



EXTENSIONNET

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to APEN's 2022 International Conference

Held on the lands of the Yorta Yorta People, the Wurundjeri, Woi-wurrung people and the Bunurong and Boon Wurrung peoples.

We acknowledge and respect that Aboriginal and Torres Islander people have always used resources from the land and waters for nourishment, medicine, and healing. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging.



Extension is Booming!

APEN's first virtual conference - Facilitating Change and the Opportunity from Disruption - was a huge success. The feedback from participants and sponsors has been overwhelmingly positive.

Across three jam-packed days, there was something for everyone: three masterclasses, four inspiring keynote speakers, over 80 presentations and a virtual dinner celebrating people who have devoted and shared their expertise, time, and energy to the field of extension. Plus, we were joined not only by a large contingent of our enthusiastic New Zealanders but also several overseas members.

APEN and its Conference organising Committee, under the fabulous leadership of Dr Ruth Nettle, supported by APEN President Dr Anthony Kachenko and our professional conference organiser, JT Production Management [an amazing effort], thank everyone who joined us over the three days. We couldn't have delivered such a vibrant and dynamic conference without you.

We, also, acknowledge the generosity of those APEN conference delegates who did not want a refund after the conference went wholly online.

The APEN 2022 Conference issue of ExtensionNet provides you with a snapshot of the activities. The Editorial Team [Chrissy, Morag, Roe, Pat & Adrian] thank the many people who have captured some of the magic that was generated at APEN's 2022 Conference.



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APEN 2022 CONFERENCE

Facilitating Change and the Opportunity from Disruption

Welcome from Convenor + Welcome from President



Dr Ruth Nettle

Ruth's and Anthony's 'official' welcome can be read in the Program Booklet

Ruth in brief, *"It is a privilege to be the convenor for the 2022 APEN conference, notwithstanding the challenges of conference organisation in a global pandemic..... Our conference theme '**Facilitating change and the opportunity from disruption**' was established at the end of 2020 and seemed fitting for the times with a focus on sharing our learning and insights from the challenges extension has faced."*

Ruth highlighted the noteworthy 'firsts' for APEN conferences – the face-to-face shifting to a virtual conference and the parallel regional 'hub' program in New Zealand. Ruth thanked the conference committee, the conference organisers, the sponsors and the 280 participants for sharing their different experiences and learning in the fields of extension.

A few snippets from Anthony - Anthony was delighted that he was able to be with Ruth in person at the University of Melbourne, the physical location:



Dr Anthony Kachenko

"While we may have all weathered the same COVID-19 storm, we have all been in different boats!" He thanked the conference committee and the fantastic support of our conference organisers and sponsors. Anthony hoped that participants left the conference *"informed and inspired to apply your learning to your work"*.

Anthony's excitement was infectious.

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Welcome from APEN's New Zealand Hub

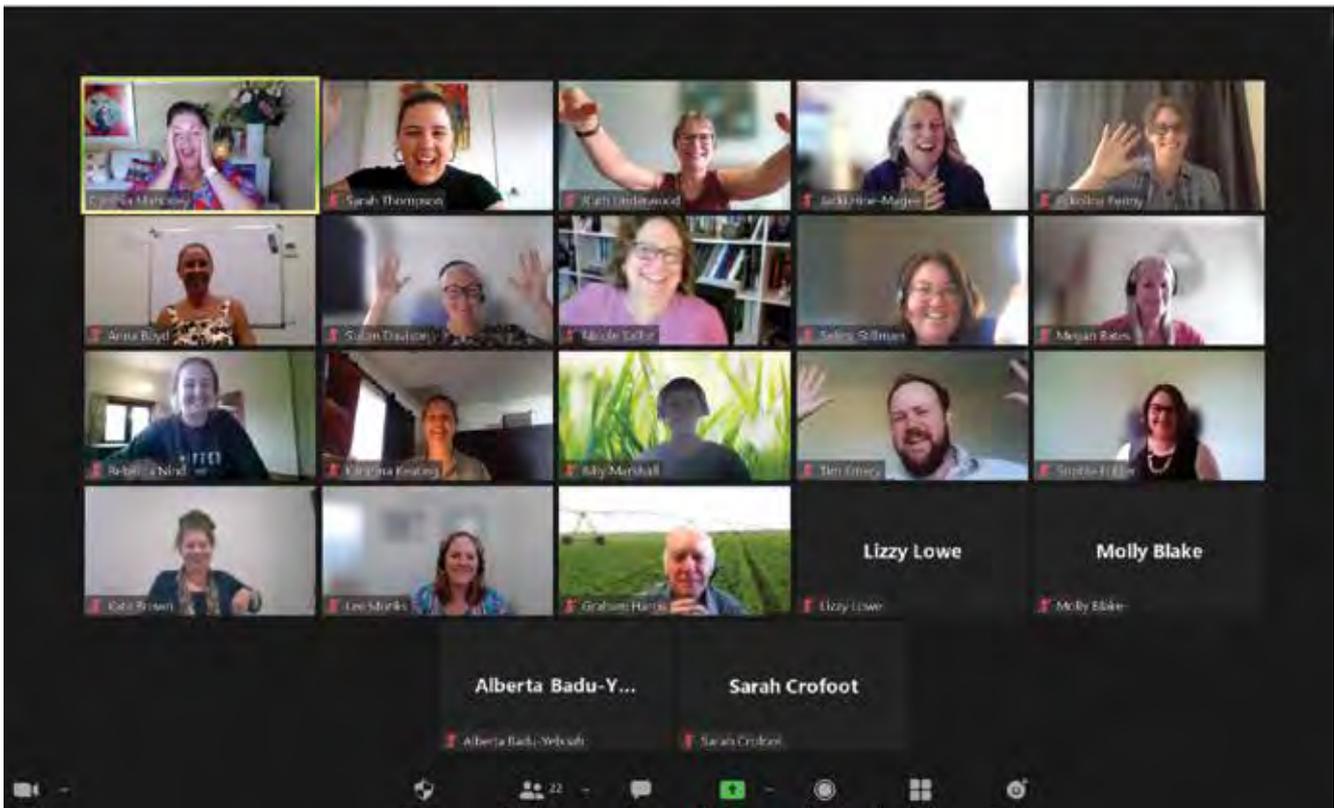
While the New Zealand Hub did not go ahead in person, they joined online events from Melbourne. Technology became one of their best friends as our NZ members shared a great conference experience not only across two countries, but delegates and presenters were able to interact with their counterparts.

Many thanks to Chrissy Stokes, Denise Bewsell, Terry Parminter, Toni White, Christina Robinson and especially Heather Collins and our sponsors: Beef + Lamb NZ, AGMARDT, Bay of Plenty Regional Council and Zespri.

ENET



The Masterclasses



Sarah Thompson shares with us her experiences, as Coordinator of the Masterclass program, Member of the Conference Committee and as our Quiz host at the welcome ceremony

Over three exciting days, conference attendees had the choice of attending one of three masterclasses, a welcome function including an online trivia event, networking breakout sessions, six keynote speakers, APEN awards ceremony hosted by Libby Price followed by dinner speaker Tangaroa Walker, 86 presentation and poster sessions and finally finishing with a fun and interactive closing session. The Masterclasses were attended by 68 people in total and the conference attracted a total of 282 delegates supported by 26 incredible sponsors that enabled this conference to be the success that it was!

When we think about the 2022 APEN Conference and all the awesome elements it entailed, often the best way

to draw out what the key learnings and messages is through conversations with attendees and their reflections. The summary below is a combination of what stuck in people's minds from the conference.

No matter what role you play whether it be extension, research, community engagement or communication – it is all about the people and that often that starts with you. We heard that you need to feel prepared, you need to practice and then when you present or engage – you need to create energy, build connection, and gain interest from your audience. We need to actively think about the audience and who they are, understand what they want (not fall into the trap of providing what we want) and how we can communicate science and information in a way that means something to the individual. To ultimately achieve adoption, we need to use practice change principles and theories

and create time and space for our audience to reflect on their situation and what they've heard, make a plan, and then apply it. We heard that in leadership we need to “meet people where they are at” and “turn up, speak up and step up”. We learnt that when you want widespread change, community is your best asset and often the most influential way to get messages heard. Lastly, one of the most impactful comments that came out of the conference was “When I went to my first APEN Conference, I realised that I had truly found ‘my tribe’” which perfectly sums up the value of the APEN community and the incredible feeling generated by these conferences.



Facilitating at the Masterclasses

Poorly executed extension is weak, done well it's an amazing tool (Kristie Anderson)

Those of us who were fortunate to attend a Masterclass preceding the conference had a problem – **choice** - which class should I attend! Whichever you chose you would not have been disappointed [according to feedback]. The following summary highlights what you have missed.

Extension & facilitation tools, techniques, and tips masterclass

The learning experience:

- A process for designing and planning extension activities that produce better outcomes
- The principles behind how adults learn and how to combine them in your designs
- Understand group stages and dynamics and their implications for group performance
- Apply and practice facilitation skills and tools
- Develop strategies to increase involvement of your participants and to manage the politics, people, and



Danielle England
Aginnovate



Jeanette Long
Agconsulting Ltd



Denise Bewsell
Scalatti NZ

- processes
- Techniques and planning for participatory evaluation of the

processes and outcomes of your activities

Planning, monitoring, and evaluating effective extension projects masterclass



Dr Jeff Coutts | Consultant Coutts J&R

The learning experience:

- The different and complementary roles that extension can play to bring about improved outcomes in an agricultural, environmental or innovation system
- A process for working with relevant stakeholders to understand the context and plan an effective extension process to address a need or opportunity

- Framing of objectives in the context of what extension can and can't achieve in a given situation
- Developing an impact pathway/ program logic model for planning, monitoring, and evaluating extension activities and projects
- Determining appropriate methods for monitoring and evaluating projects and implementing these

Maximising online presentations and extension through engagement



Cynthia Mahoney | Director CMA

The learning experience:

- A process for planning and delivering online extension activities
- How to focus on the people in online sessions rather than the technology
- Activities that allow people to become physically engaged
- How to decrease content, slow down and listening more in an online context
- Exploring technology for online extension and how to use it well and

at the right times

- Technologies and processes for evaluating online activities



So many influences beyond extension ...

The APEN Directors and Conference Committee appreciate being able to engage the expertise of Dani, Jeanette, Denise, Jeff, and Cynthia. [Participants were privileged to attend your classes. Ed.]

Keeping connected and making memories

While conferences are largely about learning, the social aspects of attending a professional conference are a large part of what make them memorable and enjoyable. When the conference is virtual, this social aspect is inevitably challenging, but with a great platform, some creative thinking and putting our facilitation skills into practice, APEN 2022 was a great opportunity to meet new people, build connections, and engage in some fun and silliness.

The Evening Welcome

“G’day (Kia ora) to our NZ hub people”

Welcome to everyone who has joined us this evening. We are so excited to share with you APEN’s first online International Conference.

On the eve of the conference, our fabulous host, Convenor Ruth Nettle, inspired us to sit back and enjoy - *[which we did with crackers and a glass -or two. Ed.]*

“Here in New Zealand, we’d planned an event at the Hub around the awards dinner, and when we went online, decided to still host an event leading into the awards announcements. We had a hilarious hour of team scavenger hunting, and there was no need to worry about allocating sober drivers because everyone was already at home”.



[Thanks, Chrissy, for capturing the occasion]

On with the show...

We were captivated by inspiring music from the Brunswick Rogues Choir, Victoria.



The choir lived up to their claim of aiming to provide fun as they sang songs from around the world that celebrate food, life, community, and social change. As they sang with such gusto concerning the theme of change.

We were motivated by the messages from Jack Creswell's Farm Advice podcasts.

Jack focuses his attention on connecting farmers and promoting opportunities to develop new connections. Through his podcast, he hopes to encourage workers, both young and old, into essential farming jobs. With widespread harvest worker shortages due to the COVID-19 pandemic, he feels that the ag industry can use all the help it can get in marketing the value of living and working rurally.



We were challenged by our Quiz Masters, Anthony Kachenko and Sarah Thompson

How many knew the answers to most questions re APEN and who were quick to record their answers? Some of us need to visit APEN's history on the website!

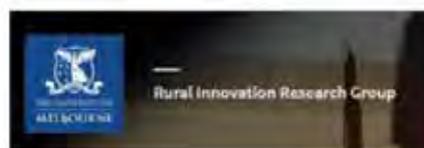


The welcome function set the tone, and we saw some fierce competition in the quiz that was part of this opening event. The conference schedule, with frequent short breaks during the two days of content, allowed space for connecting with friends and colleagues old and new, through the platform's clever use of networking spaces and discussion rooms, and the chat function was great for touching base with those familiar names, or new ones.

It was an evening full of music and fun. The messages of enjoyment kept flowing from the chat line – “a night to remember!” A great way to start our conference.



WELCOME EVENT SPONSOR



Conference Proceedings

Program Day One

Plenary Conference Opening - Dr Anthony Kachenko | APEN PRESIDENT

Welcome to Country: Colin Hunter



Guest Speaker: Caroline Welsh | Future Drought Fund and Strategic Advisory Committee for the Drought Hubs was introduced by Ruth Nettle

Caroline is the former Chair of Birchip Cropping Group (BCG), which improves the prosperity of Australia's broadacre farmers through applied science-based research and extension. Caroline has been a Director of the BCG for twelve years and was Chair for seven. Caroline is also Deputy Chairman of GWM Water which successfully built one of Australia's biggest pipeline projects the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline in western Victoria. Caroline was previously a member of the Loddon Mallee Regional Development Australia Committee.

Highlights from her address: challenges with the Futures Drought Fund as they capture the ideas to be implemented and adapted on the farm; \$100 million every year (the long term funding has been legislated); her role is to develop a funding plan for 4 years – drought resilience, noting drought is different for different region, to adapt, reorganise, reform to improve the social, economic and environmental resilience [it is not business as usual]; based on a monitoring, reviewing and evaluation framework. Set of eight hubs across

Australia – the hubs will deliver on farm trials, peer to peer learnings (see on website), collaborate efforts over the next two years as the progress and structure are solidified. It was a very informative presentation with a positive look to the future.

Caroline officially opened the Conference.

GOLD SPONSOR



Australian Government



Future
Drought
Fund



Ruth introduced Keynote presenter: Prof. Sharon Lewin AO | Director of the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity

Professor Sharon Lewin AO is the inaugural director of the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity, a joint venture between the University of Melbourne and Royal Melbourne Hospital.

Highlights from her presentation: the big picture for facilitating change with the COVID-19 response based on modelling we can understand; how can we cope with crises by thinking outside the box; Doherty Institute was well-prepared as it faced intensive pressure and uncertainty and the challenges in communicating as the facts unfolded; her experiences with HIV over 30 years

– what did they learn; importance of team effort; communication is the key; too many different views clouding people’s judgement; the need for experts to talk to communities; dealing with issue of trust!; using the media strategically – so much more. Ruth moderated a lively Q&A session. Questions ranged from dealing with science, handling the emotional aspects of others, coping personally, challenge, issue of transparency in decision-making, being clear & not ‘dumbing’ down and many more. The final question, “when things go back to normal, what will you take into other areas of the Doherty Institute?”

Feedback from ‘the online audience’ has been so positive – we wanted more and felt privileged to listen to this awesome woman.

Day one continued to the delivery of the concurrent sessions which were full of individual presentations from our delegates who shared **24 abstract presentations in the morning and 17 in the afternoon followed by 10 poster Sessions**. You can read a summary in the program booklet.

Now to the evening event where we were encouraged to use our PREZZEE voucher to sit back and enjoy the activities

SILVER SPONSORS



Program Day Two

Ruth continued her inspiring moderating with the introduction of The Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas | Minister for Agriculture, Victoria



Mary-Anne has a strong appreciation of the needs of people living in regional communities as she had grown up in a small farming community in north-east Victoria. She is proud to be part of a State Government that is delivering record funding for regional communities through investments that support regions to thrive and become even better places to live, work, visit

and invest. The Q&A session raised many issues including: Q. how she approaches and engages communities [A. Mary-Anne meets people where they are, not where she is; she doesn't use the in-house language of politicians by removing the jargon] Q. how does the Victorian government work with rural communities during natural disasters? [A. The State Government works in

partnership with Local Government to provide support.] Q. What is the future innovation agenda with the focus on agricultural technology? [A We are only bound by our imagination.]

The Minister was thanked for time, willingness to answer questions and provide answers that were looking to a positive future for agriculture in Victoria.

BRONZE SPONSORS



Ruth introduced **Keynote presenter:**
Dr Tom O'Dwyer || Leader of Signpost Programme Teagasc



Tom, our international guest from Ireland, leads the Signpost Programme 'Teagasc', based in County Cork, tasked with leading climate action by Irish farmers.

Tom's presentation captured our attention from start to finish as he explored the trends in extension: more

paperwork/ computer work; increased compliance requirements; the advisor as facilitator; multi-actor approach/ collaboration; innovation support requirement to support the adoption of more complex technologies. Tom tackled the issue of 'what works for extension'. He is an advocate of

discussion groups, demonstration farmers, industry collaboration, skills development, knowledge brokers. His photos were very informative. A quote from Tom, "innovation is an idea put into practice with success". The Q&A session could have continued for hours – too much to record here.

APEN 2022 CONFERENCE

The Signpost Programme

- A national campaign
- Two main elements:
 - A network of demo farmers
 - An advisory campaign
- Main objective is to enable farmers to reduce GHG emissions, while remaining profitable and sustainable

New

teagasc

Following Tom's amazing session, more abstract presentations were delivered.

Afternoon session with Cathy McGowan AO

Extension skills are forever: insights from a career in agriculture, community development, politics and now the next chapter



Cathy McGowan AO is a long-time honorary member of APEN. Cathy has been involved with women in agriculture throughout her lifetime. As a politician, winning the seat of Indi as an independent, Cathy was able to bring the attention on regional Australia by initiating policy, constitutional change for first nations people and a solution to the indefinite detention of asylum seekers. She is comfortable in 'walking the talk'.

Turn up! Speak up! Step up... into politics! *Cathy's vision: a prosperous,*

caring rural Australia, alive with opportunities for everyone, as she created a movement to achieve an independent elected to the seat of Indi in Victoria. Tips from Cathy as she responded to the Q&A session include the following: approach and engage with your polities; capture the energy of young people; how can the role of women be amplified – you must be 'at home' with who you are; you get more done with honey rather than with vinegar; work to your strengths; if people are not listening

to me, it is my problem; seek feedback on what people want; hone your skills to be an effective communicator; nobody likes everybody – doesn't matter if everyone likes me; need to work collaboratively in extension and advocacy; and there was much more. What motivation, what challenges, what inspiration – many thanks Cathy for being you and having the courage to be 'at home' with yourself.



APEN Awards of Excellence in Extension



Welcome to the APEN Awards of Excellence in Extension where we shine a light on high achievers

Meet our Host, Libby Price | presenter/producer
Country Today | ABC Radio Network



Libby began her career in journalism as a cadet with ABC Rural in 1985, having completed a Dip. and having worked as a jillaroo

and horse trainer for several years. Her career spans, Current Affairs, Reporter for 7.30 Report, ABC News, Victorian Country Hour, Editor Benalla Ensign, and Country Today. A most impressive

career and an energetic MC.

In welcoming us, Libby acknowledged Country – introduced **APEN President Dr Anthony Kachenko** as the host of presenting the awards.

Anthony spoke about, Extension – or arming growers with new knowledge and scientific research – is so important to help agricultural communities thrive. Extension may be the most important aspect of research and development. Effective extension that is well designed and implemented is crucial

for Australian agricultural producers to achieve the \$100 million target by 2030.”

The APEN awards were open to all extension professionals, both individuals and groups, across Australasia who have demonstrated excellence in extension through a work program completed within the last five years.

As Anthony announced the awards, he was supported by the sponsors of each award.

This year's award recipients included:

APEN Amabel Fulton Award for Excellence in Extension by a Young Professional (sponsored by Coutts J&R and presented by Dr Jeff Coutts)

Joint Winners - Jodie Ward (Future Beef, Queensland, Australia) & Sarah Thompson (Dairy Australia, Victoria)

APEN Open Award for Excellence in Extension (sponsored by Hort Innovation and presented by Jane Wightman)

Joint Winners - Denise Bewsell (Scarlati, New Zealand) & Warwick Waters (Cotton Research & Development Corporation, Australia)

Highly Commended - Melissa Sowden (Silver Fern Farms, New Zealand)

APEN Amabel Fulton Award for Excellence in Extension by a Young Professional (sponsored by Coutts J&R and presented by Dr Jeff Coutts)

Joint Winners - Jodie Ward (Future Beef, Queensland, Australia) & Sarah Thompson (Dairy Australia, Victoria)

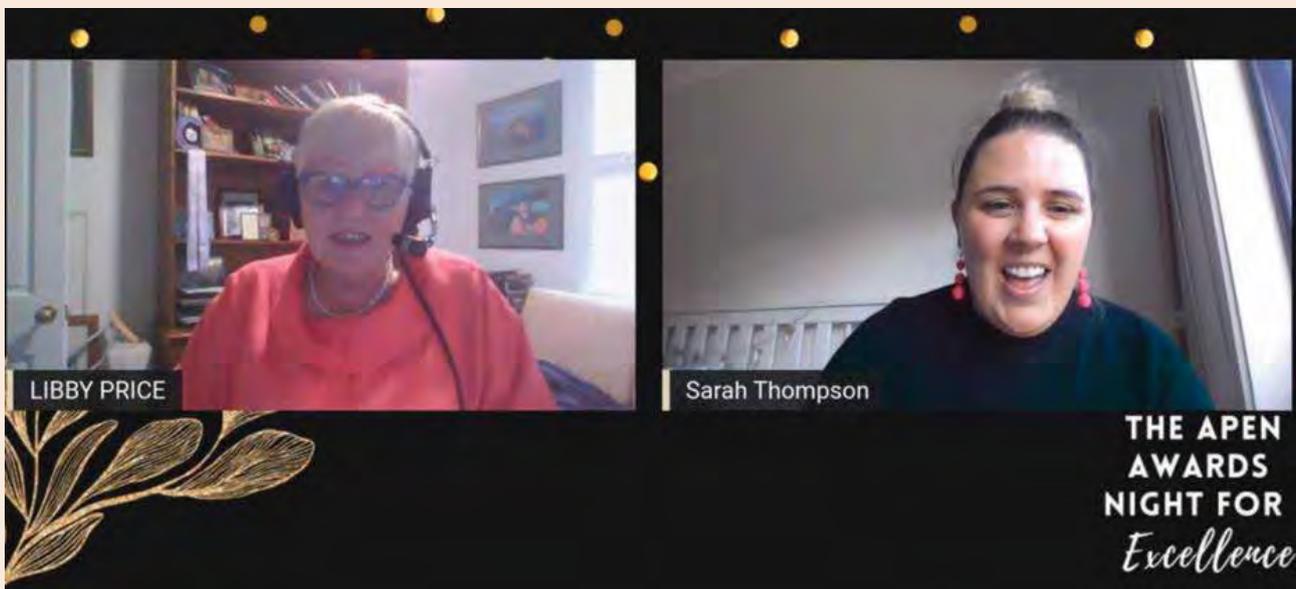
Jodie Ward was given her award for her dedication and commitment to extension which she enthusiastically displays and passes on to all who meet her.

Jodie is part of the FutureBeef Project Team. FutureBeef aims to share the latest practical tools, scientific insights and, relevant, timely advice through coordinated online delivery tailored for the northern Australian beef industry. Recently, she has actively worked with Meat & Livestock Australia's Research and Development Committee to deliver professional development activities to upskill advisors within the beef industry. She has also used her extension skills to support the Queensland Government disaster recovery and COVID-19 activities.



Jodie has sought to develop her social media and social video skills which she has used to communicate broadly across the industry, through creation of engaging content that addresses the needs of her audience. Others now come to Jodie for advice on the structure and content of social media; her peers spoke highly of her initiative, positive 'can do' attitude,

and an ability to 'sort out problems and identify solutions'. The panel were impressed by her commitment to on-going professional development and her commitment to working with stakeholders to understand their needs and provide them with a clear proposition and steps for them in considering the adoption of a new practice.



Sarah Thompson was given her award for her role in planning and delivering development activities for Dairy Australia that allow over 35 extension staff to connect, brainstorm, develop and excel in their extension roles, and ultimately, deliver targeted and impactful extension activities to dairy farmers.

Sarah organises the professional

development of extension staff who are located regionally across the nation. She also coordinates the implementation of individual development plans to ensure they have the necessary extension and technical skills to support on-farm practice change. In addition, Sarah 'gives back' to the industry through her role as Regional Coordinator. Her peers spoke highly of her understanding of extension, proactive nature, and ability

to mentor staff older than herself. The panel were impressed with her comparative young age, responsibility of her role and the extension leadership demonstrated by her. The panel also noted that her experience in extension has equipped her to create learning opportunities for extension staff that are relevant and immediately applicable to their extension officer roles.

APEN Open Award for Excellence in Extension
(sponsored by Hort Innovation and presented by Jane Wightman)

Joint Winners - Denise Bewsell (Scarlati, New Zealand) & Warwick Waters (Cotton Research & Development Corporation, Australia)

Highly Commended - Melissa Sowden (Silver Fern Farms, New Zealand)



One of the first people I met in my own journey with APEN was **Denise Bewsell**. She's someone who shares my passion for chocolate – actually for Denise it's more like an obsession – but also who is incredibly humble. She knew she'd been nominated for this award, but was nevertheless surprised, because “there's always amazing people that actually get these awards!” Yes, Denise, YOU! Denise's award is for a piece of work that many will have heard about: her involvement in the Red Meat Profit Partnership (RMPP), a large scale project funded by a Primary Growth Partnership (ie central government funding).

While most PGPs consist of one or two organisations partnering with the government, this project was unique in that it had 10 partners, including the Crown, Beef+LambNZ, red meat processors and banks. Having a consortium running the project brought

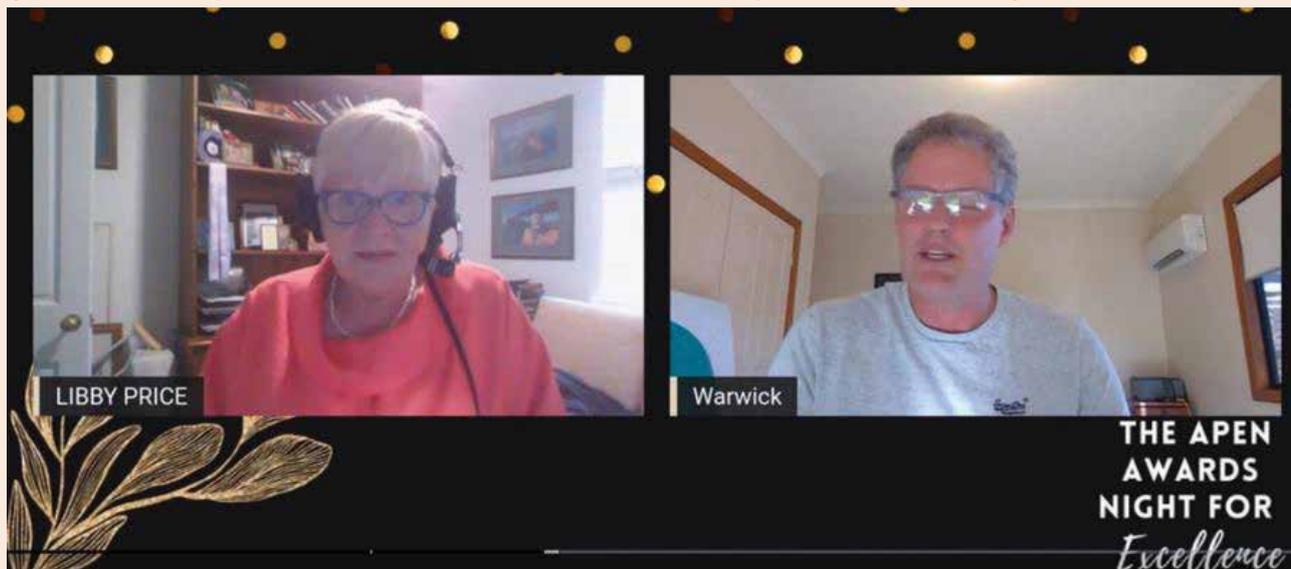
its challenges (“herding cats” was mentioned) but Denise explains “It means that you have actually involved a whole lot of your stakeholders. If you're using that co-innovation language, you're basically involving a whole lot of your end users' perspectives right from the start. And they were present through the whole thing.” The extension component of the programme was one aspect, and involved upskilling and empowering rural professionals and facilitators, developing an Action Network of small groups of farmers, each working with a facilitator to investigate and test ideas that were relevant to them. The Action Network has been picked up by Beef & Lamb NZ, and they are also continuing to support both the groups and facilitators. APEN is a great network where she's been able to learn from and connect with others doing “cool stuff”. Denise describes it as a “safe space to air your

ideas and you hear ideas and so you can incorporate that feedback, even if it's not a formal thing.” She loves the way people give their time and energy, and that even the most experienced extensionists come with a “generosity of spirit, like, I can always learn. It feels like these people always come with this attitude of “I can learn from you.” And yeah, I think it inspires.”

Denise describes the award as “a huge surprise. It's a huge honour and privilege. I was part of a team and the team were amazing, and I've learned so much and continue to reflect and learn from that. OK, I got the award, but actually it probably should have gone to the team.”

So congratulations to Denise, and the whole extension team at RMPP, for an amazing project that will live on well beyond the life of the project.

APEN Open Award for Excellence in Extension
(sponsored by Hort Innovation and presented by Jane Wightman)



Warwick Waters was given the award for contribution to extension through his role as Program Manager for CottonInfo, where he is responsible for coordinating the activities of extension specialists and technical (scientific) experts to connect the cotton industry (growers and service providers) with research.

Warwick has an innovative approach to extension in his role as Program

manager for the CottonInfo Team, delivering a cutting-edge extension approach within the cotton industry. CottonInfo connects growers, agronomists, and consultants – providing the latest news, information, events, and research to support the cotton’s industry’s implementation and ongoing development best practice.

Warwick ‘thinks outside the box’. He was described as ‘a breath of fresh air’,

through his passion for extension and a deep knowledge and understanding of theory. His peers spoke highly of his ability to help other understand and apply theory, to think about ‘the why’, and to think about design in order to increase the effectiveness of extension. The panel were impressed by how Warwick was revered by his staff, researchers and individuals external to CottonInfo.



Melissa and I actually spoke for the first time at the NZ networking drinks event held immediately before the awards event, so when the award was presented, I was so excited for her. When she was telling me about what she does in her role at Silver Fern Farms (SFF), a red meat processor, I suspected she was underplaying it, and hearing the judges’ feedback at the awards night, this definitely comes through. A farmer commented that “she

puts it in our language” – and this goes right to the heart of the project Melissa was nominated for.

Melissa was an instrumental part of the team that developed the SFF Eating Quality Field Guide, “the bible if you want to know anything around eating quality”. This resource for their farmers, suppliers and markets takes the “on the plate” characteristics that contribute to eating quality and links them to the on-farm practices that are influential.

This resource helps farmers identify their limitations, and understand what actions they can take, all in plain and approachable language.

For customers overseas and the sales teams, to be able to understand what farmers are actually doing to improve eating quality is really powerful as well. Other processors have obviously seen the value too: Melissa says, “it’s a great thing when your competitors plagiarise your work.”

Of the award: “It’s really nice to be acknowledged for the work that you’ve done when you don’t necessarily know that it’s been recognized.” Described variously as a “quiet achiever” who “flies under the radar”, “highly respected and trusted by livestock reps and farmers” and whose work has had a “ripple effect [that is] massive,” Melissa’s certainly made an impression on me.

Life Memberships were also presented to Dr Patricia Hamilton (SA), Dr Roy Murray-Prior (Qld) and Dr Terry Parminter (NZ) for their outstanding services to the extension sector.

An Honorary Life Membership was awarded to Dr Rosemary Currie for her dedication to APEN as the APEN secretariat for 27 years. [Best wishes for an 'early' retirement, Roe]



Dr Pat Hamilton has been a strong advocate for rural, remote and regional communities through her experiences as a teacher, secondary school principal and sheep farmer. She has been a driving force on the board of several state and national rural women's and regional organisations – Australian Women in Agriculture Ltd, National Rural Women's Coalition Ltd, the Regional Development Australia York & Mid North, Women Together Learning, and Country to Canberra Ltd.

Pat has been a member of APEN since 2003. She joined the APEN Management Committee in 2016 and became a Board Director in 2018 along with her role as editor for APEN ExtensionNet since 2016. She has guided APEN in its transition to a company limited by guarantee, with particular skills in corporate governance and Pat has been responsible for the reinvigoration of the Regional Coordinator network within APEN.

Pat has demonstrated a strong commitment to APEN to build positive,

productive relationships, networking and working with members as agents of change.

Pat's advice, "don't play safe: take risks and take control of your life. Challenge yourself to make a difference. Always take opportunities if timing is right. Don't be afraid of failure. Always strive for excellence."

Dr Roy Murray-Prior If you've ever met Roy, you'll laugh when you hear him say "I'm thinking I should slow down." Roy is nothing if not a man who gets involved. He says that receiving a life membership is a great honour, although in the same breath, that "if you've been around long enough, they'll give you a life membership." Classic Roy.

Roy's career in extension began when he and his then girlfriend (now wife) were travelling around Australia and ran out of money in Tasmania. He applied for all sorts of jobs and managed to swing one in extension. He describes studying for a Graduate Diploma Agricultural Extension at Melbourne

Uni a few years later as "the best nine months of study I've done in my whole life, and I've done a lot of years of study!"

What made it so great was that it changed his view of the world, bringing together all sorts of disciplines, meeting growers and farmers where they're at, working out how they view the world and starting with what they think is important. It's easy to sense his frustration with top-down models of extension, often driven by people in power who work in their own silo, and often see extension as an add-on at the end of a project.

In contrast, Roy describes a meeting he attended at a farmers' group office with grower group farmers and their group officers and the researchers that were supporting it, and it sums up perfectly what he means when he talks about understanding what's important to the farmers and growers we work with.

"I remember one of the applied researchers presenting her results.

And she went through all her things, and most of them were nice to know. And then all of a sudden, she said something, and you could see the farmers' eyes lights up. This is the gold." I am always stunned at how people who are so experienced, whose time is valuable and who have lots of other commitments, give their time to APEN. Roy is that guy who always puts his hand up to be a mentor, who is on the Board, who helps to organise conferences – he's the guy there in the background doing the doing of APEN. He might have hung round long enough, but he's well and truly earned the honour of being a life member.

Dr Terry Parminter's career in extension stretches back over 40 years, to its beginnings in 1979 as a Farm Advisory Officer, providing a free (Government-funded) extension service. Back then most farmers and growers would have known exactly what extension was and would have known their local extension officer (who at times was even put to researching winter feed options, to discover later it was in aid of a seven letter crossword solution).

The delivery of large-scale field days for sheep and beef farmers that attracted up to 2000 farmers and 100 research centre science staff at a time is one of Terry's many achievements, and more recently he's designed and organized the public engagement campaign in the Wellington region (pop. ~500,000) to encourage participation in the development of the natural resource management plan for the region.

Terry has worked across research, on-the-ground extension, and policy, and these days at the intersection of all three. A strong belief that extension is a discipline, which requires not only a set of skills but a sound understanding of the principles and theories that underpin them, has in part driven Terry's engagement with APEN, not only participating but actively contributing to the organisation, in many forms over the life of the organisation. Terry always puts his hand up when it comes to conference organizing. The support he

provides is very practical, and with his many contacts and connections across the public and private sectors is a key fundraiser for the New Zealand cohort.

Just as in my previous conversations with Terry, he's not afraid to go deep. Terry constantly thinks about how what he's hearing or seeing fits with what he already knows or believes, and how his perspective is changing. Right now, he says, "I don't see how someone could enter university and say, "I want to be an extensionist, and that is why I'm doing the undergraduate degree I'm doing."" For most people we discover extension at the end of a degree, or somewhere along the way in another career. APEN, he believes, brings together people from lots of backgrounds, who have a diverse set of skills, and that a key role for APEN is to ensure that these skills remain linked to their theoretical base in economics, social psychology, and education as well as elements of pure science, to maintain the integrity of extension as a profession. Without this, Terry argues, we will struggle in the future to have extension recognized in universities. After some of the stories he's told me about chairing community meetings on pretty emotive issues, it's clear Terry isn't one to shy away from a difficult conversation.

Dr Roe Currie (Roe to most of us) has been a formidable advocate for extension and APEN for almost 27 years many years having held the role of APEN Executive Secretary. As well as being the contact and communications point for APEN and looking after the membership database and finances, the role involves assisting the APEN Board and Committees and especially the President, Treasurer and Secretary. Roe has supported the organisation in everything that it has achieved including the delivery of conferences, the mentoring scheme,

regional events and communications and organisational governance and the transition of APEN into a company limited by guarantee.

When recognising Roe for 25 years' service to APEN, Roe indicated that she was motivated by her desire to keep APEN running, ticking along, and progressing and working closely with the APEN Board, Committees and Members. Roe has also demonstrated a strong commitment to APEN, and to its efforts to build positive, productive relationships, networking and working with members as agents of change. Those that have worked with Roe can attest to her 'can do' attitude in driving and supporting the work of APEN through its committees, programs, and events. APEN is indebted to the contributions of Roe over her 27 years with the organisation.

To quote Roe, "Working with all the APEN Committees and Editors and getting to know them all and see them grow with experience as they work for APEN's benefit continues to be a satisfying and rewarding experience. Putting faces to APEN members' names at events is a highlight of the role."

Pat, Roy, Terry and Roe were suitably surprised and thrilled with their Life Memberships. See them recognised with the four other Life Members on the APEN website: <https://www.apen.org.au/about/apen-life-members>



Not content with celebrating the achievements of the Award winners, Libby introduced the Dinner speaker, the amazing [Tangaroa Walker Dairy Farmer 4 Life](#)



Our speaker [Tangaroa Walker](#), a dairy farmer, author and “edutainer” from New Zealand is the face of @Farm4life and launched straight into his trademark relaxed style that had us cackling. His story was fascinating, and I think even if doesn’t see it himself, Tangaroa is smashing it at extension! Bringing bite-sized learning to farmers, working with experts to develop content, and sharing stories about his day-to-day farming experiences alongside his role as a dairy farmer, Tangaroa lives and breathes farming and learning, and through that helps to shine a light on mental health in the rural sector. If I took anything from his talk, it’s that anyone can play a role in enabling others to learn develop, as long as they’re passionate about what they’re doing.

The APEN Awards themselves were a highlight of the conference. The calibre of the winners was very high, and it was so great to see the new life memberships given to Pat Hamilton, Terry Parminter, Roy Murray-Prior and a very special honorary life membership to our amazing Roe Currie. The congratulations flying through on the chat were so cool to see, and we loved being able to hear from our award winners on screen. The amazing extension work that Excellence in Extension awards winners have been part of is a testament to their skill, passion and hard work, and it was super inspiring to hear from them about what they’ve loved about their projects. Libby Price and Anthony did a brilliant job of hosting the evening and the Awards.

What this conference highlighted to me is that although we all love getting together in person, an online event has definite advantages, and we can very successfully run an online conference with the right planning, preparation and platforms.

Conference Wrap Up & Reflections

Conference Wrap Up session was convened by Dr Ruth Nettle & Sarah Thompson

Sarah 'warmed us up' by creating a space for reflection. We explored topics we had listened to and learnt about during the last two days (three for some) that will be our future influencers. There

were so many highlights, so many messages to take away, so many ideas to ponder over.

As Ruth said, "extension is about people

...APEN's future starts with us ...will we do things differently ... time will tell."

The conclusion: **Extension does matter it is very alive in the village of APEN.**

The Production Management of the APEN 2022 Online Conference was provided by JT Production Management



Snippets from the JTPM Evaluation report

The APEN Conference, hosted totally online, was an international meeting for rural and community advisory practitioners, researchers, and academics who combined the best extension research and practice from developing and developed countries. We heard from leading experts, thought leaders and industry professionals.

The conference was held across three days and provided stimulating and inspirational workshops. 80+ participants shared their experiences and learning on extension through presentations,

posters, and discussion. The conference included optional masterclasses, a welcome function, a gala awards dinner, 5 x keynote speakers and much more.

We observed that engagements during the abstract presentations, keynotes and various plenary events were high, indicating an appetite from the conference attendees to interact with their peers and other extension professionals – validating the decision to proceed with the conference.

The APEN Conference 2022 was successfully delivered. Feedback from attendees throughout the conference experience was mostly positive and we

believe that the decision to proceed with the event in an online capacity yielded a lot of value for conference attendees.

It was a pleasure to work with the APEN Committee, and the collaborative environment, attention to detail and thoroughness supported in making several key project decisions – one of which was to adjust the conference from hybrid to an online-exclusive event. Taking into account the number of moving parts in this project, the unfortunate necessity to remove the in-person elements and the complexity in coordinating such a large number of presenters – JTPM believes that the APEN Conference 2022 was staged successfully and delivered a great outcome for participants, presenters and organisers alike.

From the APEN Directors: "Many thanks to Melinda and the team at JTPM. You were so professional and easy to work with. We really appreciated your guidance and flexibility. It was a buzz".]





Reflections Post Conference from Convenors Ruth & Anthony

Several weeks after the conference we approached Ruth and Anthony with five questions. We thank them for their honesty in sharing their reflections with us.

How are you feeling after such a huge commitment?

Ruth: Thinking about the conference still puts a smile on my face. The level of engagement, interaction and impact that was able to be achieved is a source of great pride and achievement for the whole conference committee. Seeing so many people on camera at the end of the conference was truly inspiring to see and reinforced who we are as a community.

Two months on from the conference I still receive emails and am making connections with people from the conference about new opportunities. Whether it is something one of our key notes mentioned, an insight from our peer presentations that people are referring to or using or a new connection made in the virtual booths or virtual meeting options, people are still talking about the conference!

Anthony: Optimistic about the future of the extension profession across the Asia-Pacific and relieved that the conference was a success. My optimism stems from the high calibre of presentations and conversations that occurred through the virtual platform across the three-day event. My relief is attributed to the fact that we managed to move from a hybrid event to an online event within two weeks with minimal disruption thanks to the Ruth, the conference committee as well as the expert guidance from the event organisers.

Would you change anything?

Ruth: The feedback from the conference evaluation has been inspiring and useful for future events. Providing more time between presentation sessions and some more themed networking/discussions will be important. Things I'd keep are the APEN welcome quiz – ensuring Sarah Thomson and Anthony Kachenko are our quiz masters again. Having community inspired performances like



our Brunswick Rogues choir singing about change was a great addition and artistic, and creative endeavours are really important in extension.

Anthony: There are always things that could have been done differently and is the very reason why we comprehensively evaluated the event – my feedback included. We want to ensure the 2023 conference is equipped for success and continues to advocate the importance of the extension profession.

What 'props' did you need to maintain the enormous energy? [I rely on chocolate, walking, and sharing my ideas with my dog]

Ruth: I forgot to ensure my access to chocolate across the conference days (how did I forget that?). However, through the conference, some of the APEN team and presenters were in the building I was participating from – and it is amazing how much energy comes from giving or receiving a big thumbs up through the office door or having a quick de-brief chat between sessions! The importance of feedback in giving positive energy, eh!

Anthony: I do enjoy my coffee hit which keeps me on my toes. There was plenty of coffee consumed at the conference I assure you.

Do you have any messages you want to pass on to the next conference team for 2023?

Ruth: While our conference feedback indicated people do prefer face to face events, don't hold back from on-line

options. Our sponsors were diverse, amazing, and so supportive – reflecting the village of extension these days and we encourage consideration of this diversity in future conferences.

Anthony: I was privileged to be part of a high performing, passionate and diverse conference committee that committed several hours (many as volunteers) to ensure the conference was a success. I cannot underestimate the importance of the committee and the leadership and direction of the conference convenor – in this case, Professor Ruth Nettle for the next conference. Having a highly capable, honest and enthusiastic conference organiser with a sound, track-record of previous delivery is also paramount. The need to keep the APEN Board involved (many of which were on the organising committee) is also essential to ensure appropriate governance and necessary guardrails are in place.

Any other info?

Ruth: In my wrap up talk at the conference conclusion, I think there were some important developments for APEN as an organisation and as a profession that are important to note:

We learn a lot from people outside our sector and internationally – because we have so much in common – not only because there are things that are different or can be taught.

Anthony: Very much looking forward to the next conference being face to face (or hybrid)!

Conference Committee

Anthony and Ruth wish to acknowledge the tireless efforts and commitment to the APEN 2022 conference of the following members of the conference committee:



Dr Rosemary Currie
APEN Executive Officer and Secretary



Dr Roy Murray-Prior
APEN Treasurer | REIS Journal Chief Editor



Dr Heather Collins
APEN Director



Peter Long
APEN Director



Penny Shaw
Program Manager Grain Services,
Biosecurity and Agriculture Services



Jason Hingston
Regional Extension Manager, Horticulture
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Leads – Regions, Dairy Australia



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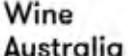
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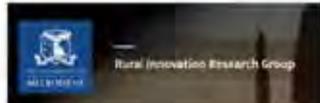
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RC - Regional Coordinator

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.

Editor: Dr Pat Hamilton

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