

## Engaging Farmers in south eastern Australia into carbon farming through trusted, independent advisers

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*In consultation with Bill Long (Ag Consulting Co), Cam Nicholson (Nicon Rural Services), Harm van Rees (Cropfacts), Michael Faulkner (Agrilink Agricultural Consultants), Peter Cousins (Peter Cousins Consulting).*

### Key Messages

- Private advisers are a significant professional resource to provide targeted extension service.
- Extension programs involving private advisers targeting public good outcomes require private advisers to be engaged on a commercial 'partner' arrangement to ensure that time can be allocated and commitment obtained from them.
- The opportunity for advisers to be both exposed to presentations from key experts and being able to discuss the implications for their clients with the researcher and other advisers.
- Increased knowledge, understanding and confidence of key industry advisers to deal with carbon farming issues is an important component of change. As opportunities in this topic increase in the future having a skilled advisory sector will assist in making these changes.

### Introduction

The *Carbon Farming Knowledge Project* was funded by the Australian Government under the Extension and Outreach component of the Carbon Farming Futures Program. The aim and approach of the project was to engage with at least 600 broadacre farmers through 33 key trusted farm advisers across SA, Victoria and Tasmania to build their capacity in the development and delivery of an effective carbon farming extension program. The project used proven extension and adoption methodologies to ensure there is effective change in attitudes and practices of farmers being influenced in this project.



## Carbon Farming Knowledge

Central to this approach has been to support the independent agricultural advisers network to build their capacity to deliver effective messages on the Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) and more recently the Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF), factors affecting agricultural emissions, GHG management, opportunities for sequestering carbon, and the risks and opportunities associated with farm businesses participating in the CFI / ERF through a professionally delivered training, mentoring and evaluation program.

The project went beyond awareness to develop the appropriate technical understanding and skill levels of advisers to effectively facilitate change in farming businesses to incorporate carbon farming technologies into everyday operations. The approach also involved working with credible researchers to ensure their messages are well understood and have practical messages that can be delivered by the adviser network to the farming community.

### Project Model

The project model was developed in the context of declining public sector extension

and increasing numbers of farming enterprises engaging private advisers, and around a topic that was poorly understood. This was largely a public good and for which there was little producer demand. A key element was to develop capacity so that trusted advisers had the ability to work through a decision with their farmer clients.

Central to this model has been the emphasis on capacity building through partnered

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# Engaging Farmers in south eastern Australia into carbon farming through trusted, independent advisers (Continued)

engagement. The central element was the 6-monthly workshop between advisers and researchers and the process used is critical to success of the model. The Carbon Farming Knowledge Project has ensured that this was not a passive information transfer between researchers and advisers – but rather an opportunity for both parties to explore the information presented in the light of shared adviser experience and an understanding of their client contexts and farming systems. Time and process had been allocated to ensuring that this happened in practice.

Funding of the advisers involved has been a critical (and cost effective) element in ensuring their commitment and involvement. Given the commercial demands of their businesses and the lack of 'pull' from the clients, such an arrangement has allowed them to allocate the time needed as well to give ownership of the project to them. This highlights the relevance of this approach to other public good areas where market failure would otherwise occur.

## Project Evaluation

Impacts of the project have been thoroughly evaluated over the course of the project. A base line survey was conducted with the project advisers at the start of the project, and mid-way through and at the end of the project. The 600 farmer clients were surveyed for their baseline knowledge, understanding and attitudes to carbon farming at the beginning and again at the end of the project.

The project has had considerable impact on the knowledge and understanding of issues around reducing GHG emissions on farm and the confidence to do something about it. A significant unintended outcome of the project has been that 70% of the farmers interviewed at the end of the project have taken at least one action to reduce GHG emissions and increase carbon storage on their farms over the period of the project.

### *Knowledge and beliefs on the impact of greenhouse emissions*

- Overall increase in farmer's current knowledge of the impact of GHG emissions on their farm business (increase of 0.5 from 2.1 to 2.6 on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1=very low and 5=very high).

- Increase in the percentage of farmers who believe that GHG emissions are causing the climate to change (+14% - from 31% to 45%).
- Increase in the percentage of farmers who believe that humans are responsible for increasing GHG emissions (+10% - from 60% to 71%).

### *Confidence in ability to identify actions*

- Overall increase in confidence in farmer's ability to identify the most appropriate actions to take to reduce GHG emissions on their farm (increase of 0.6 from 1.9 to 2.5 on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1=no confidence at all and 5=very confident).

### *Actions taken over previous three years*

- The 'post' survey reported that 70% of farmers had put at least one action into practice over the last three years.
- These included increasing soil organic carbon (70), nitrogen use efficiency (56%) and fuel efficiency (50%); sequestering carbon (41%); using renewable energy sources (36%); and reducing methane emissions (23%)

## Conclusions

The major implication from the project is that the process is well suited to developing capacity around complex and public good topics such as carbon farming. The model can be directly applied to other topics and rapidly develop targeted capacity gains.

The project fully delivered on its objective of developing the capacity of thirty advisers to better engage with their clients around the topic of carbon farming. This then had a direct to impact on the nominated 600 clients of these advisers.

A critical element underpinning this project was that the advisers already had a trusted relationship with that client – and understood the individual business circumstances of the farm. The awareness, understanding and potential implications/opportunities for the farm business is then context-bound with the adviser being able to have the discussion over time and when appropriate for that farm business – and supporting them with associated decision making. This is not the case with an 'outsider' who comes in on an extension program around a single issue – without the trust, relationship and time-frame.

Having capacity to respond to the longer term opportunities for practice change as other drivers emerge (price of carbon, government policy, productivity benefits) will drive practice change to occur in a more efficient manner given the increased knowledge and understanding.

Another critical element of the project is the on-going legacy. Advisers and farmers are in their businesses for the long haul, and the design of project means that there will be ongoing support for those involved with the view that the knowledge and skills developed by this trusted network will continue to influence farmers on all aspects of carbon farming well past the life of this project. Material that has come out of the project provides a further legacy to build on the gains of the project. Putting the equivalent funds into a specialist extension program would require significant staffing costs and would lack the ready grower relationships, trust and continuation factor which embedded advisers can bring to such programs.

Increasing capacity will have a flow on benefit not only to on-going interaction with the farmer clients, but other and future clients – as well as the shared experience of producers with other producers. It goes beyond getting a 'research message' out to farmers – it is working through a complex topic, understanding its implications for farming enterprises and having significant number of advisers equipped to engage and support producers in carbon management into the future.

*Mark Stanley comes from a mixed farming background and has had extensive experience in field crops development and extension and more recently in natural resources management within the State and Commonwealth Governments and with industry. Mark currently operates his own project management business, Regional Connections, on South Australia's Eyre Peninsula. He is also on the GRDC Southern Regional Panel, the board of the Eyre Peninsula Agriculture Research Foundation and is a committee member of the Lower Eyre Agricultural Development Association as well as providing strategic executive support to Ag Excellence Alliance.*



ENET

# Good farm business management is good carbon management

Catherine Phelps

**Good farm business management is good carbon management.** This has been the key theme of the Dairy Australia Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) Extension and Outreach project, *Profitable Dairying in a Carbon Constrained Future*. With no cost effective Emissions Reduction Methods relevant to Australian dairy the Dairy Australia CFI Extension and Outreach team decided to focus on embedding carbon reduction messages into existing dairy industry programs and communication channels. The overall context being 'good farm business management reduces greenhouse gases per litre of milk'.

In the Australian dairy industry gains in greenhouse gas emissions intensity can be generated from a wide range of farm management practices including pasture management, forage cropping, reproduction efficiency, fertiliser and effluent management, irrigation and keeping cows comfortable. For example high fibre, low digestibility feeds such as hay and mature pasture will result in greater methane emissions than forages with better digestibility. So strategies that improve diet quality such as better grazing management and balancing forage diets with grain will lead to more milk per unit of feed and lower emissions per unit of milk solids – a result that reduces 'emissions intensity'.

To extend the message that “*good farm management is good carbon management*” the project adopted a range of approaches from embedding the carbon message into existing extension programs such as In Calf, Cool Cows, and Fert\$mart through to activities focused specifically on resource efficiency. Resource efficiency activities included the establishment of resource efficiency focus farms (carbon focus farms) and the delivery of one on one extension using the industry carbon calculator DGAS, to identify areas of farming practice that could be more efficient.

Underpinning the extension approaches is a suite of Profitable Dairying information resources. These include a Profitable Dairying post card outlining the key efficiency themes and where to go for more information, farmer and service provider fact sheets, YouTube clips and a dedicated website, the Dairy Climate Toolkit.

As of May 2016, over 200 resource efficiency activities have been held involving 2,579 farmers and service providers participants, with an additional 351 one-on-one activities delivered across the eight dairying regions. A further 2,380 farmers and service providers have been exposed to carbon messages through existing extension programs. The figure below illustrates the range of activities by practice area.



As the project has progressed the key messages and tools have been refined. The operating context has changed – i.e. with the increasing interest from international markets on carbon disclosure and domestically the interest in defining natural capital and carbon risk. Emerging trends have reinforced the need for carbon reduction to be further integrated with wider NRM and productivity endeavours. It is incorporating the messaging of reducing emissions intensity through good farm management that has been critical to the project's success.

Initial evaluation of activities indicates the project has successfully achieved its aim of building awareness that good business management is good carbon management. A more detailed evaluation to determine the impact of the different approaches is underway.

## Case Study - Riverina Resource Efficiency Focus Farm (Murray Dairy)

David and Jenni Owen, with their daughter Kristeen and her husband Leigh Culton, host the Riverina Focus Farm where they milk up to 650 cows on 415 hectares at Blighty in the NSW Southern Riverina.

With the support of the Riverina Focus Farm, Dairy Australia's 'Profitable Dairying in a Carbon Constrained Future' (PDCCF) project set out to explore opportunities that would both improve farm profitability and reduce the farm's greenhouse gas emissions.

At the formation of the focus farm group in 2013/14, the cows were producing around 570 kg milk solids with approx. 3 tonnes of concentrate per cow and 5 tonnes of home grown feed per hectare.

The resource efficiency focus farm set goals to improve profitability through:

- Improved pasture management resulting in more tonnes of a higher quality home grown feed
- Increased monitoring of conserved fodder to enable improved diet formulations to be achieved
- Bi monthly weighing of the heifers and review to enable improved feeding and management so that they meet the target weight and age at calving.

At the end of the two years the resources efficiency focus farm had

- Increased home grown fodder produced from 5 t DM/ha to 7 t DM/ha
- Improved the quality of the home grown fodder conserved
- Reduced the age of calving from 27 months to 24 months
- Achieved 90% of mature cow weight at calving.

These management strategies reduced the greenhouse gas emission intensity for the farm by 0.4 to 0.5 kg CO<sub>2</sub>-e/kg MS. While the total reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 154 t CO<sub>2</sub>-e is not an economic driver for the business, it is a welcome consequence of adopting management practices that improve resource efficiency. The outcome being increased farm profitability and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

*Submitted by Cathy Phelps, Program Leader, Land, Water and Carbon Dairy Australia. The extension approach was developed by the Dairy Australia CFI Extension and Outreach team, including Warren Mason and Amy Fay (Dairy Australia, Murray Dairy), Marguerite White (Dairy NSW and Subtropical Dairy), Scott Birchall (Murray Dairy), Gillian Hayman (GippsDairy), Rachel Brown (DairyTas), Graeme Ward (WestVic Dairy), Monique White (DairySA), Sam Taylor (Western Dairy) and Alison Kelly (Dairy Australia). The case study was prepared by Darryl Poole RMCG Consulting and Scott Birchall.*







# Reducing on-farm emissions: successful farmer engagement

Donna Lucas

## The project

Tas Farming Futures was one of 24 projects funded across Australia through the Carbon Farming, Extension and Outreach Program. The project was delivered over a three-year period 2013 to 2016.

We worked with farmers and advisors to help them understand the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from individual farming enterprises and from typical Tasmanian farms, across a wide range of industries and farming systems (meat, dairy, cropping, vegetables, fruit, wine).

Project highlights included the development of tools, including the following two examples.

A nitrogen use efficiency (NUE) calculator was developed. This generated a great deal of interest from producers and agronomists. The input data required is easy to obtain and can often be recalled by farmers from memory. This is an advantage compared to other tools e.g. GHG calculators, which require data that is often not easily accessible.

We established an Emissions Reduction Planning (ERP) approach. A flexible approach was designed so that ERPs can be tailored to the needs of each individual farm business. An ERP can be developed as an addition to existing or new Property Management Plans (PMPs) or can be developed as a stand-alone Plan or incorporated in other types of farm plans.

In addition to a focus on one-on-one support, we presented information at local, state,

national and international events and conferences.

## WHAT DO WE KNOW NOW, THAT WE DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE, AS A RESULT OF THIS PROJECT?

### Main Finding

Tas Farming Futures was one of 24 projects funded across Australia through the Carbon Farming, Extension and Outreach Program. The project was delivered over a three-year period 2013 to 2016.

### The engagement and delivery model

We developed an extension model (Figure 1) through the project.

The model consists of three main components:

#### 1. Group / industry events

Presentations and exhibits at industry events and producer group meetings can lead to individuals or groups who are interested in participating in further activities. We focused on increasing awareness through delivering succinct information, tailored to the specific industry (as applicable) and included local relevant case studies and data.

#### 2. More intensive support

We worked more intensively with interested people (focus on developing participant understanding, knowledge, confidence, skills). This included benchmarking groups, training workshops for advisors and tailored one-on-one support. Presenting information

to groups (see 1 above) reaches a larger audience, but maintaining a flexible approach to working with groups allows interested people to become involved in further activities, rather than trying to deliver in-depth information to whole group. Tools such as the NUE calculator were useful for supporting farmers to develop farm plans and for benchmarking with groups.

### 3. Communications

We used multiple communication channels (electronic, hard copy, face to face) including newsletters, social media, industry magazines, field days. Field days can be a mix of training, problem solving and communications. We utilised case studies (from one-on-one work – see 2 above) for communicating information and stories to a wider audience, where the case study farmer was happy to share their information and data. Case studies were useful for making group presentations relevant.

The model encompasses the following:

- All of the five capacity building models are included – at least to some extent
- Engagement is embedded in the delivery rather than an add-on
- Consideration of the learning journey, and stages of learning. That is taking people from awareness and simple information through to farm planning and training - for those who want to go to the next level.



## FROM THE EDITOR

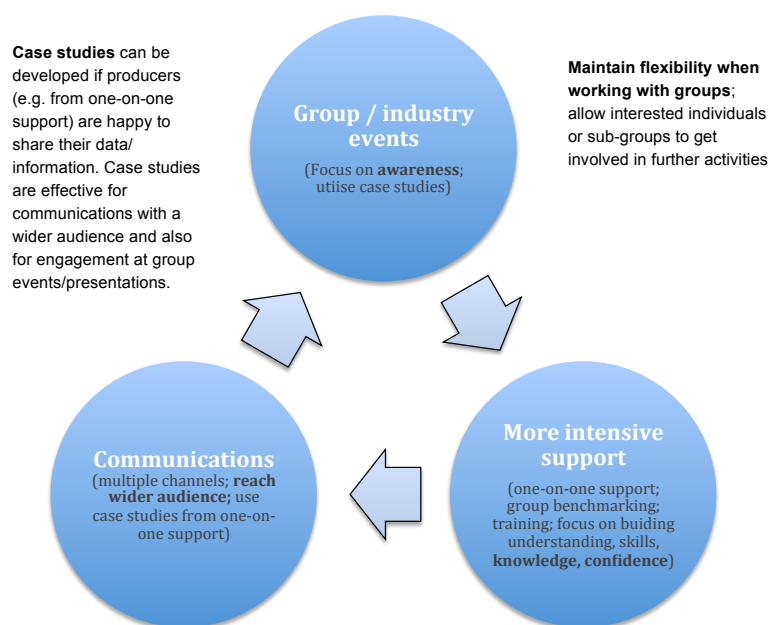
Welcome to this themed edition of ExtensionNet focusing on the carbon farming initiative. Mark Stanley is presenting the Carbon Farming Knowledge project in South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania, Donna is presenting work engaging farmers to reduce emissions, and Catherine Phelps is presenting the work done by Dairy Australia in this space as well.

For our regular columns, I had noticed that we tend to have opinions from experienced male extensionists and young extensionists I found to write the column tended to be female.

While this is certainly representative of our membership, I felt it might be time for some diversity, so I would like to especially thank Cynthia Mahoney and Joe O'Reagain for contributing to reversing this trend! I think you will agree that both Joe and Cynthia have contributed excellent pieces, and I would like to encourage everyone with stories different from what we usually publish to come forward and contribute. After all, we all learn from sharing experiences, and not only in workshops!

I hope you enjoy your reading!

Maryse



**Figure 1: A simplified model for delivering information that is new to the target audience.**

This model could be adapted for a variety of extension projects. However, it is particularly relevant for delivering information, such as GHG emission reduction, that is new to the target audience. For the Tas Farming Futures project there was a need to increase general awareness and understanding as well as (and before) supporting farmers to consider emissions reduction in their farm operations.

We know that adoption is a learning process.

We also know that a range of factors influence adoption including (Pannell, 2015 ):

- social factors
- characteristics of the technology/ practice (relative advantage and trialability)

The relative importance of these factors depends on the stage of learning. At the 'awareness' and 'non-trial evaluation' stage, social factors are often more important than the technology or practice itself. Once people move to 'trialling' and potentially 'adopting' or 'revising' the practice, then the characteristics of the practice e.g. relative advantage, become more important.

We found that case studies were effective for engagement, helped to increase the awareness of the problem or opportunity and addressed the social aspects by showcasing local producers and building trust and credibility. This human dimension was important for engaging producers on a topic that is not a high priority for them i.e. reducing GHG emissions.

It was challenging at the start of the Tas Farming Futures project to know where to start or how to get traction. The model as described above helped the project to gain momentum. Case studies were useful for communicating information and stories to a wider audience. In turn, communications (including case studies, presentations and attending industry events) resulted in more producers becoming involved and seeking information/support. This helped the project to main momentum.

The fact that the project team has good networks in Tasmanian industries and is respected also assisted in early engagement.

#### **Project impact established via monitoring and evaluation**

The project had a substantial impact via supporting Tasmanian farmers and their

advisors to increase their knowledge and understanding of on-farm GHG emissions and how to reduce them. Farmers have already implemented changes on farm.

Landholders we worked with have implemented actions to reduce emissions, look after soil carbon, avoid nitrogen losses and consequently increase efficiency and productivity; they have made lasting changes to their business and started to influence others in their region to do the same.

Advisors we worked with are using tools, resources and lessons learned to engage with individual landholders or form groups (e.g. a vineyard benchmarking group) to improve their clients' efficiency and productivity through better managing emission sources and looking after soil carbon and nitrogen fertiliser inputs. This provides a multiplier effect and legacy from our work.

#### **For more information**

The main legacy of the project is a team of extension professionals in Tasmania who are now upskilled. This includes the project team as well as other advisors who were engaged in project activities.

Case studies and tools developed through the project are available through the project website: <http://www.tasfarmingfutures.com.au>.

*Donna Lucas is a Senior Consultant at RM Consulting Group and is based in Tasmania. She has a background in business management and accounting and completed an Applied Science (Agriculture) degree at the University of Tasmania. Donna has been working in extension and agricultural consulting for the past eight years. She has been a member of APEN since 2010 and joined the management committee in 2015. Her extension work has included a range of industries and topics including soil management, vegetable production, livestock and farm planning. She recently managed the 'Tas Farming Futures' project, which was a three-year extension project funded by the Australian Government that provided support to Tasmanian landholders to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.*

<sup>1</sup> Five models: 1. group facilitation/empowerment, 2. technology development/problem solving, 3. training, 4. information access, 5. consultant/mentor (RIRDC, 2007. Capacity Building Resource Manual)

<sup>2</sup> Pannell D. (2015) The nature of the adoption process in agriculture. AIAST Forum, August 2015.



# Young Extensionist Corner

## Young Extension Officer Perspectives

Joe O'Reagain

Currently working with the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (QDAF) as a pasture agronomist based out of Toowoomba, APEN member Joe O'Reagain started out his career in 2009 working with beef producers in central Queensland with the Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA). From the beginning he had to dive headlong into extension, setting up reef water quality projects, facilitating a local beef group, running pasture budgeting and monitoring workshops and guiding producers through the Grazing Best Management Practices (Grazing BMP) Program.

With a view to nominating a few pointers for newcomers to the extension game, below he shares a few of his most important learnings from his first few years. To experienced extension officers, these may seem obvious and pedestrian but they can represent some hard learnings for a young player.

**As a new graduate, extension can be daunting!** According to the National Farmers' Federation, (2012) the average age of the typical person on the land is 52. At the beginning of your career you're young, inexperienced and you probably look it too. To add to this, you mightn't be familiar with the local area, while the people you're interacting with have lived there for their whole lives and know every track and dry gully in the district. They've seen plenty of people come and go from their locality, so it goes without saying that it will take a while for you to build people's trust and to prove yourself to be of some utility in the district. All of this can make planning and running your first workshops seem like an overwhelming task. Take notes on other good facilitators and get some training in extension methods. A good idea is to bounce your facilitation plans off other more experienced facilitators – even better is to share facilitation duties at your first few workshops, as there is great value in being able to debrief and reflect with a co-presenter on how an activity played out. It's also always good to sound out your crowd before they arrive – who are the influencers, the talkers, the quiet ones? Ask yourself how your plans for the day will engage with all of these characters in the room.

**You don't have to know everything:**

The most important thing I realised in my first few years was that a big part of being an extension officer is to act as an agent of information. The array of projects, production systems, land types and organisations that your work is likely to span means that you simply will not have the capacity to answer all of the questions that come your way. You need to see yourself as a conduit and connector of people, publications, resources and events. If you need to find something out, get on the phone – across a catchment and the various organisations working within it, there will almost always be someone with the skills, knowledge or resources that you're chasing – and usually, one well-placed phone call will have their number on your notepad in no time.

**Take on a student mindset:** There is a great deal to learn early on. Find yourself some mentors, join organisations like APEN, read and go to every field day and workshop you can convince your boss to let you attend. There's also a lot to learn from landholders – ask, ask, ask about everything - their cattle, the creeks and rivers, grasses and forages, weed issues, the history of the property. I always found it useful to cross-reference what I learnt on-property with other producers, colleagues and contacts, along with some reading. The first few years are about learning like a sponge – it will be a few years before you develop your skills and knowledge to the point where people begin to view you as a stand-alone source of information.

**Progress takes time and long-term group work is best:**

Facilitated producer group approaches to extension that are well-supported and funded over a period of years are the biggest incubators and machines of change. Such groups permit continuity of membership, ownership and responsibility for the group process and trust between members to allow for honest critique of business plans, and accountability for actions. I was fortunate to have some involvement in the Central Queensland Better Economic and Environmental Futures (CQ BEEF) Project – this was a well-funded long-term project involving intensive business analysis within nine beef groups





across central Queensland. Through intensive planning and a combination of group and business analysis feedback, some participants implemented very substantial changes to their businesses as a result of the project.

**Graziers and farmers are diverse and complex individuals:** While generalisations are often made about farmer personality profiles, at the end of the day they're still people and they all vary in their personalities, skills and aspirations. They have other interests outside of their businesses and just like everyone else they're fallible, with good intentions sometimes derailing, even with the best-laid plans.

**Put effort into maintaining good relationships with other organisations in your district:** When I was with FBA, we were able to get to a point where if the need arose, we could mobilise workshops and events across multiple organisations and a huge catchment with very short notice. This all came down to the development of well-defined roles, sound planning, good communication and strong relationships.

**Plan and prepare and plan some more:** Put effort into developing quality products and materials that are pertinent to people's needs and interests. For important programs and projects, we would spend weeks putting together resources, discussing workshop strategies and sourcing

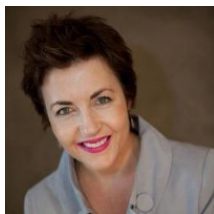
the most relevant information and guest trainers. In the latest project I've been working on, we've been working with producers on means to address production decline in long term grass pastures, primarily through the application of legumes. We've put a lot of effort into the constant refinement and tailoring of our workshop process and materials. This quality of product, combined with the high relevance of the subject matter has meant that we have not been able to meet demand for workshop delivery in our region.

**Work hard to feed the knowledge-hungry** - no matter how time consuming and exhausting it may seem. These people have made a shift to wanting to learn and (hopefully) wanting to take action. Half the battle is getting people keen, so when they say they are you'd better run with it!

**Where possible, involve every decision maker in the business:** I've had several experiences in which a producer has come to a workshop, got all excited and put together a grand plan before going home to their wife/husband/sibling only to be told that it simply won't happen. The best results are achieved when people from the same business can share in the enthusiasm and the idea formulation that comes with a training activity, while being able to temper their aspirations with shared knowledge of the physical and financial realities on-farm.

**Don't burn yourself out!** Extension can be exhausting and exasperating. I remember finding an extension publication that had been written before I had been born – it contained the very same messages I was working to promote for the first two years of my career – I felt like quitting then and there. Recalcitrant “blockies” and flogged-out paddocks eroding before your eyes may taunt your vision of change, but don't tie up your self-worth in the success and failure of a project. Focus on the people who are keen to improve themselves and their businesses. It's easy to become consumed by your work and the goals of your project. Many people in extension believe strongly in the value and importance of their work, often working enormous hours. While your project might mean everything to you, to a producer its one aspect in a long list of jobs, commitments and concerns – the weather, the school fees, the broken down pump. Most people I know in extension are there because they love the work, not for the pay cheque. They enjoy the field, meeting people and travelling around to different properties. The way I see it, if you're going to get stressed and burn out, you might as well go and work in the mines where at least you'll get paid to be miserable about your job.

ENET



# From Public to Private

## Making the Transition

By Cynthia Mahoney,  
Director, Cynthia Mahoney and Associates



*"The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. To be your own man is a hard business. If you try it, you will be lonely often and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high for the privilege of owning yourself".*  
Rudyard Kipling

My beloved, beautiful, courageous, wise and treasured mother, Anne, died four months ago at the age of 69 after a four-year battle with ovarian cancer. She was the one who posted this quote to me six years ago, a few days after I resigned from my 17-year career in the Victorian Department of Agriculture (and its various incarnations) to take a leap into the great unknown and start my own consulting practice. I stuck the quote next to my computer in my home office and look at it every day with thanks. Mum always knew just the right thing to say.

My decision to resign happened quite quickly in the end, although it had been a long time coming. I stepped out into my new future with nothing lined up except, for the first time in my life, the self-belief that I was a resourceful, capable person and that everything would work out. What had stopped me from resigning earlier was fear and self-doubt. What if I couldn't find any work? What if I made the wrong decision and was unhappy in my next job? What if I didn't have the right skills? So many what ifs.....?

I had done a lot of self-reflection in the lead up to my resignation. I'd stumbled across a terrific book called "Do More Great Work" by Michael

Bungay Stanier. It ended up helping to change my life. One of the activities I did was to identify the "peak moments" in my life so far when I was at my best and doing my "great work" – the work that really mattered to me, where I was in my flow and using my strengths e.g. Who was I when I was at my best – how did I feel, what was I doing? Of what was I most proud? Who else was involved? What behaviours had I exhibited when I was at my best? What behaviours didn't I exhibit?

Some of the themes that emerged were that my "great work" had always involved facilitating; working with people and groups around change, leadership and personal development – things I was passionate about; I could initiate projects, design them, deliver and evaluate them; the work was varied; I was learning new things, taking on challenges and growing in myself; I was able to work with fabulous people with whom I clicked and who inspired me; I had fun; I was being creative; interacting regularly with others; and I was making a difference to people's lives.

What also stood out was that the best things in my life had happened after I took on something that absolutely terrified me. I had done these things when I was younger so what had happened to that courageous person – where had she gone?

It hit me that I was not being my true self where I was currently working, that I was not doing the facilitation and leadership work I was passionate about and that I was feeling very inauthentic and was not being true to myself. I almost didn't



recognise the person that I had been in my “great work” moments. This reflection process was very powerful and ignited in me a realisation that I had done “great work” in the past and was capable of doing it again! Finally I was ready to back myself.

I took some time out to dream about possibilities and to identify my “great work” – in an ideal world without any limitations what would I be doing? The answer to that was working with people, teams and organisations to be their best, utilise their strengths and find their voice, mainly using my facilitation skills but also utilising coaching, training, speaking and even sometimes my skills from my days as a socio-economic researcher and extension officer. Ideally my focus would be leadership and personal development. I registered my business name, Cynthia Mahoney and Associates; joined LinkedIn and Twitter to connect with people from my past as well as new people I admired; I resigned from my job and then let my networks know that I had made a new start. I invited lots of people out for coffee in order to ask their advice about this new world of consulting and to hear about what they were working on.

The decision to proactively close one door seemed to create the opportunity for new doors to appear. A few key people in my network, some of whom I knew well and others less so, stepped forward with consultancy opportunities and valuable advice. Someone offered to be my mentor and I also employed a business coach to help me challenge my own limiting beliefs about success and to discuss practicalities about consulting.

At the start of each year I identify a theme for the year ahead and in 2011, my theme was “being OK with uncertainty”. I knew I would need something to help steady my nerves and keep me strong as everything I was doing was new. I decided to stop letting fear hold me back and keep me being a smaller, lesser version of myself and instead embrace it and have confidence that I was growing and developing through all these new experiences. This theme became my anchor, as every time I felt the fear, I would remind myself that experiencing uncertainty was what 2011 was all about, that I actually had wanted this to happen so I was on the right track.

I said yes to things that interested me (and terrified me!) and invited others in my network to collaborate with me if I felt I didn't have all the skills a potential client needed. I rang peers and mentors when taking on new

jobs in order to talk through my facilitation plan with them and gained feedback. Within three months I was facilitating three different leadership programs – one for a national horticulture industry; one for a major company and one for a not-for-profit that I had always dreamed of working with as they ran amazing programs with participants coming from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors – nothing to do with agriculture. Never in my wildest dreams had I imagined that all this would happen so quickly and that every day I would be doing my “great work” with clients who appreciated my style and shared similar values to me.

Of course there was a lot of hard work involved and long hours; I've found consultancy can be “lumpy” (i.e. sometimes almost too much work and at other times you have room for more) and I've battled a lot with my mindset about my own value. As a consultant you need to develop, deliver and sell all at once with multiple clients so there are always lot of balls in the air; you need to know your stuff and be good at the business management too; and you need to be comfortable with uncertainty.

My mother's shock terminal cancer diagnosis came a bit over a year after I started my business. I found that being my own boss during this time was a huge asset. I will be forever grateful I had my own business during this four-year rollercoaster ride. I was able to prioritise the most important thing, spending time with Mum, and schedule my work around this. I could be flexible with location. My clients and collaborators were immensely understanding and supportive. The fact that I was doing work I loved, that was so positive and rewarding, that was making a real difference and that I was working with people who appreciated me gave me a lot of strength and helped my resilience.

In the six years since I left the public service I've designed and facilitated a range of leadership programs for organisations and people in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors; I've developed my own personal development program, “Driving Your Life”, to help people gain clarity for their career or life direction and also adapted it as a team performance program, “Peak Performance”; I've designed and delivered extension and facilitation training programs; given keynote addresses at conferences; worked on a social research project about women's participation in agriculture; run team building and strategic planning workshops; embraced social media in my own business and ran training for other businesses and industries; worked with small businesses; undertaken

evaluation; designed and delivered change management programs; developed and facilitated performance conversation and peer feedback processes; designed and facilitated a digital leadership program, a leadership program for people with a disability and a leadership program for a public health organisation; and more!

I deliver face-to-face and also connect with people on-line and am forever dreaming about new and better ways of doing things. It's a big, wide world out there full of endless possibility and with the ability to connect with people from near and far in ways that work best for them. The skills I learnt whilst employed in the public sector have been crucial to my success. Facilitation, evaluation, research, strategic planning, systems thinking, culture change, conflict management, project development, negotiation, budgeting, understanding self, etc. are all highly transferrable to the world of consulting. You can fall into the trap of being “unconsciously competent” and so you assume that all this stuff is obvious and that everyone has done it before. However everyone is on their own development journey and so there are always people searching for the skills and knowledge we have, particularly those of us who have been trained well in the profession of extension, facilitation and change.

Six years on from taking a leap, I'm living authentically (most of the time), doing my great work (most of the time), feeling the fear and doing it anyway (most of the time) and am trying to be the best version of myself (most of the time). I'm excited about the future and the opportunities that the new world, “the connection economy”, offers people like me, whether we're based in the private or public sectors.

There are indeed challenges involved with being a consultant but for me, “no price is too high for the privilege of owning yourself”. Mum always did know best.

Cynthia Mahoney and Associates is a consulting firm that works with individuals, groups, business and government in facilitation, strategic planning and evaluation. Cynthia is passionate about working with people to develop their life and leadership skills and to increase diversity and participation in decision-making in industry, government and the community. She is a strong believer in bringing people together to identify issues, exchange ideas and develop solutions that work for them, their family, their business and community.



# Looking back on APEN Roadshow

Col Freeman and Maryse Bourgault



Have you missed out on the Program Logic workshops? Here is a taste of what it is all about:

**Program Logic** can be known by many names, and it can be confusing:

Program theory	Results chain	Theory of change	Causal map
Causal model	Outcomes model	Outcomes hierarchy	Impact pathway
Theory of action	Logical framework	LogFrame	Logic model

I think of it in these terms:

The world is a complex place, and provides the **situation** for your program.

A **Program** is an **intervention** into the world which aims to trigger **changes** in program participants that lead to desired **outcomes**.

A **Program** is also an **experiment**. As a program designer, you have a **hypothesis**:

*If we do 'this', then 'something' will happen.*

Programs 'work' by triggering a **mechanism** within participants that leads them to change.

Your **theory of change** outlines **why** you think the intervention will trigger those mechanisms and **contribute** to change.

**Program Logic** is your understanding of **how** these **contributions** will lead to the desired **outcomes**.

A **LogFrame** is a model of your **Program Logic**. The model I use has options for three types of outcomes, based on either time or the process of adoption. These are short, medium and long term outcomes, or KASA (Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills and Aspirations), behaviour and condition.

A simple model of Program Logic shows how you understand your program's activities will produce tangible outputs on the way to achieving the desired outcomes. It is called Program Logic because it uses the same if-then statements that are used in formal logic.

Program Logic is very useful in developing work plans and gantt charts, and makes planning evaluations quite easy.

## Some feedback from participants:

Seventy-five people attended 7 workshops and gave it an average of 4.5 out of 5. People enjoyed working on their own projects and having the opportunity to work on something immediately useful. The interaction with other participants with different experience levels was also highly appreciated.

## Last chance to participate:

Darwin Friday 2 December 2016

Fisheries Conference Room - Goff Letts Building

Berrimah Research Farm

9:00 – 15:00

For more details check out <http://www.apen.org.au/roadshow2016>

## About the Facilitator

*Col Freeman is a natural resource management (NRM) specialist, project manager and community engagement facilitator working at the intersection of the social and environmental sciences. Col has worked and consulted for the past 18 years in the adoption of improved practices within the horticulture, dairy and grazing industries; improved environmental management with rural, urban and coastal groups; and more sustainable policies, planning and practices for local government.*

# New APEN members

If you've recently joined APEN, welcome! You'll reap plenty of professional and personal rewards. If you've been in APEN for a few seasons now, be sure to say hello to the new members.



## Bianca Cairns

Bianca joined Horticulture Innovation Limited (Hort Innovation) in January 2016 as the R&D Manager of the Industry Development and Adoption portfolio. This portfolio comprises over 80 R&D investments and spans over 30 different horticultural industries. Bianca also has over 7 years of experience working with the Australian Sugarcane industry, with both The Sugar R&D Corporation (SRDC) and BSES Limited in both a business development and R&D management roles. Bianca's formal qualifications include a Bachelor of Biotechnology (Hons) and a Master of Research Management and Commercialisation. Bianca is passionate about ensuring that end-users are involved in shaping and conducting R&D, and that the results of good science are made accessible and easy to understand.



## Sandy Scarrow

Sandy graduated with a Bachelor of Horticultural Science from Massey University. Her first role in extension was working as a Horticultural Consultant with the then Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) in the Bay of Plenty, New Zealand. She is now an owner and consultant within a nationwide horticultural consultancy company Fruition Horticulture. Her work has largely been in the kiwifruit industry but has broadened out to cover many other crops and engage with other aspects of the primary sector. Passionate about being a part of an industry which produces high quality food for the world markets she also has a passion for the environment and social justice. She has been able to incorporate these interests into her consultancy work. Heavily involved in industry training, Sandy also manages a programme delivery literacy and numeracy training to seasonal workers in New Zealand from the Pacific that impacts both on the lives of these workers while in New Zealand and also on the development of some of the poorer communities in the Pacific.

Welcome to these new members who have joined since last edition. We're glad to have you all on board.

<b>Sally Balmain</b>	<i>NSW</i>
<b>George Mayenga</b>	<i>Kenya</i>
<b>Bianca Cairns</b>	<i>Qld</i>
<b>Sue Heisswolf</b>	<i>Qld</i>
<b>Mabbie Elson</b>	<i>Qld</i>
<b>Alison Moore</b>	<i>Qld</i>
<b>Brock Dembowski</b>	<i>Qld</i>
<b>Sam Tocknell</b>	<i>NT</i>
<b>Callen Thompson</b>	<i>NT</i>
<b>Mandavi Mishra</b>	<i>India</i>
<b>Peter Newman</b>	<i>SA</i>
<b>Peter Hayman</b>	<i>SA</i>
<b>Murray Doak</b>	<i>NZ</i>
<b>Melissa Sowden</b>	<i>NZ</i>
<b>Jacki Hine</b>	<i>Tas</i>
<b>Heather Cosgriff</b>	<i>Tas</i>
<b>Laura Gray</b>	<i>NZ</i>
<b>Penny Richards</b>	<i>Vic</i>
<b>Sandy Scarrow</b>	<i>Tas</i>



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## Guidelines and Deadlines

*Submissions should be made in MS Word 6.0 with minimal formatting. A portrait photograph of the author is required. All photographs, figures and/or tables ought to be provided as separate files (preferably TIF or JPEG; photos scanned at 300 dpi). Feature articles should be around 1000 words and minor articles 500 words. The editor reserves the right to edit submitted material to meet space restrictions. Letters to the editor or general items of news of interest to the network are welcome. Articles should be submitted at least four weeks prior to publication.*

*Preference is given to articles that are grounded in some form of project or event.*

**Editing: Maryse Bourgault**

**Layout: Ross Tasker, Snap Albury Wodonga, Victoria.**

**Production management: Rosemary Currie, APEN Secretariat, Wodonga, Victoria.**

*Opinions expressed in ExtensionNet are not necessarily those of the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (Inc.) unless otherwise stated.*

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