technologies, AI and augmented reality. We will hear from farmers and practitioners. People who work on the ground, policy advisors and academics. How others are addressing complex extension challenges in Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific and Asia.

There is a wealth of extension understanding and experience within these four walls, and the best thing is the outstanding generosity of the APEN extension community, of everyone here.

Be curious and bold and brave.

Be open to improving your own extension practices, in order to better work with farmers and farming communities to improve their farming practices.

Network and have fun,

Caroline Coppo

APEN Conference Chair



A message from Beck Burgess, Conference Convenor

The theme Tech + Extension: A Powerful Partnership for Change hit home for me. Technology is an incredible enabler, but it's people who make it meaningful. Our job in extension is to help others make sense of it in their own world - to translate, to connect, to walk alongside. That's where real change happens.

A few highlights really stood out:

- The opening plenary - looking around at a sea of faces from right across Australia, NZ and beyond, all there because they care about how we help others adapt and thrive.
- Sessions that weren't just theory, but real stories - early-career extensionists stepping up, producers sharing their experiences, practical examples of what actually works on the ground.
- The conversations in between. Sitting next to someone new and hearing how their challenges, hopes and ideas mirror your own. Realising again that we're all trying to create change in our own patches - and that we're better when we learn from each other.

I came away from Brisbane feeling hopeful. Hopeful that our profession still matters and does create impact. Hopefully, that the work we do - building trust, creating space for learning, helping people make their own choices - is more relevant than ever.

A huge thank you to the APEN Board and all the Working Committees for making it happen. The hours behind the scenes, the logistics, programming, sponsorships and communication - it all showed.

To every delegate, presenter and sponsor -thank you. It's your willingness to show up, share, listen and connect that makes APEN what it is.



That's where the real impact happens.

Here's to turning inspiration into action, keeping the conversations alive,
and continuing to bridge technology with human connection.

Regards,

Beck Burgess
Beck Burgess Consulting

0438262966
www.beckburgessconsulting.com



Tech + Extension:



A Powerful Partnership for Change

In a rapidly evolving world, extension professionals are leading the charge in enabling meaningful change across agriculture, natural resource management, and regional communities. So many of you joined the conference team in Brisbane as we explored how the intersection of technology and extension is shaping a smarter, more sustainable future.

This three-day face-to-face event brought together extension professionals, producers, researchers, policymakers, and innovators from across Australia and the Asia-Pacific. The program featured high-impact keynotes, interactive panels, practical sessions, and valuable networking opportunities.

Delegates:

- Engaged with leading thinkers and practitioners in agricultural innovation and extension
- Explored how AI, robotics, and cultural intelligence are transforming our profession with Darren Warren from USA
- Connected with over 260 delegates from across the region
- Shared our knowledge through abstract presentations and dynamic discussion forums
- Strengthened our professional practice with insights and tools to apply in our work



It was inspiring, motivating, heaps of networking, lots of exchanges of contact details and plans for future interactions. Heaps of praise for the conference team under, the Chair of the Conference Committee, Caroline Coppo, and the Convenor, Beck Burgess.

To capture everything is daunting

- > Change starts with us! What can we, extension experts, scientists/researchers, policy makers, managers – everyone - do differently?
- > Many of us, being reflective thinkers, are still absorbing and dissecting all the information from Darren Warren's fascinating presentation.
- > There is so much more to think about.

'If only everyone could see things clearly as [David Warren] does' (apology to Life of Brian).



The Master Classes and The Field Trips

Pre Conference



The two Masterclasses provided an opportunity to learn directly from industry experts in an intensive, practical setting. These sessions were tailored for professionals ready to dive deeper into the strategic, technical, or interpersonal challenges of extension.

The Master class: 25 Years of Rural Innovation with Nicole Reichelt and Prof Ruth Nettle

Ruth Nettle leads the Rural Innovation Research Group (RIRG), a team of social scientists which combine research and practice. Nicole Reichelt, as part of the team, is a Research Fellow in Technology Assessment. The RIRG's focus is on the people and practices involved in implementing change.

Their master classroom took us through 25 years of Rural Innovation research, bringing practical tools, insights, and lessons from the past to tackle today's extension and agricultural innovation challenges. The journey which blended social research with real-world application showed us the way to helping practitioners work with farmers, advisers, and stakeholders to address current and future industry needs.

As we reflect on the practical applications, there were lessons that we should not forget.

Many thanks to Nicole and Ruth for sharing such a wealth of information based on the research of 25 years.



The Master Class:

Social Media Bootcamp with Liz Ballantyne from Media Mortar

Noel Ainsworth was one of 20-30 people who attended the practical workshop, Social Media Bootcamp, with Liz Ballantyne from Media Mortar. This is Noel's response.

"I quickly realised that I am old school given that I take videos in landscape form. But that didn't matter as Liz catered to a wide array of social media skill levels.

Being good at social media is about executing planned, relevant marketing and content strategies that don't just connect with producers, advisers, and industry stakeholders, but that also build long-term, profitable relationships.

Liz outlined strategies to translate technical knowledge into engaging content, choose the right platforms for different audiences, and create messages that support trust, learning, and practice change.

For me Liz helped encourage participants to look beyond using social media to build hype around planned events.

More than just knowing your audience, Liz stepped through how to build a following using content pillars in social media planning.

With this introduction from Liz, at least now I know some terminology to search for resources and examples to support my foray into the world of social media."

Our thanks to Liz, whose practical workshop delivered how we, as extension professionals, can use social media as a powerful tool to connect with producers, advisers, and industry stakeholders. As Noel suggested, these tools will strengthen our role in today's digital extension landscape.



The Field Trips



THE BUS TRIP

The bus trip was full of laughter, and chatter as we left the Brisbane Showground and were on our way to explore Bribie Island or visit places along the southern circuit.

Thanks to the organisers of the Field Trips. It was a great opportunity to expand our extension skills.



COASTAL DISCOVERY – BRIBIE ISLAND BOUND

The full-day adventure took us into the heart of aquaculture innovation, where we ensured that our footwear was fully enclosed, and we were trusted to adhere to biosecurity measures.

Highlights included going behind the scenes on a working site tour and then venturing out to get the inside scoop on Fire Ant site demonstrations and biosecurity.

The seven-hour trip exposed us to magnificent coastal landscapes, fantastic guides, and conversations that will be lasting.



SOUTHERN CIRCUIT – CROPS, RESEARCH & RURAL ROADS

After travelling through Queensland's rich farming country, our first stop was a guided tour of the Gatton Research Station.

The discussion with the team, who are shaping cutting-edge agricultural research, was very enlightening.

The next stop took us to Tosar Crop Research Centre for a rare behind-the-gates look at what's driving productivity and sustainability in modern cropping systems.

At both places, we ensured that our footwear was fully enclosed, and that we could be trusted to adhere to biosecurity measures. The time on the bus gave us time to network, swap ideas, and comment on what we learnt – all inspiring encounters.



Committee Reflections - A Rejuvenating Success

We were very fortunate to have the expertise of a dynamic group of experienced people who volunteered to be on the committee. This team learnt a great deal along the way as they captured an exciting program with great keynote speakers, dynamic master classes, exciting field trips, a diverse group of presenters, eye-catching posters, a great sponsorship team, all recognising the outstanding work from practising extensionists and the support of our members.

The impressive ‘think tank’ and action group consisted of Conference

- Chair Caroline Coppo (Nth QLD Regional Coordinator & QLD DAF);
- Conference Organiser Bec Burgess, (Bec Burgess Consulting;
- Event Support, Krystel Gough (Brisbane Economic Development Agency);
- APEN President Noel Ainsworth (QLD DAF);
- Treasurer Roy Murray-Prior (APEN Treasurer, Agribiz RD&E Services);
- Justine Bailey (UniSQ); Emma Grabham (AgriFutures),
- Ossie Lang (RMCG);
- Peter Long (Peter Long Consulting past APEN Director);
- Jane Oorschot (TNQ Drought Hub);
- Lauren Thornton (Regional Coordinator APEN, Extension Officer FRDC)
- Jo Palmer (APEN Communications Consulting (acting));
- Olivia Weatherburn (APEN Director, Beef+Lamb NZ);
- Jane Wightman (Hort Innovation).

Feedback from the members of the Conference Team

Emily Harrington | TNQ Drought Hub

Emily had the pleasure of being part of the Communications Committee for the 2025 APEN Conference and attending the event for the first time last month.

Coming from a communications background and being fairly new to the world of agricultural extension, Emily was keen to learn more about how the two disciplines connect. “I wanted to bring that insight back to my role at the TNQ Drought Hub and make sure what we’re producing is meaningful, practical, and valuable for our stakeholders.

Coming out of the conference it dawned on me how much communications and extension overlap, you really can’t have one without the other. Communications share the message - but extension takes it that step further, creating real-life connections that empower people to act and make change. It was fascinating to hear from so many passionate people across research, industry, and extension all working towards the same goal of helping producers and communities adapt, innovate, and thrive.

Being part of the committee was also an amazing opportunity for my own professional growth. I learned from some of the best, contributed to an event that celebrates agriculture, and met some inspiring and generous people along the way.”

My appreciation for the opportunity to grow.

Regards,
Emily



Emma Grabham | Senior Manager – Adoption & Communication | AgriFutures

The 2025 APEN Conference was, without doubt, a standout success and the AgriFutures team is incredibly proud to have played a part in bringing it to life. From the outset, the goal was to create a dynamic, inclusive, and forward-thinking event that celebrated the diversity and depth of the extension community. Judging by the feedback, engagement, and energy throughout the conference, I believe we achieved just that.

One of the most rewarding aspects was the seamless integration of hybrid participation. This approach not only broadened our reach but also allowed regional members and corporate partners—many of whom face current travel restrictions—to engage meaningfully. Next time, let's make this a game-changer with centralised hubs of people attending via this hybrid model. I'm confident it can become a staple of APEN conferences.

The sessions themselves were rich in content and conversation. From thought-provoking keynotes to interactive panels and practical workshops, the program was carefully curated to reflect the evolving needs of our sector. The diversity of voices—practitioners, researchers, farmers, educators, and students—brought an authenticity and vibrancy to the discussions that was both inspiring and energising.

Behind the scenes, the collaboration among the organising committee, communications team, and facilitators was exceptional. It was a joy to work alongside such a committed and creative group of people. The camaraderie and shared purpose were evident in every detail. Special thanks to Beck Burgess and my fellow members of the comms working group for their tireless efforts to be sure our messaging was clear, timely, and impactful.

Another highlight was the sense of community that permeated the days. Whether in-person or online, attendees were eager to connect, share, and learn from one another. The use of tools like WHOVA helped bridge the physical divide, enabling real-time interaction and Q&A across the hybrid format. It was heartening to see how technology, when thoughtfully applied, can enhance—not replace—the human connection at the heart of extension work.



We were also thrilled to have many of our fellow RDCs in attendance. Their presence not only underscored the importance of collaboration across the sector but also sparked valuable conversations about future partnerships and innovation.

Perhaps most importantly, this conference felt like a rejuvenation point for APEN. It reignited our collective energy, reminded us of our shared purpose, and set a bold tone for the future. The success of this conference is a testament to what's possible when we embrace innovation, collaboration, and a commitment to personal and professional growth.

As we look ahead, I'm excited about the future of APEN and the role we can all play in shaping it. The 2025 Conference has set a new benchmark—and I'm already looking forward to what we can achieve together next. (And yes, I'm all good to share that this was initially drafted with AI assistance!)

Regards,
Emma

Peter Long | Consulting Agricultural Extension Services

Attending the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network 2025 International Conference was an incredibly valuable and a great networking opportunity. I genuinely appreciated the diversity of participants' extension experiences, the considerable number of younger professionals and as always how welcoming everyone was. It was great to see the near 230 gather for the 2025 APEN conference with more attending online.

From the moment I arrived at the welcome BBQ at the Stockman's Bar I was impressed by the level of organisation and the diversity of participants gathered from different regions and professional backgrounds. The Brisbane Showground conference venue was great with a generous sized main conference room and close by breakout rooms for the abstract presentations. The conference AV was faultless, and the catering was of a high standard.



The keynote speakers set an inspiring tone, sharing insights that challenged conventional thinking and encouraged innovative approaches within our field. Our US keynote speaker, David Warren, conveyed how AI can empower extension professionals to deliver faster insights and improved decision making. He communicated very well to the audience and David challenged us to add AI to our everyday extension tool kit.

The Battle of the Practitioners, farmer presentations and fishbowl sessions added experiences and insights to apply in our everyday extension projects and practices.

One of the highlights for me was the opportunity to attend the abstract presentations which focused on current trends and emerging technologies. The presenters who come for all facets of extension and diverse sectors shared their extension approaches and practical experiences. I always come away from the abstract sessions pleasantly surprised with something new I have learned.

Networking was another major benefit of the conference. I was able to connect and reconnect with others who share similar interests and goals, leading to conversations and potential future collaborations. Having now attended many APEN conferences, I was energised by the number of younger extension professionals attending and sharing their great work. It is a big positive for the future of extension.

Overall, the conference met my expectations and provided me with new knowledge, practical tools, and a renewed sense of motivation to apply what I learned in my work.

Regards,
Peter

Thanks, from the Delegates

The APEN community thank the Conference Committee for their enthusiasm, their talent, experience and understanding of the 'world of extension'. There was much chatter on people's social media channels acknowledging the influence and success of the 2025 APEN International Conference and many sent us their feedback.

Well done!



The Keynote Speakers



David Warren: Human + Machine: How AI is Changing the Role of the Extension Professional

David Warren from Oklahoma State University & the US Extension Foundation explored how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can supercharge extension – delivering faster insights, personalised advice, and better decision-making, all while keeping the human connection at the heart of our work. It was a powerful journey through the evolving landscape of AI in agricultural extension.

What is AI? – “replication of facets of human intelligence using statistical predictions based on massive datasets. In practical terms: Automation of knowledge work.”

What AI isn't – “AI can optimise how work is done, but it cannot tell us what work should be done, or why it matters.”

Artificial Intelligence isn't a distant frontier anymore – it's here, transforming how we generate, share, and act on information. David challenged our mindset, trust, ethics, and ensured that technology elevates extension professionals rather than replaces them.

The impact on the audience was profound. David took us through a pathway of the whys and the how and the effects. David's advice included, “Start today. Learn continuously. Learn with values. Collaborate and share what you have learnt. Ask AI to teach you about itself. AI is a partner, not a decision-maker. Double check all the answers. Have a plan. AI's impact will be BIGGER and FASTER than the Internet.”



David's Feedback on LinkedIn "Had a great experience giving the keynote Human + AI at the APEN conference in Brisbane Australia a few weeks ago. Great people and great conversations!

The feedback from delegates was consistent.

"A tool we can't sit back and watch." (Pip Job)

"David described, "a tool that can help analyse and process information faster than ever before, but one that still relies on human judgment, relationships, and integrity." (Paige Cross)

"Key takeaways for me included David Warren's discussion on what AI cannot replace: trust built through personal relationships, local knowledge, ethical judgment, empathy, and the ability to truly understand community needs. (Chi Nguyen)

"David Warren urged us to embrace AI as a tool to enhance – not replace – our work. While AI handles data efficiently, it lacks the empathy, creativity, and ethical judgement that define effective extension practice. His message was clear: every organisation needs a deliberate AI Strategy." (Amanda Scott)

The consensus from the audience: it is amazing how much AI can help us, if we only take time to use it.

APEN thanks David for his enormous contribution to the conference. He stayed for the whole conference and was "brave" enough to sit in the "fishbowl" to face more questions.



The Keynote Speakers

Hilton Collier: Blending Tradition & Technology – an Indigenous-led Innovation in New Zealand



Setting the scene, Hilton shared with us some events that were driving change for the Māori people, their traditional beliefs and culture, where strong leadership, sacrifice and hope were driving change in the management of the land and responding to climatic events. which provided them with food. He raised some questions which are being dealt with – “Can we afford to ignore nature’s impact?” Are we looking after the land? How do you optimise land use? How do you change behaviours? Why do you need to bring everyone along the journey? What happens when things don’t go according to plan?”

Briefly, the community cooperative has three strategic pillars:

- Advocacy and Policy
- Unlocking the value from our lands
- Trade – creating new ways, building relationships

The people are working to overcome the ‘white noise versus economic reality by optimising their land use in knowing what to plant where – Whanau. Whenua. Whakapapa - why, who, how.

Hilton portrayed the face of tomorrow’s farm manager as a pipeline of thinkers and doers who draw on the expertise of technical people to work with local translators – it is about the community.



APEN thanks Hilton for sharing such a positive story. Full of practical innovation. And, for sitting in the fishbowl where he contributed great advice.

Meet Farmer Mark Mortimer and Farmer Scott Samwell



Mark is a mixed sheep and cropping farmer from Tullamore in Central NSW, capturing information, as Manager of the Centre Plus Poll Merino Central Nucleus from electronic tags by the storing, and analysing of this data.

Mark shared his adoption plan: make what I already know easier; make data a by-product of management; improve labour efficiency. His advice and practices resonated with so many of us on the land as we grapple to keep abreast of the latest technology.



Scott is a third-generation vegetable grower from Mt Barker, South Australia, perfecting the art of Brussels sprout production.

Both are leaders and strong adopters of cutting-edge agtech as they drive change in their businesses and communities.

Scott dealt with the challenges of pests, using optical technology to manage the different brussels sprout crops, and shared harvesting by machine. The video was great to see how two people can gather 2-6 tonnes a day. It, also, demonstrated the importance of needing safety measurement practices.

Questions covered the cost of innovation, running a business, the pitfalls faced by early innovators, the involvement of extension officers, building relationships with growers, attracting grants. Two different approaches. Both offered different ways of using technology successfully.

APEN appreciated the practical applications and the sharing of time-consuming hours to be the best in their field. Strong characteristics of Mark and Scott.

The Battle of the Practitioners



Moderator

Jayne Cuddihy

Panel

Ebony Faichney

Dr Ruth Nettle

Jeanette Long

Ian Perkins
(virtual)

What a dynamic foursome! From various regions Ebony, a Queenslander in the early stages of her extension journey, Ruth from Victoria, combining her academic career with the practicalities of extension, Jeanette from South Australia, a farmer. mentor, coach and great facilitator, and Ian from Queensland with his wide experience and now working with a peer-to-peer indigenous group.

Guided by Jayne, the group responded very frankly to some very thought-provoking questions.

In a changing world what stays constant? “Importance of bringing people together”. “You are not the most important person in the world”.

What keeps you working in the field of extension?

“Variety, dynamics, different pathways, helping and influencing people, building trust, “sitting under a tree” (attracted curiosity , leading to engagement.)

Is the title of the work we do important? ‘Extension Officers, Communication Coordinator, Ag Consultant...?’

Where have the panel learnt their extension skills?

Going to APEN conferences, attending sessions with Jeanette and Ian, enrolling in tertiary courses with Ruth, continually working on the job with Ebony. Talking, sharing skills, knowledge, experience and listening to all the stories.

What is the future of extension?

“So many words of wisdom to take home. It was a fabulous, interactive session.”





I had the great joy of attending and speaking at the 2025 APEN Conference. This was my second time at this fantastic event. As always, one of the biggest highlights was the networking. It was wonderful to reconnect with familiar faces and meet so many new ones. The conversations, laughs, and shared passion for extension reminded me why this community is so special.



One of the aspects I love most about APEN is the cross-sector sharing. I spent time in sessions led by presenters from the livestock sector and was struck by how similar their challenges, wins, and goals are to those of us in horticulture. Hearing fresh perspectives from other industries always fills my tank and sparks new ideas.

This year's strong focus on AI and technology was both exciting and a little confronting, but in the best way! I came away convinced that AI is something to embrace, not fear. The emphasis on human nature alongside tech was a reassuring reminder that people remain at the heart of what we do.

A real highlight for me was being part of a panel session with Jeanette Long, Ruth Nettle, and Ian Perkins. It was an honour to share insights as part of the next generation of ag practitioners. If you're ever asked to join a conference panel, I challenge you to be brave and accept. It was a great experience. The energy in the room was infectious, and I left feeling truly inspired.

Farming is getting tougher, and it's easy to get bogged down in the daily grind. The APEN community provides a safe and supportive space to come together, learn, recharge, and remind us why we do what we do. Going back to work, I will be implementing some of the new ideas learnt at this dynamic conference

Regards,
Ebony

The Awards and Prizes

At the gala dinner, APEN President Noel Ainsworth conferred life membership on Jeanette Long and Denise Bewsell and presented the APEN Awards for Excellence in Extension (Open/Experienced and the Amabel Fulton Award for Young Professionals). Congratulations to our award recipients: Krystie Bremer, and Diah Fitria Widhiningsih and Honourable Mention to Emily Scott.

In 2018, at the 25-year celebration in Brisbane, the APEN Board decided to introduce a Life Membership Award” to honour Members who have displayed exceptional, loyal, outstanding service, and contribution by providing a measurable benefit to the organisation over an extended period of time.



Jeanette Long | Life member

Jeanette Long is a passionate supporter and advocate of APEN and has been a very significant influencer on promoting the role of extension in extension practices over 25 years. Jeanette’s strong commitment to rural and regional community issues were evident in her many roles with APEN, member, coordinator, board of management, delivering a range of professional development leadership programs, ExtensionChat, facilitating meetings and workshops, as a mentor, a coach and attending ten APEN Conferences, including Convening the 2015 conference in Adelaide, and President from 2014-2017.

During her time as President, Jeanette was keen to increase the opportunities for member interaction by developing a social media strategy in taking an active role to increase our use of Facebook, Twitter and the LinkedIn groups. At the 2023 APEN Conference, Jeanette was presented with the APEN Award for Excellence in Extension for her outstanding work across the field of extension.



Denise Bewsell | Life member

Denise Bewsell has made sustained and exceptional contributions to both extension practice and APEN. She has served as New Zealand Regional Coordinator, APEN secretary, and management committee member from 2009 to 2015, providing strong governance and representation. Denise was Convenor of the 2013 APEN International Conference in Christchurch and Co-Convenor of the 2023 Hobart International Conference.

She has coordinated the APEN Reading Brace since 2016, and shared extension wisdom through the Enablers of change blog posts since 2019, supporting professional learning across the network. Denise has also delivered numerous regional training workshops, webinars, and masterclasses, and served as Assistant Editor of the Rural Extension & Innovation Systems Journal from 2021.

In 2022 she received the APEN Award for Excellence in Extension by an Experienced Professional for her leadership in farmer-led action research models, now regarded internationally. Her contributions show a career-long commitment to building capability, collaboration, and furthering APEN's interests.

Life members, Terry Makin, John James. Jeff Coutts, Ruth Nettle, Roy-Murray Prior, Pat Hamilton, Terry Parmenter, Graham Harris, and Honorary Life member, Roe Currie, welcome Jeanette Long and Denise to the team.



Krystie Bremer | The APEN Award for Excellence in Extension

Over the last five years, Krystie Bremer, as Executive Officer of the Gascoyne Catchments Group, has coordinated and delivered a wide range of extension activities, connecting producers with practical tools, research and training to fit the local needs. Her workshops, peer learning, one-on-one support and community events over a very large area in remote pastoral regions, is informative, relevant and adopted on the ground. Krystie's work applies extension principles that drive adoption.

Her commitment to learning, (Krystie completed the ARLP trial in 2024), directly benefits the producers and partners she works with, brings fresh ideas, proven methods, and an ever-growing network back into the region.

Krystie's response on receiving the award.

"I was incredibly honoured and a bit speechless, to receive the APEN Award for Excellence in Extension. It's humbling to be recognised amongst such a passionate group of professionals but more importantly, it reflects the work done with and for our community.

I've been told, recently, that it's okay to toot your own horn occasionally, so here it is: this award represents countless conversations on the phone, in the paddock, at the kitchen tables, and the ongoing effort to build trust between producers, organisations, and researchers. Thank you to the many people who continue to walk alongside Gascoyne Catchment Group, the producers, partners, and collaborators who make this work possible.

It is a powerful reminder that extension should be meaningful, grounded in community and trust.

Thank you to everyone who shared, challenged and connected with integrity, collaboration, diversity, professionalism and connectedness at the heart of it all.



Diah Fitria Widhiningsih | The Amabel Fulton Award

Diah Fitria Widhiningsih began her extension journey by founding Bercak Pustaka in 2018 after witnessing the low learning motivation among children in her neighbourhood. She created Mini Tentative Research for Kids (Mini T-ReKs) to raise leadership and critical thinking skills by combining teamwork games with art and agriculture, helping children understand how mathematics applies to daily life in more attractive ways. She then realized the importance of involving families in agrarian communities to ensure lasting change.

Working with the Agricultural Extension and Communication Study Program at Universitas Gadjah Mada strengthened her professional skills in engaging farming families and expanding her networks. When the Covid-19 disrupted local livelihoods, she and her volunteers developed a socio-entrepreneurial program to promote waste management and family resilience.

Women learned to turn banana-plant residues into marketable food products, men produced organic fertilizer, and children supported these actions through home gardening. Today, several households continue using waste for compost, and training participants have developed a new product.

Initially self-funded, the programs later gained financial support through Pertamina Foundation's Young Leader program in 2023. Fitria believes that limited funding should never stop us from creating change. Start small, stay consistent, and greater impact will grow through collaboration. Our thanks to this amazing young woman – a superb role model.

Fitria believes that limited funding should never stop us from creating change. Start small, stay consistent, and greater impact will grow through collaboration.



Emily Scott | Amabel Highly Commended Award

Emily has been a well organised and innovative supporter of industry best practice in AUSVEG's VegNET in Gippsland. Her influence has covered improving growers' productivity, profitability and sustainability and the uptake of technology across the vegetable industry in Gippsland, Victoria. Her current role as Engagement Officer of Horticulture Standards with Agriculture Victoria focusses on Grower/industry advocacy, demonstration events, industry adoption, industry impact and best practice.

APEN appreciates the sponsorship of J & J Coutts.

Best Research and Field Notes Prizes at the APEN Conference


Abstract, presentations, soapbox sessions and creativity with posters is a great opportunity to share your work, ideas and experiences. To be recognised by your peers as a recipient of best research, field notes and best poster is an honour.


Dr Roy Murray-Prior, Board Director and Dr Severine Van Brommel, Editor APEN's REIS Journal presented the prizes during lunch at the 2025 conference. Prizes were awarded for the best Research Paper and best Field Notes Paper submitted for publication in APEN's Rural Extension and Innovation Systems journal (REISJ).

The best Research Paper award was won by Clinton Muller, Mary Johnson, William Kerua, Alan Petersen and Solomon Nagaunavou for their paper entitled "From soil to collective change: Farmer-led adaptation of the Landcare LIFE Model in Fiji".

Bruce Hancock and Sean Miller won the prize for the best Field Notes paper that was entitled "SA Livestock Consultants lead the development of the next generation of the grazing livestock workforce".

Judging was overseen by the REIS journal's Editorial Board with criteria used to assess papers submitted for publication in the journal. We hope these papers will be developed for publication in an edition of the journal to be released by the end of the year.





The selection panel were very impressed by the relevance of the papers to cover both theory and practice.

Meanwhile you can still develop your abstract and presentation to submit to the journal by the end of January 2026 for potential publication in the journal next year.

See <http://www.apen.org.au/rural-extension-and-innovation-systems-journal> for further information on submitting papers.

Best poster prize went to Ellie Buchanan and Ruth Nettle for their poster entitled “Factors influencing the engagement of farm workers in training: A case-study in the New South Wales dairy industry”. Conference participants judged the posters using six criteria that they entered using the Whova app.



Comments from Around the Traps

- RMCG was pleased to sponsor two students from the University of Melbourne to attend the event – Reiss Lin and Phillip Koch – who shared some of their insights below.

Reiss Lin:

"This APEN experience was incredibly valuable for me. As an agricultural extension student, the event provided an excellent opportunity to connect with extension professionals from various industries. This allowed me to exchange insights with them on both the theoretical and practical aspects of agricultural extension.

"This event also made me deeply aware of the gap between theory and practice in extension work. Most extension projects are highly reliant on stakeholder facilitation and communication skills, which is challenging for students or early-career professionals. This made it clear to me that for students aspiring to a career in agricultural extension, this is a crucial skill that needs to be proactively cultivated in the near future.

"A particular highlight was reconnecting with the RMCG team following my two-month internship with them last year. It was very helpful to discuss what I have learned over the past year and my thoughts on my post-graduation career path."



Comments from Around the Traps

Phillip de Carvalho Koch:

"The 2025 APEN Conference was an incredible experience that deepened my understanding of agricultural extension. I gained valuable insights into how extension connects research, practice and people to create meaningful and lasting change. My highlight was the range of discussions and presentations that explored the art and theories of facilitation, and how important trust, empathy and curiosity are to being an effective practitioner.


"I was also inspired by the passion of everyone I met, from professionals with decades of experience to people of all ages at the beginning of their journey. Their willingness to share experiences and ideas made the event insightful and energising. I am especially grateful to the RMCG team members, who were generous with their time, advice and words of encouragement. Their input made the experience all the more valuable as I continue developing as a thoughtful and people-focused facilitator."

Finally, a huge congratulations to our team including:

Senior Consultant Clinton Muller and his co-authors on receiving the Best Research Paper for 'From soil to collective change: Farmer-led adaptation of the Landcare LIFE Model in Fiji'

Consultant Ellie Buchanan on receiving Best Poster for 'Enhancing farm worker training engagement: A case study in NSW dairy industry'

Consultants **Morag Anderson** also presented a poster on the Resilient Farming Tas project (Tas Farming Futures), Ossie Lang joined the organising committee for another successful year and Tayla Field blitzed the points tally for engagement through the conference app.



The Enablers of Change Academy is launched at the Conference

We're excited to share that we officially launched the Enablers of Change Academy at last week's APEN Conference in Brisbane—and what a launch it was! There was standing room only, plenty of buzz, and even time for a celebratory selfie (we're getting better at remembering to take these!). Thanks to all our lovely followers who joined us for this event!

The Academy is all about helping those who enable change—farm advisors, extension practitioners, and others working across agriculture and NRM—to build the skills, confidence, and mindset needed to create real impact. Delivered as either in-person or online, our workshops and courses are practical, engaging, and designed to strengthen capability where it matters most—on the ground with farmers and industry.

From quick, focused sessions to immersive multi-day programs, you'll find courses covering topics like designing extension plans, building trust and rapport, applying behavioural science, using AI in extension, and extension fundamentals. Our programs are non-accredited by choice. That keeps them affordable, flexible, and focused on practical, work-ready skills you can apply straight away. Read all about our approach and the training we have planned on the [academy's website](https://www.enablersofchange.com.au/academy/). [For further information see key date for further information <https://www.enablersofchange.com.au/academy/>]



Ag Institute Australia (AIA) members from across the country were out in force at the 2025 Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN) Conference in Brisbane, engaging in a week of professional development, innovation, and collaboration in agricultural extension.

SA members of Ag Institute Australia enjoying the conference



AIA Members Bruce Hancock, Elke Hocking, Jordan Norman, Rachel Davis, Penny Schulz and Ryan Hall.

AIA's National Student Compendium Draws Strong Interest at APEN 2025. Ag Institute Australia (AIA) made a powerful impression at the 2025 Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN) Conference in Brisbane, where Jordan Norman, AIA Student Compendium Project Officer, delivered a Soapbox presentation titled "The Student Compendium: Building a national digital platform to connect students to primary industries and industry to students."

<https://www.aginstitute.com.au/news-item/21135/aia-national-student-compendium-draws-strong-interest-at-apen-2025>



A New Zealander's point of view

It was a real privilege to attend APEN again and as always there were many reflections that rattled through my brain on the way home to New Zealand. Here is just a few:

- How great it is to be in a forum where extension is not only understood but championed! One of the real benefits is meeting other passionate people and hearing and sharing their stories and issues. The challenge for us all is to keep those connections alive – watch out Luke next time in Queensland I am keen to see how hydro microphones work with in the feeding prawns
- AI (not Artificial Insemination as in the Dairy Sector) was a constant theme for all attending. The challenge for us to embrace it as a decision support tool rather than decision making tool in this next period.
- The workshop format was brilliant and really, I was fascinated by the Valeria Bellans work on agriculture extension programme design and will be watching keenly to see how this develops
- One of things I am going to SWIPE (Steal with Integrity and Pride from everyone) was Mark Mortimer's axioms for adoption

1. Make what I do already easier
2. Make data a byproduct of management
3. Improve labour efficiency/gross hours!

Lastly it was great to see our extension “rock stars” honoured with life memberships and others being nominated for awards. A challenge for us all is to nominate our peers to put a spotlight on the great work they do.

Regards

Simon Sankey

Regional Team Coach Dairy NZ



News from NT

> **Lauren Thornton | Extension Officer, Northern Territory**

Fisheries Research and Development Corporation – FRDC | APEN NT Regional Coordinator

Laure has experience with cross cultural community engagement and a passion for capability and capacity-building across all fisheries sectors, particularly women and Indigenous enterprises.

Lauren Thornton had not attended APEN conference before and found that she felt more connected and appreciated her role, and now has some exciting ideas about how she can support the value of Research Development Extension in her community of Northern Territory fishers. Through her initiative, the following 3 were sponsored to attend the conference and have provided thoughtful responses. A fantastic effort, Lauren.



> **Stacey Holzapfel - Pastoral Extension Officer, NT Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Katherine**

7 takeaways from the 2025 APEN conference

Thanks to the Northern Hub and APEN, I was sponsored to attend the 2025 APEN conference in Brisbane – not an opportunity that comes up every day as an Extension Officer from Katherine, NT!

The conference was a fantastic chance to have a look over the fence and see what other extensionists are up to. We all walked away with ideas, contacts and inspiration to tackle some of the challenges it turns out we all face.



Coming up with key takeaways from the two days was not an easy task as there were so many great presentations! But here are 7 discussions that stood out to me, in no particular order, that might resonate with you as well:

1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is moving fast

Adoption of AI is happening faster than any major technology before it (cars, electricity, internet). AI is already outperforming humans in technical and data-heavy tasks, although it isn't so great with emotional intelligence, creativity or ethical judgement. The key message: your audience is using AI now, and so you need to be using it yesterday.

Also, interesting (and scary!) - Google AI summaries have reduced website visits by 50%, and more people are relying only on those summaries and not clicking on the reference links.

2. People are still the heart of extension

No matter what new tech we use, extension is still about people. First and foremost, good extension requires trust, which takes time to develop. There is no cookie-cutter approach to extension activities as everyone is an individual. The value of an extensionist is their ability to navigate that and customise activities accordingly.

It was also a good reminder that an extension officer doesn't need to be everything to everyone – rather than trying to be an expert on many things, facilitate your audience to connect with existing experts.

3. The definition of extension

Should we ditch the term “knowledge transfer”? We can't just pour information into people's heads.

Extension isn't about telling; it's about helping people make sense of information and apply it in their own context. Extension links information with people's realities.

Communications vs extension came up again and again – they are not the same thing:

- Communication = awareness and education
- Extension = understanding and action - working with people to apply learnings, which again, requires trust! (trust in the person, that is.)

4. Producer insights

Some of the most valuable presentations were from producers.

A producer's criteria for good extension:

- Make what I do easier
- Make data a byproduct of what I already do (not another job!)
- Improve labour efficiency
-

“Never use a high-tech solution when a low-tech one will do”.

People want tech that will provide insights and linkages, not extra work and information to sort through.

Producers also said they prefer being introduced to new extension officers by someone they already know, rather than a cold call (importance of a mentor!), and they're tired of endless feedback surveys – let's switch to verbal feedback.

5. The value of mentoring and peer-peer learning

Structured mentoring programs led to stronger professional development. Face-to-face time at the start is critical - it builds trust and comfort before moving into online or remote formats.

Peer learning & networks were also mentioned as vital for resilience and motivation, especially in remote areas. We need people who can facilitate this to happen.

6. Just soft skills?

“We need to stop calling extension soft skills”. It should be included in university degrees, yet the number of extension subjects in Australia is declining.



Extension requires people with skills in adult learning, generating engagement and facilitation.

It is something that is often undervalued, and a lot of the work is invisible and hard to measure. We need to value the time and effort that goes into creating trust and relationships and build extension into projects from the beginning.

And a good tip for project design: include staff development and upskilling in the project budget, make sure they have the skills/knowledge to deliver the project requirements confidently and effectively.

7. Tips, tricks and other observations

I also found myself making notes on not just the presentations' content, but also on some of their delivery techniques, including:

- The “fishbowl” – this was a very clever idea to wrap up the conference. An empty table in the middle of the room, where anyone could take a seat or leave at any time to join the open discussion. It was like watching a talk show or listening to a podcast with revolving guests!
- Co-presenting from opposite sides of the room – which I assume was a planned strategy that succeeded in grabbing and holding my attention. Rather than being static and standing at the lectern, the presenters moved our attention from one side of the room to the other as they bounced ideas off each other.
- Chocolates are still a great way to get the audience involved!
- And straying from the traditional PowerPoint slideshow and intro > method > results etc. format, can pay off if the goal is audience engagement!

Regards,
Stacey





Mary Williams | NT Department of Agriculture & Fisheries Livestock Extension Officer


I would like to thank the Northern Hub for sponsoring our attendance of the APEN conference. I had a great time networking and learning new skills to bring back to the NT.

I recently had the opportunity to attend the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN) conference in Brisbane. To be surrounded by other like-minded extension professionals who have experienced both the same challenges and triumphs was an experience second to none.

The conference touched on lots of topics such as the speedy uptake of AI, the rise of Tik Tok and social media trends, and the importance of building monitoring and evaluation (M&E) into project design. However, conversations kept coming back to PEOPLE and how they are at the centre of extension. The importance of face-to-face interactions with people was reiterated over and over.

Building extension skills face-to-face in structured sessions with extension mentors, building rapport through in-person interactions with producers, and having staff, already known to the producer, introduce new extension officers are examples of this. Nothing can beat the authenticity of face-to-face interactions.

The producer panel session gave us lots of gems of wisdom. The key points that I thought were important for developing research projects + delivering extension for those projects (from a producer's perspective) were:

- 
- Try to make what is required of the producer easier (don't use a high-tech solution for a low-tech problem)
 - Try to collect data that the producer would be collecting anyway (eg. as a byproduct of management)
 - Try to help increase labour efficiency on the property
 - Adoption of change will not happen overnight, changes will be incremental

The “battle of the practitioners” featuring Ian Perkins, Ruth Nettle, Jeanette Long and Ebony Faichney also settled on the common theme of people being the centre of extension. Seasonal conditions, finances and willingness to adopt change will always be barriers, however time is something that is always required to build rapport. The more willing we are to give our time, the more trust we will gain. The importance of wrapping information into a story to make the information more poignant and easier to remember was also mentioned several times.

A point from a talk on monitoring and evaluation also stuck with me. The presenter said that the best way to know how your extension efforts went is to talk to people and listen to their experiences, rather than giving people a survey that generally does not get filled in. Testimonies are the best form of evaluation and are even better for marketing. They are also valuable to provide to funding bodies.

To reflect on my APEN experience for 2025 – I have come to the conclusion that extension is like the book title “How to win friends and influence people”: We “win friends” by building rapport with producers and can “influence” them by encouraging adoption of change.

Regards,
Mary

Chi Nguyen

**Regional
Development
Office**

Vegetables WA

I would like to thank the Northern Hub for sponsoring my attendance at the APEN Conference. This year's theme, exploring how AI, robotics, and cultural intelligence are shaping the future of extension, offered valuable insights into how technology and human capability can complement each other in our work with growers and communities.

Key takeaways for me included David Warren's discussion on what AI cannot replace: trust built through personal relationships, local knowledge, ethical judgment, empathy, and the ability to truly understand community needs. These are the cornerstones of effective extension, reaffirming the human strengths we bring to the profession. Another highlight was learning how extension practitioners can respond to digital transformation by strengthening relationships with our "digital customers."

Emphasis was placed on building direct engagement through multiple communication channels, using CRM systems, and developing communities of interest to better capture and respond to grower needs.

The field trip to the Gatton Research Station was particularly relevant to my work, showcasing innovative agricultural research and providing opportunities to connect with scientists, advisors, and fellow practitioners. It was an invaluable experience to network, exchange ideas, and see firsthand how data-driven and collaborative approaches are helping address on-farm challenges.

Attending the conference has strengthened my professional practice by equipping me with practical tools, fresh perspectives, and a deeper appreciation of how collaboration and technology can drive positive change. I look forward to sharing this knowledge and continuing the conversation with growers and the broader extension network so together we can foster innovation, resilience, and sustainable growth across our agricultural communities.

Regards,
Chi





The SA Drought Hub and the SQNNSW Innovation Hub attended the APEN 2025 conference. The SA Drought Hub had multiple team members present, while the SQNNSW Innovation Hub sent staff and supported extension officers to attend, where they presented and networked with other hubs. The conference provided a platform to discuss and share knowledge on building resilience in the face of drought, a core focus for the Hub. A central theme was translating research into real-world impact on farms and in communities Pathways to Impact Framework

The Tropical North Queensland Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub was also represented, with a representative noting their participation.

**Our deep
appreciation goes to
everyone who
provided feedback.**



The APEN BIG Fishbowl

**Facilitated by
Conference Convenor - Beck Burgess**



The last session of the dynamic APEN International Conference gave the attendees (the "fish") time to share their reflections on what they had learnt over the last 3 days by 'swimming' into the fishbowl and escaping before another 'fish devoured' them.

The big fish, Beck, baited us with questions and managed to capture fish who had the courage (and the curiosity) to take the bait and join her while the rest of us listened intently.

The following is a smorgasbord of issues raised and possible solutions to contemplate on our way home for future implementation. We heard from small fry, to those who have been leading the 'school' - and those in between - each with their own special journey.

The few questions from Beck gained heaps of reactions.

- What is holding us back with extension?
- What does the future look like for young people?
- What will the 'culture of extension' look like in the future?
- How do we prepare for the next stage of our career?

- It is ourselves, our choices, our connectivity, how we choose to fix the digital divide
- Young people need to work with 'grumpy older people' for their support when embracing the new technology – they can be helped to create their career
- What's old, is new again
- There will be opportunities economically as the 'baby boomers' retire
- Some young people feel insignificant – we need to bridge the gap and challenge assumptions and sometimes the older generation just need 'to get out of the way'
- Having relevant conversations with different mentors
- Pooling resources with a shared vision
- Being creative, building strong relationships, adapting different extension models
- Retirees are a resource, lot of knowledge, worked with lots of different people
- Important to learn from each other - be welcoming, listen, show interest, tap others on the shoulder,
- Champion the work of APEN – networking, mentoring, maintain the excitement, provide value
- Need all types of people with different skills – skills can be learnt
- Need to position yourself at the table
- Start the conversation
- People make a change when they feel the need

It was a very dynamic session full of lots of interaction and sensible advice as we gave each other permission and confidence to be the centre of attention in the fishbowl.

A great way to end the conference as our MC, Jayne Cuddihy, thanked everyone as we all took the bait to attend one of APEN's focus on the world of extension researchers and practitioners.



What's Next?

Big questions from the Conference

> **What's holding you back from using AI in your business or program delivery**

AI won't replace us. The human element remains crucial and there is no dispute that it can help us, when we know how. [Paige Cross | Farming As A Business]

> **What happens when nobody turns up?**

- Start the conversation. [Jane Wightman | Consulting]
- Build trust on the ground with cultural differences. [Ian Perkins | Consultant]
- Tap people on the shoulder. [Sophie Folder | TAS Farmers]
- Provide the how and the resourcing for follow up. [Jeanette Long | Facilitator]

> **Where do you learn your skills as an extensionist?**

- Look for the opportunities. It is a journey of learning.
- Having conversations with experienced people who work as a researcher, practical farmer, extension facilitator, mentor, coach, project leader.
- Invest in practical capacity building workshops; attend field days; adopt technology; read articles; join organisations; share problems and solutions. It is your choice!
- Be brave – aspire to be a future leader.
- Be welcoming, by showing interest in people. Extension is the 'business of people'
- Consult the pipeline of thinkers and doers – communication is the key!
- Having a good understanding of the theory, as well as understanding where to look for new/emerging research and practices and existing resources and networks

What's next?

- Ask AI to teach it yourself for AI's impact will be bigger and faster than the Internet. {David Warren | AI Program Leader | Extension Foundation in US]
- For us, (SNSW Innovation Hub), the answer is clear: the Pathways to Impact Framework will now be applied across all Southern NSW Innovation Hub projects. It will evolve as we learn, with feedback from those using it in real-world contexts. That's the beauty of extension done well: it's not static. It grows, adapts and improves through practice. [Pip Job | Knowledge Broker, Southern NSW Innovation Hub]
- Make learning deep and meaningful about, and with, the community. Plant seeds in the right place [Hilton Collier | NZ Program Leader]
- It was very difficult trying to capture the words of wisdom from the conference. There were so many.
- And so, "How do we keep the ripples of influence (the pebble in the pond effect) flowing and not diminishing over time and distance? [Jeanette Gellard | Innovative Influencers]



It is time for each of us to find answers to...

what are the drivers of change?

New ways of doing things?

Adopting new technology?

Critical uncertainties?

New values or beliefs?

Is it the size of the rock we drop?

Is it the size of the pond it falls into?

Is it what obstacles may lie beneath the pond's surface?

The Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN) Conference was a chance for those of us working in extension and adoption to come together, share ideas, and test our thinking against what's happening nationally and globally." [Pip Job | Knowledge Broker, |Southern NSW Innovation Hub]

As Callen Thompson Consultant at AgSTAR Projects reminds us of the words of Benjamin Franklin

Tell me and I forget.

Teach me and I remember.

Involve me and I learn.

Thanks from the Chair

To the generous financial support of the sponsors - Your backing helps bring together extension professionals, researchers, and industry leaders to share knowledge, spark ideas, and strengthen our networks. We couldn't do it without you!

Tim Bradley, National Farmers Federation and the enthusiastic team from Brisbane Economic Development Agency (BEDA)

Conference Organising Committee and Subgroup members

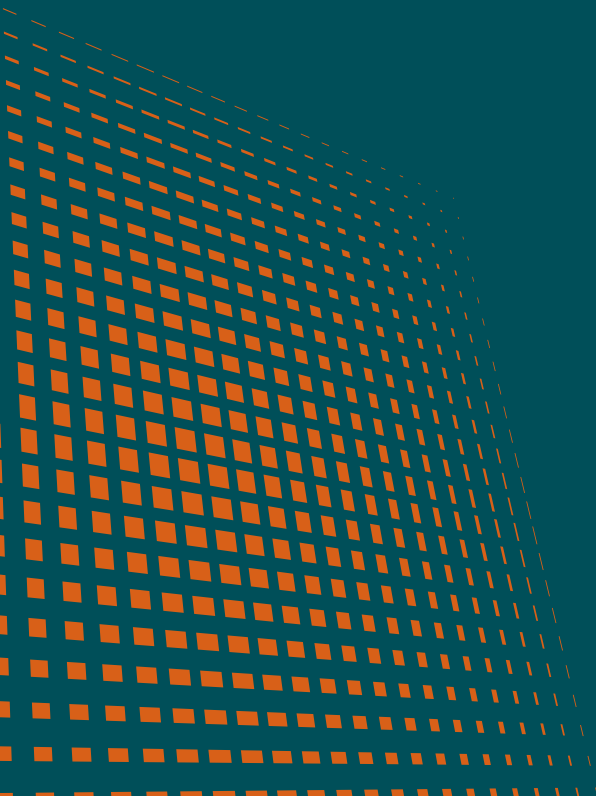
Beck Burgess our fantastic Conference Convenor who effortlessly worked her magic to deliver this 2025 APEN conference

Reminding us that APEN is run by teams of volunteers, Caroline acknowledged APEN would not be possible without these dedicated volunteers – the Board, Regional Coordinators and the Governance, Business Development, Professional Development and Communications Committees.

And last, but not least I'd like to thank everyone here today, and the multiple organisations that you represent, for attending, presenting, and engaging at the APEN Conference. Welcome to the 2025 Australasia-Pacific Extension Network International Conference and let's make this conference a powerful partnership for change.

Please make sure you are an APEN Member, to further strengthen this great organisation.

Regards,
Caroline



APEN 2025