



EXTENSIONNET

Newsletter of the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network Ltd

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It starts with a conversation



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A message from the APEN President

Dr Anthony Kachenko, APEN President

Greetings everyone. It has been a productive time at APEN in the lead up to the end of financial year. We launched the professional membership category in time for membership renewals which has been well received by members with several applications streaming through. The scheme provides recognition of the skills, knowledge and experience in extension gained through ongoing professional experience and/or formal qualifications. It also recognises that members understand industry ethics and accountability. I would encourage every member to consider this membership category during their membership renewal. We plan to profile some of our professional members in future communications to share their stories as extensionists – look out for these as they will sure be a great read.

The APEN Conference committee has been working diligently behind the scenes on the 2022 International Conference in Melbourne on 9-11 February. The event will also offer virtual attendance for those unable to travel to Melbourne. We expect to open registrations as well as a call for

abstracts in the next few weeks and I would encourage you to consider how you will get involved. It will be an event like no other so make sure you pencil 9-11 February 2022 into your diaries now.

APEN thrives on passionate members who volunteer their time to support the organisation. We have a team of Regional Coordinators who are elected to represent the regions within APEN here in Australia, in New Zealand and Overseas. Their main role is to assist with getting APEN activity in the regions and to inform the Board of any issues. Some regions will also be hosting a 'virtual hub' as part of the International Conference in 2022. I would encourage you to reach out to them and expand your network. I am sure they will be thrilled to meet you.

As always, please feel free to contact me directly anytime at president@apen.org.au or 0429 221 443 to share your thoughts on APEN.

Keep safe, keep well and until next time.

Best wishes,

Dr Anthony Kachenko



Editorial – It starts with a conversation... to keep the energy flowing

We have conversations for sharing, connecting, and reflecting – often spontaneous, sometimes with difficulty and hopefully, with a decision and action to achieve movement and change.

This issue of ExtensionNet shares the views and thoughts of a diverse group from the family of extensionists and how they have started a conversation to motivate and inspire others to keep the energy flowing to influence the adoption of change.

- **Angus Dunne's (QLD)** journey, as a graduate of the QFF program and implementing the Project Pioneer, is a must read for emerging young agricultural advisors
- **Ruth Underwood (NZ)** emphasises never underestimating the power of having a vision based on engaging



people. Ruth's tool kit on engagement will widen our capacities

- **Ossie Lang (TAS)** expresses his delight in sharing the annual RMCG staff retreat which provided a space for chatting – a great opportunity to start conversations, share experiences and help us grow personally and professionally
- **Sue Pickering's (NZ)** contrasting stories of how different packhouses value their people is a very telling

reminder that people are the centre of our core business

- **Lloyd Ryder's (NSW)** introduction to leadership through the Rimfire Resources Program has widened his network and influenced his career choices – especially his continued passion for agriculture
- **Morag Anderson's (TAS)** diagram endeavours to capture the issues that influence landholder decision-making

I am continually amazed and in awe of the people who are willing to share their talents, skills, and experiences with us. It is such a promising future. And it all starts with a conversation...

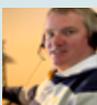
My thanks to the talents of the Editorial Team for finding these inspirational people.



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APEN 2022 CONFERENCE

Facilitating Change and the Opportunity from Disruption

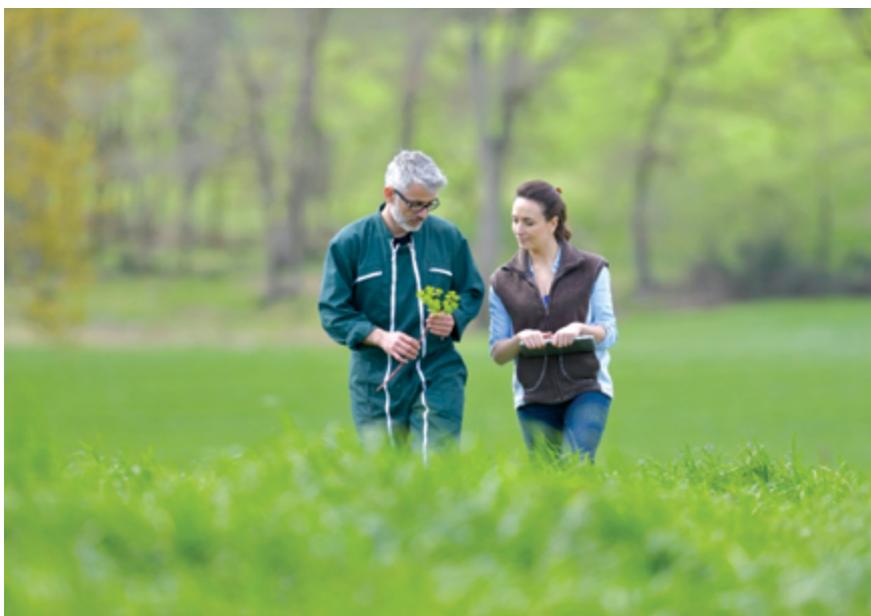
2022 Australasia Pacific Extension Network International Conference
University of Melbourne, Melbourne Victoria 9 - 11 February 2022

APEN's International Conference, *Facilitating Change and the Opportunity from Disruption*, will be hosted by the University of Melbourne. We are excited to announce that it will be a hybrid event with both face-to-face and online delivery, enabling everyone to share presentations and connect with national and international attendees to overcome the challenges of travel, time, cost, or disruptions.

The theme for the 2022 International Conference, *Facilitating Change and the Opportunity from Disruption*, will attract high-profile and exciting keynote speakers, stimulating and inspirational workshops, vibrant debates and discussions, and opportunities for participants to share their experiences and learning by presenting an interactive workshop, submitting a poster and networking with a diverse group of people.

The conference committee is organising field trips and master classes on 9 February 2022, based on feedback from previous events. In addition, the Welcome function and the Gala Awards Dinner will be times to connect, catch up with friends and colleagues and widen your personal and professional network.

Whether you are a 'newbie' in your extension career or a long-standing member of the industry, APEN's International Conference will provide



Secure your place at the conference and join over 200 delegates either in person or online.

opportunities for forming connections with like-minded individuals, exploring Melbourne (and wider Victoria), and be inspired and motivated by our thought-provoking speakers.

An added bonus - Regional Hubs. True to the theme of the upcoming conference and finding opportunity from disruption, APEN is exploring the option of hosting Regional Hubs throughout Australia and New Zealand. This is an exciting alternative for those wanting the security of being able to attend an event in their own state yet still tune into the conference and participate in networking and activities with other attendees. A great idea!

Stay tuned for more information as the conference planning progresses!



Sarah Thompson
Conference Team Member

Creating the Future through Engagement

Project Pioneer – A case study for empowering whole of business change

Angus Dunne

“Everything we are doing comes back to people”

Project Pioneer is a collaboration between Resource Consulting Services (RCS) and Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF). Along with MaiaGrazing, Central Queensland University and FarmMap4D. The current round (2019-21) is funded by the partnership between the Australian Government’s Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. The project was born out of the need to combine business, economic and ecological balance sheets, with a focus on groundcover to retain topsoil and prevent fine sediments and nutrients from entering the Great Barrier Reef Lagoon (GBR).

As a young professional starting in the reef space and extension in 2019 through the QFF graduate program, I had lots of questions. I wondered why many reef extension programs, focused and evaluated were based on tick box reductions instead of preventative whole of business change. Essentially, everything we are doing comes back to people, and quantifying a shift in mindset is considerably more complex than measuring sediment.

Over the past two years, I have led the day-to-day delivery of Project Pioneer to 50 grazing businesses in the project,



RCS project Officer Angus Dunne, working on the 2019-2020 water quality surveys in Thangool central Queensland.

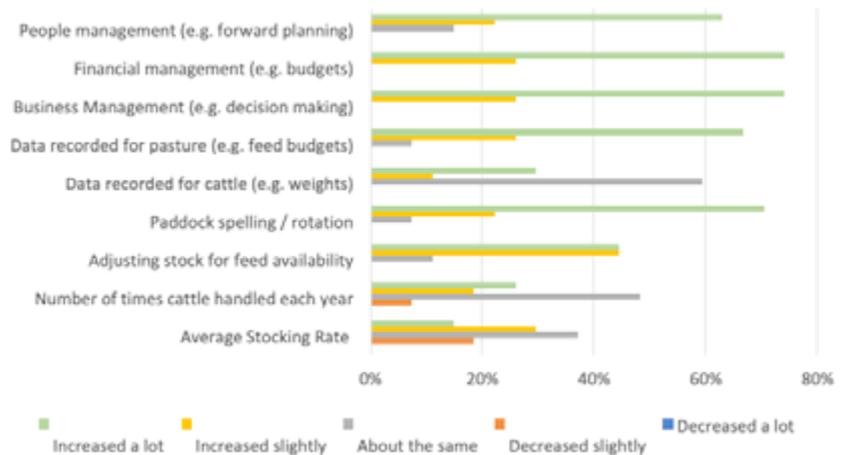


Figure 1. CQU evaluation of Participant responses to the question “Have your management practices changed since you have been involved with Project Pioneer?”



Angus Dunne at the 2019 APEN conference in Darwin, NT

ranging from Charters Towers in the north, to the Bunya Mountains in the south. There are a further 41 businesses supported to continue their management change journey from Pioneer’s previous round in 2016-19. I have been fortunate to see firsthand that ecological health, economic profitability, and healthy people in agricultural businesses are synergistic, not trade-offs.

An evaluation of the project from project partner Central Queensland University recorded the responses in Figure 1 as to which management practices had shifted through the project.

To quote RCS General Manager, Adam Curcio, “You have to meet people, where

they are at”. This embodies the project’s approach to supporting and empowering landholders. Through the delivery of Project Pioneer, communication was tailored to encourage engagement and empower participants. As a result, the projects have taken participants on a journey over two years:

- **GrazingforProfit®** – A 7-day intensive course on ecology, business, grazing, goals, and visions
- **RCS Next Steps** - a 6-month coaching program to implement knowledge from the 7-day school with a coach who has already walked this path
- Annual peer-to-peer local producer groups, building local networks and communities of practice

- Annual on-farm consults with an experienced RSC advisor
- Annual benchmarking through ProfitProbe® and personalised interpretation of the results
- Deep dive into the latest in soil health through the RCS Soil Solutions Workshop
- A recap of business principles through a 3-day RCS Business Fundamentals Workshop
- 2-year Subscription to MaiaGrazing an online grazing system with powerful analytical and forecasting functions
- 3-year subscription to FarmMap4D, a spatial hub with a high level of data accuracy for property planning and mapping.

The project operated within the Rural Profit System shown in figure 2.

The breadth of landholders and industry partners in the project is inspiring and required considerable growth in my communication skills. RCS, APEN and industry mentors introduced me to frameworks and theories to better understand my own and others' communication.

Some examples of these are:

- Kolb Learning Styles
- Myers Briggs
- DISC styles (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, Conscientiousness)
- Communication Styles
- The Big five (openness, conscientiousness (?), extraversion, agreeableness, Neuroticism)

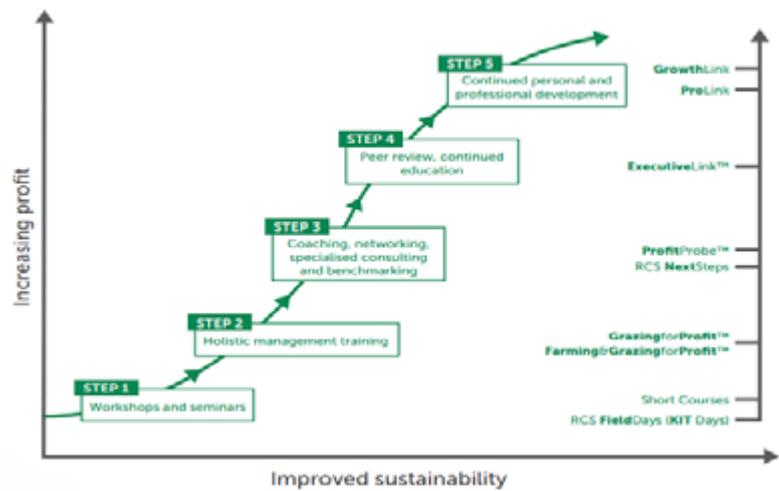


Figure 2. The Rural Profit System.

Along with Toastmasters, these frameworks helped me to understand my communication strengths, and opportunities for growth. Developing my communication skills built a platform through which I could listen and communicate effectively with stakeholders. I did not grow up in Agriculture. However, after I overcame my imposter syndrome, I realised that this was one of my greatest strengths as it enabled me to focus deeper on understanding what was happening on the ground instead of thinking I already knew how it worked.

The five biggest lessons I have learned about communication through the project are:

1. Listen: to what is being said, not what you think is being said.
2. Clarify, do not assume.
3. Build relationships for long-term communication.
4. We are all doing the best we can.
5. We do not need to know the answer, only where to find it.

To find out more about Project Pioneer visit the website [here](#).



RMCG meets in person again! ...and a reflection for extension events

Ossie Lang

Tasmanian Regional Coordinator

In mid-May, all RMCG staff were lucky enough to finally gather together at Nagambie for our first in-person staff gathering in 18 months. Normally, we would meet in person twice every year, with one of those an annual overnight retreat – COVID-19 disrupted our plans.

With approximately 60 staff spread across Victoria, Tasmania, the ACT and NSW a lot of planning went into bringing everyone together. In hindsight, we were extremely lucky to hold it when we did as Victoria headed into another lockdown the following week.

While we have all been in touch virtually throughout the 18 months the chance to

share some time and meals together was invaluable.

One of the key aspects of the retreat was the under-packed schedule. This was a deliberately engineered aspect of the planning that left plenty of time for discussions and chatting. This was particularly beneficial as we had around a quarter of the team who had not attended an in-person event at RMCG. Having a space to chat and discuss was fantastic and allowed me to engage with my colleagues in a way that I wouldn't have been able to if we had been flat out with events or talks. We also had some really good group discussions throughout the



retreat which were unstifled by schedules. I encourage you to adopt this approach with your next event that you are planning, particularly if it is with a group who rarely get a chance to be in the same room together. I recently hosted an event and deliberately under-scheduled the program. The discussions that arose, as a result of this, were key to the success of the day.

[Ed. Thanks Ossie, for sharing this great idea.]



Looking Back to Go Forward

Sue Pickering

Sue is Founder and Director of Develop Ltd. She is well known for spearheading and delivering ground-breaking and gamechanger leadership initiatives from scratch, including the Young Grower of the Year, the HortNZ Leadership Programme and Develop Ltd.'s in-house programmes.

Ten years ago, I visited two packhouses.

The first packhouse - had "new state of the art" everything including packing and sorting systems. When I asked the CEO about the status of their staffing, he became very agitated and outlined how difficult it was to get the right people, that they were losing people to other companies and the headache of having to get people to perform. When I asked what they were doing to improve this. He brought out a set of "rules" and said we have these, and we have KPIs which our senior team has set, and "it's up to them to meet them - why can't they just take more responsibility?"

In contrast, at the next packhouse we were met at a disheveled side-door by the boss in an old grey coat (like the old greengrocer used to wear). As we walked around, he introduced us to his staff, whom he knew by their first names, and facilitated a genuine conversation with each. When I asked him the same question he replied, "We don't have too many problems". Staff tended to stay for years and people knocked at the door. When asked how he managed this, he thought quietly and said "I think it's all about how we treat our people we get to know them, warts and all. We try to explain why we do what we do, provide opportunities to develop them and we let them get on with it. If a loyal staff member comes to us with a problem, even if it's not to do with work, we see if we can help".



Emerging Leaders with Sue Pickering

The contrast between the two packhouses couldn't have been greater and the message is as relevant now as then. If you want to engage your people you need to genuinely care. You need to give them a true sense of belonging. You need to build an environment of trust. People need meaning, purpose, freedom to make choices and have the chance to grow. Image, rules, or norms, while important, are not going to drive truly sustained engagement nor great performance on their own.

This is particularly so with our new generation where demand exceeds supply

and who are not so much loyal to companies as they are to causes, their careers, projects and what impact they make.

These two simple conversations set a foundation for the leadership and team building programmes for current and emerging leaders and their businesses I run today. I address both the program culture and what we try to develop in our participants.

To effect real and sustained results, we need to focus on people as people - not people as merely workers or labour.



"It's all about how we treat our people"

Young Hort leaders see strong future in the industry

Rimfire Resources

In March a group of 18 young leaders attended the [Rimfire Resources Introduction to Leadership Program](#) which is delivered in partnership with the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation, with funding support from [Hort Innovation's Hort Frontiers Fund](#). The program is tailored to address one of the strategic goals identified by Hort Innovation: to better equip Australian horticulture for the future by tackling the shortage of young leaders in the sector, and to ensure the development of those young industry leaders into the future.

Introduction to Leadership is a customised program that acknowledges the barriers to retention in agriculture, including competition from industries that may offer other benefits in terms of salary or location.

"Hort Innovation are working to support industry to retain graduates in the sector despite those pressures to skip into other industries," Gemma Burger of Rimfire Resources says. "Emphasising professional development opportunities is important."

"Alongside everything that makes the sector genuinely attractive, including a relatively fast path to advance in your career; diversity of roles and strong job security (we always need to feed and clothe people); it's also a very high-tech space. It's an exciting industry to be a part of, and it comes with domestic and international opportunities," Gemma says.

For Lloyd Ryder, a passion for horticulture is already ingrained, and the 2020-21 Introduction to Leadership program has provided an added anchor to the industry. "I didn't grow up on a farm or in horticulture, but my father grew up on a dairy, and I always had that curiosity as to how my life would have been different if I'd grown up in agriculture," he says.

Lloyd graduated with a Bachelor of Science from the University of Sydney and embarked on his graduate job-hunt with an open mind.

"I was applying for work anywhere and everywhere, and happy to travel interstate ... I found a job with Driscoll's and moved to Tasmania. I didn't know much about berries, and I'd probably seen myself going into a broadacre agronomy role, but it has turned out to be one of the best positions I could have taken," Lloyd reflects.



"The berry industry is booming, with production rapidly expanding over the last few years. It's a great time to be in the industry, and there are lots of young people involved."

It was with a similar openness that Lloyd dived into the Introduction to Leadership program.

"I got a lot more out of it than I expected to. I didn't have leadership ambitions, really, but through the program I've learned that it isn't about the position you hold, but how you operate in your role," he says.

"Traditionally, agriculture as an industry has been led by older people, and it hasn't been seen as a young or youthful industry. I'd like to see more awareness of what a good career it can be, and what a far-reaching impact you can have."

Lloyd's experience of the leadership program involved learning from remote 'hubs', in response to COVID-19, but later connecting in-person with his 17 fellow-participants in San Remo, NSW earlier this year. The participants had the opportunity to network with leaders in varied sectors of agriculture and ask them about their leadership styles, challenges and advice. They also had the opportunity for a "no holds barred" tour of the Family Fresh Farms baby cucumber production facility in Central Coast NSW where the focus was firmly on the value of people in their operation.

Lloyd said, "It's great to have widened my network in agriculture through this program. I consider all the people in my cohort to be friends, and it's fantastic to have those connections throughout the industry."

The Introduction to Leadership Program also dovetailed perfectly with advancement in Lloyd's career with Driscoll's, as he leaves behind his role as a Clean Stock Technician, to move to an agronomy role with the southern production team. The role takes fuller advantage of Lloyd's scientific training and the career he had imagined while studying. He's working alongside young, often female, colleagues in an environment that challenges industry preconceptions.

"I've been surrounded by people my age also passionate about ag from the beginning," he says.

"It's where I see my future, and we need to entice more young people to see it as a promising career choice."

Attracting new entrants into Australian horticulture – promoting careers in horticulture (LP15006) is funded by the Hort Frontiers Leadership Fund, part of the Hort Frontiers strategic partnership initiative developed by Hort Innovation, with co-investment from Rimfire Resources and participating host companies and contributions from the Australian Government.

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Creating the Future through Engagement

Ruth Underwood

Horticultural Consultant, Fruition Horticulture (BOP)

In my article, I touch briefly on building a future vision, why aim for engagement, then cover some engagement tools I use regularly.

What future?

Building a vision of the future is important. It can be done with a group, or a vision presented which people can then tweak to fit their purposes.

In the face of gloomy future prospects, due to climate change and environmental degradation, tweaking the vision towards a positive aspect helps. It could be a focus on doing your part or making local improvements. A positive vision helps keep a spring in your step while doing the sometimes uncomfortable or mundane things necessary in the short term.

Why engage?

Engagement also builds trust, and a vision is easier to execute the more people are on-board with it. A relevant quote is: "Change happens at the speed of trust", attributed to Debra Jacobs, CEO of The Patterson Foundation in Florida. Acknowledging different views and listening respectfully is important to progress discussion rather than cement opposing views.

Engagement Tools

- Take some time to figure out how to deliver your content so that it is memorable.
- Questioning and active listening skills



have been essential tools to build engagement through my career in horticultural extension consultancy. Any form of involvement with the topic and process helps keeps people engaged and energised

- Mixing up your methods keeps things fresh.
- Sharing ideas, note what other presenters do and adapt it for your purposes.
- Brief stories can work.
- 'Post-it' notes are great for capturing and organising ideas.
- One tool I've used that was fun, if a bit unruly, was writing something on a piece of paper you then folded into a dart, and flew the dart off. You then picked up a random dart and read the contents to the group.
- Using open and participatory language, projecting good energy and aiming to validate and articulate your participants' contributions applies

equally in person and online.

- Brief quizzes, and going around the group for individual comment can be used.

With the rapid development of technology, new options occur, like:

- A 'together' format I bumped into on Skype in the past month
- Breaking into groups online tends to work best where there is a specific 'tech' person implementing this

Following up after engagement is also helpful:

- Whether an email thank you, a summary or a link to a newsletter subscription list
- Take time for a brief reflection on what went well and ideas for next time, formally in your delivery group and with your participants or privately for your own purposes

I've tried to use the 3-step speech process for this article:

1. "tell them what you're going to tell them"
2. "tell them"
3. "then tell them you've told them", so I'll complete the trio!

I recommend using a vision of the future as a basis for engagement, which also builds trust, and mix up tools to make your contribution memorable, posing open questions and using respectful active listening as core tools.



Landholder decision making - complex and multifactorial

Morag Anderson

As people in extension, you know that influencing adoption of new practices is one of the many challenges of extension, especially for people working in natural resource management and biosecurity. These topic areas are not sought after by many landholders and changing practices to improve environmental outcomes on farms is therefore challenging.

As part of a recent project to increase capability in landholder engagement, Morag Anderson and Doris Blaesing from RMCG ran targeted workshops and webinars and produced a guide for participants. The accompanying diagram was developed from the collective knowledge of the people at the workshops and synthesised by

Morag Anderson for inclusion in the guide. Whether or not the various smaller circles and boxes in the diagram capture every influencing factor is debatable – and the aim of the diagram is not so much the veracity of the content but more about conveying the complexity that landholders face when making decisions on farm, i.e., what may be in their minds when you suggest to them to change a certain aspect of their business.

For someone in extension, the message you bring and how you bring it is illustrated in the upper right hand yellow section of the diagram – this is what you potentially have control over, the rest of the elements (green and orange) are mostly out of your control.



Many variables must align for a change in practice to be a valid option for the landholder. One of the biggest messages from the project is that change takes time, years not months, and the right timing, and trust, which also takes time. And you need to listen to the landholders and hear what they are saying.

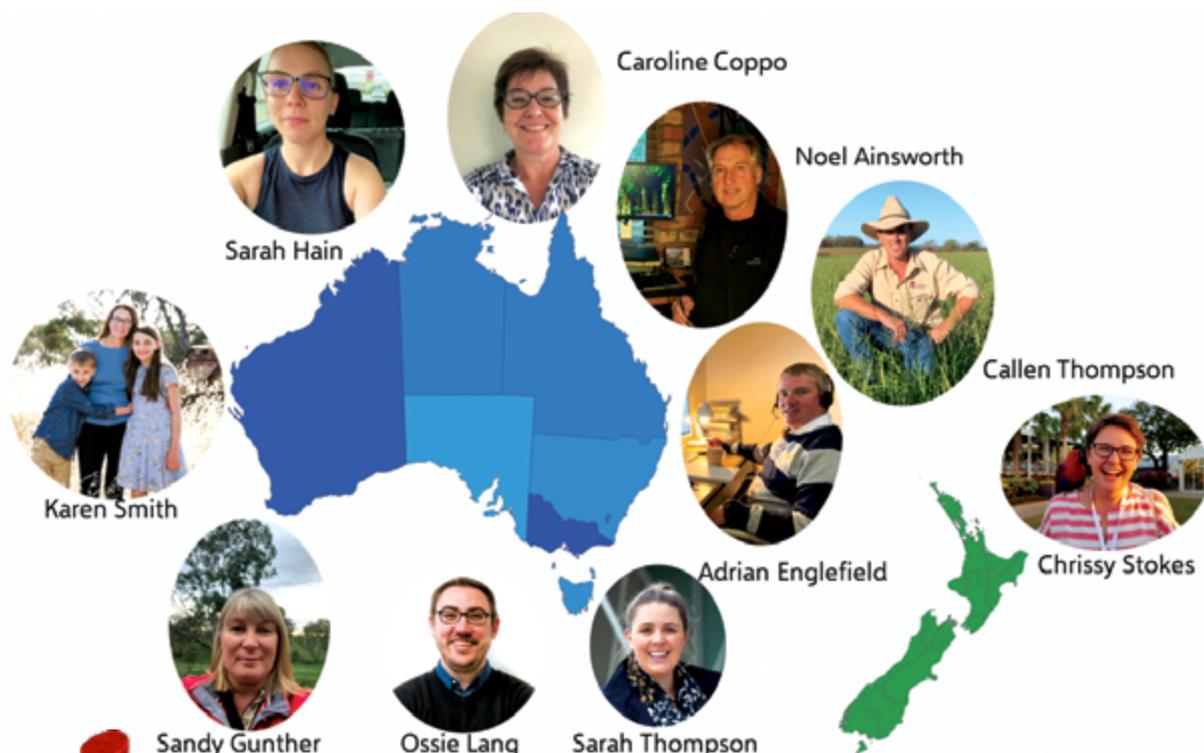
We hope you find the diagram useful. If you'd like a copy of the guide, please contact me: moraga@rmcg.com.au

For more resources on this topic, also check out the webinars of Prof Geoff Cockfield (15/02/2021) and Dr Roy Murray-Prior (21/06/2021) along with their PowerPoints, etc., available here: <https://www.apen.org.au/resources/webinars>

Landholder decision making



Around the Regions



Appreciate the work of our dedicated Regional Coordinators

just a reminder:



- Regional Coordinators (RCs) are elected to represent the members in their region – covering each state and territory in Australia, New Zealand and Overseas.
- The purpose of the Regional Activities Committee (RAC) is primarily to
 - deliver activities and events for members across all the APEN regions
 - to keep the Board informed and advised on regional issues and interests

www.apen.org.au/regional-coordinators

Contact your Regional Coordinator and share your journey – contact details on the back cover of this issue of ExtensionNet

Making Extension Connections

ExtensionChat

APEN Online
connecting with best practice



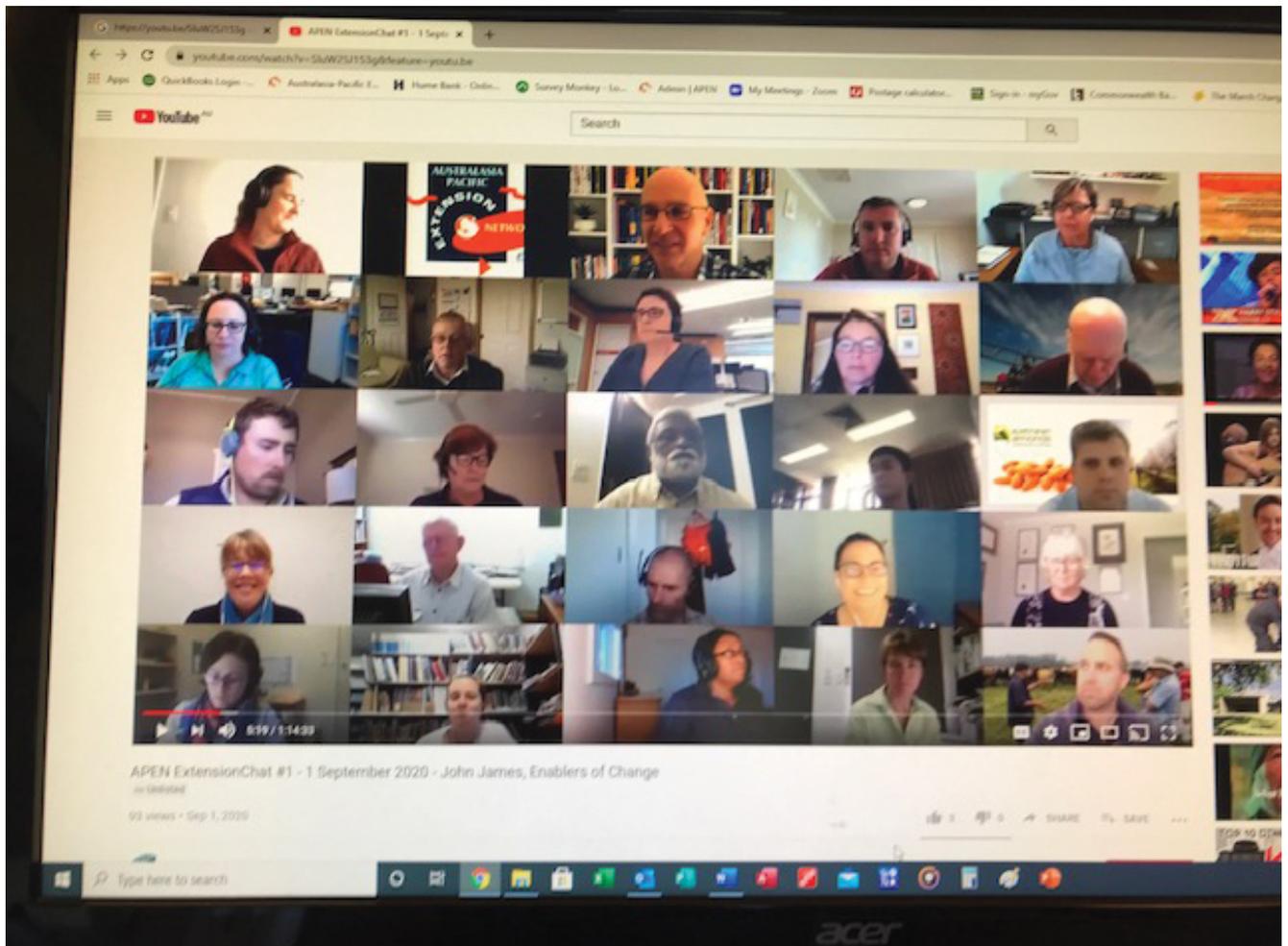
Following the outstanding success of ExtensionChat 2020, the APEN Board is excited to announce that there will be a 2021 version of this successful program.

APEN's ExtensionChat 2021 is a platform for professional development, networking, and representation of members across Australia, New Zealand, South-East Asia, and the Pacific.

The **ExtensionChat** program provides the opportunity to connect with like-minded extension professionals and influencers in the world of extension.

We encourage you to grow your extension network and broaden your skills and knowledge by sharing best practice amongst your peers.

Keep a look out for further details!





"25 Years & Flourishing"

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RC - Regional Coordinator

Together, we have the power to inspire, connect and deliver on new opportunities and rich experiences that can open doors to innovation and progress while growing global economies and increasing well-being (Tae Yoo)

Guidelines and Deadlines

Submissions should be made in MS Word 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.

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

Stories and photos (next edition) due to Editor September 2021.