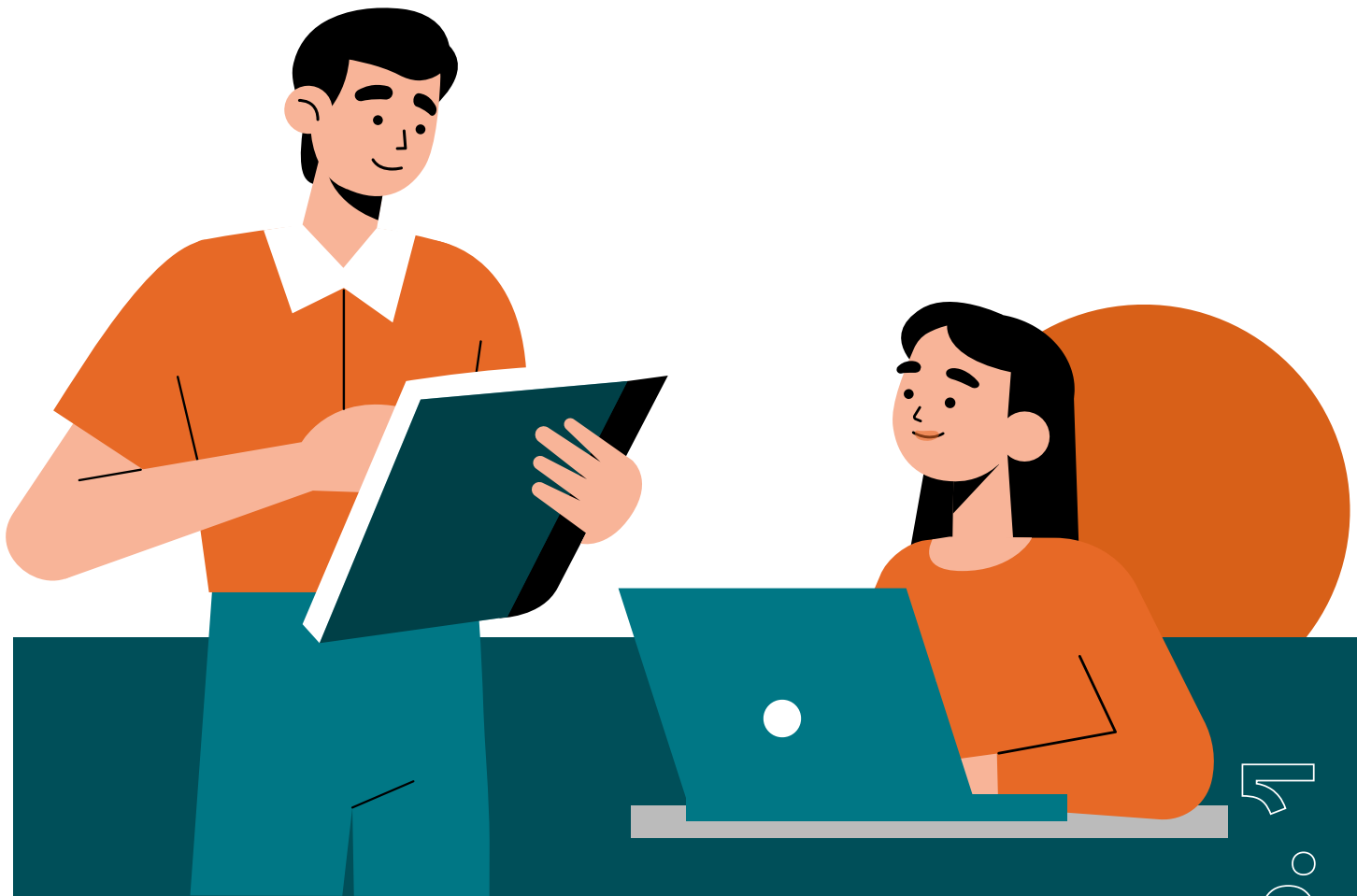


Newsletter of the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network Ltd

# ExtensionNet



**Study tours, events, co-design  
and artificial intelligence**

A light read before the APEN conference

Vol. 31 No. 1

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## Editorial

### Adrian Englefield

Hello APEN members  
Welcome to a new edition of ExtensionNet and my first leading the editorial team.

Firstly, a HUGE thank you to Pat Hamilton for an excellent job as ExtensionNet editor over the past seven years. Pat has provided a very sound base for further development of ExtensionNet as both a professional development, support resource and communication focus for APEN members. You are a highly valued mentor for many within APEN - hope you enjoy reading future ExtensionNet editions.

This ExtensionNet edition has a bit of everything!!!

- We are chatting to John James about the new world of artificial intelligence and, in particular, Chat GTP - are you unsure of how Chat GPT can be utilised by extensionists? John has some answers and provides links for two informative webinars
- Several APEN members have reported from events and tours including the E-Tipu IFAMA World Conference in Christchurch and the 2023 AgriFutures innovation immersion tour in the USA
- We have tips and tools on co-design from the Southern NSW Innovation Hub and the team at AgInnovate will discuss 'Field days that rock'.

As you would all be aware, the APEN Conference is fast approaching on 14-16 November. I look forward to catching up with new and existing members, for what is a clear highlight for the APEN community.

And finally, APEN is looking for members to fill various Board positions, if you are interested, please see the details included in ExtensionNet and submit an application.

I am looking forward to contributing to APEN through ExtensionNet. If you have any ideas to improve ExtensionNet or have ideas for future editions, please flick me an email Adrian Englefield at [adrianenglefield@gmail.com](mailto:adrianenglefield@gmail.com).

**Thank you.**  
**Regards, Adrian Englefield**  
**Editor ExtensionNet**

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# 2023 CONFERENCE

14-16 November 2023 | Launceston, Tasmania

**APEN 2023 is around the corner: discover keynotes, awards, scholarships, and more!**

The buzz is real, and the anticipation is high! As we draw closer to the APEN International Conference in Launceston, Tasmania from 14-16 November 2023, we wanted to share some exciting updates that promise to make this event unforgettable.

## Inspiring keynote presenters

Join us and be inspired by our esteemed keynote presenters:

- **Tim Jarvis AM:** Dive deep into the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss with Tim, an environmental scientist, author, and adventurer. His recent movie, *Shackleton*, is a testament to his commitment to pragmatic environmental solutions.
- **Ivar Ravn:** Discover the innovative strategies of SEGES Innovation in Denmark. Ivar will share their journey in managing innovation and adoption, and how they've revolutionized sustainable farming with data and AI.
- **Stephanie Trethewey:** Connect with the heart of rural Australia through Stephanie's storytelling. Learn about her initiative, *Motherland*, and how it bridges gaps, removes isolation, and fosters relationships among rural mothers.

## Field Trips & Masterclasses: Act Fast!

Thank you for the overwhelming response to our field trips, which are now completely sold out! There is still an opportunity to register for our masterclasses. These sessions are designed to enhance your knowledge and skills, and are filling up fast. Act quickly and secure your spot at a discounted price of \$450 ex GST. Don't miss out on this chance to expand your horizons and gain new skills!

- **Climate adaptation:** Delve into the challenges of climate change with Steve Willing.
- **Farmer wellbeing:** Dana Carver explores rural wellbeing and resilience in a changing world.
- **Innovating agricultural extension:** Gain international insights with Ruth Nettle and Nikki Reichelt.
- **[SOLD OUT] Fearless facilitation:** Master the art of group dynamics with Denise Bewsell and Chrissie Stokes.

## APEN Awards for excellence in extension

We want to thank everyone who submitted nominations for the APEN Open or Experienced Extensionist and the APEN Amabel Fulton Award for Excellence in Extension by a Young Professional (35 years or under).

The nomination period is now closed. We appreciate the time and effort put into these nominations. The winners will be announced during the APEN conference, where they will have the opportunity to present their work, receive a professional development bursary, and be featured on our platforms.

Thank you for your participation and stay tuned for the announcement of the winners!

## Student scholarship winners

We are thrilled to introduce you to our scholarship winners, a milestone made possible through the generous sponsorship of [RMCG](#). This initiative was aimed at supporting students in Australia and New Zealand who are engaged in agricultural extension studies, fostering the next generation of industry leaders.

**Karen Edwards, University of Melbourne**

Masters of Agricultural Science

Karen is on a mission to blend industry insights with her academic pursuits, eyeing opportunities in the agricultural extension sector. She perceives the APEN conference as a vital networking platform that will help shape her future career.

**Laura Grattidge, University of Tasmania**

PhD (Suicide prevention)

Laura is spearheading the development of community-centric guidelines for youth suicide prevention in rural Australian communities. She envisions the conference as a platform to present her research and foster meaningful collaborations.

**Emma Knowles, University of Adelaide**

Bachelor of Agricultural Sciences

Emma is committed to fostering international agricultural development, keen on establishing

connections between Australia and global partners. She sees the conference as a stepping stone to enhance her extension capabilities and network with industry pioneers.

**Join us and connect with your community**

The APEN 2023 Conference is a gathering of the brightest minds in rural and community advisory. Our theme, 'Looking to the future: the role of extension and education', is set to spark conversations on the future trajectories of extension and education in our dynamic world.

Let's look to the future together, embrace change, and shape the world of extension and education.



*Join an APEN committee.*  
**Enhance Your Skills**  
**Enable Change**

**A piece missing from your life? APEN has a solution!**

Committees are an important way for members to help APEN achieve its strategic directions and help you share your interests and expertise to enable others to grow

We invite you to join one of the Board Committees which meet quarterly by Zoom

- Audit, Risk and Finance
- Business Development
- Governance and Strategy
- Membership Engagement.

We are looking for committed members. The term of appointment is two years, and the committee meets at least four (4) times per year.

We encourage you to select a Committee and send us an Expression of Interest to [info@apen.org.au](mailto:info@apen.org.au).

In your response, please outline:

1. why you want to be involved
2. attributes, interests, and skills you can bring to team: (400 words max.)

For further information contact the Chairs of the committees:

**• Audit, Risk and Finance**Dr Roy Murray-Prior M: [+61 427 212 079](tel:+61427212079)**• Business Development**Peter Long M: [+61 490 324 671](tel:+61490324671)**• Governance and Strategy**Dr Anthony Kachenko M: [+61 429 221 443](tel:+61429221443)**• Membership Engagement**Noel Ainsworth M: [+61 409 003 909](tel:+61409003909)

In the words of Janna Cachola [Author]: "If you have a voice, use it. If you have legs, stand up. If you have feet, step up. If you have each other, fight together".

## Getting others involved in APEN

### Meet Sophie Folder | Past Tasmanian Regional Coordinator

*Sophie shares a blog she wrote for APEN before APEN became a company limited by guarantee. Her thoughts provide a rewarding experience for anyone who is interested in becoming a Regional Coordinator. Thanks Sophie – we agree! APEN is a fantastic network!*

I joined APEN in 2003 when my supervisor at Vic DPI told me that I should. I was lucky enough to be part of the DPI graduate program and have great skilled and experienced extension officers to mentor me in my early extension career. I attended the APEN conference in Hobart that year and to be honest much of the content went over my head, but I still considered it to be a great experience. Now that I operate my own consulting business as a sole trader, I see the benefit of APEN even more as an opportunity to network and share with other like-minded professionals. It is terrific to be amongst a group of people who understand what it is that I do, what the term extension means and to be challenged by new ideas and ways of operating.

I was fortunate that I had the advice to join APEN from my supervisor and given the changed landscape of extension service delivery I worry that those traditional points of introduction to APEN for young extension professionals may be reduced. I think we all as APEN members, who value this great organisation and network need to shout it from the rooftops and let others know about APEN, especially to those new to the profession.

Locally in Tasmania it has been great to see the Tasmanian APEN membership grow in numbers over the last six years, as together with the Cluster Coordinator Aysha Fleming, we organised local APEN events including APEN roadshows, formal training workshops, informal networking events and promoted APEN webinars. Local events are a great way to demonstrate the value of APEN and to encourage people to get on board

I am thrilled but also saddened to hand on my APEN role to the new Tasmanian Regional Coordinator Donna Lucas and wish her and new Tasmanian Cluster Coordinator Tony Butler all the best for the new APEN roles. The Tassie members will benefit from their new enthusiasm and ideas, and it is great that Donna and Tony now have the chance to take on the opportunities that being an APEN representative has brought me. I will really miss being part of the APEN MC, it has been a wonderful experience.

So, for anyone out there who is considering taking on an APEN role... DO IT! or if you ever get tapped on the shoulder and asked to consider taking on a role with APEN... SAY YES! You won't regret it.

Read the full blog post [here](#)

“  
for anyone out there who is considering taking on an APEN role... DO IT!  
”

## APEN Conversations

**Rebranding APEN's book club - Now APEN Conversations! Launched on Monday 24th July – you missed a robust session. Noel Ainsworth [Regional Coordinator South Queensland and APEN Board Director] facilitated the discussion on two ways to engage employees/teams/clients for co-design. Participants took the opportunity to have their say and share their experiences on how they use technology in delivering their role and how they foster social interaction, team belonging and cohesion.**

**Stay tuned for more information about future sessions.**





## The Value of Study Tours

Karen Smith

The inaugural 2023 AgriFutures innovation immersion tour to the United States in June proved to be a success in terms of peer-to-peer learning for the 15 producers and industry representatives taking time out of their own businesses to look at production systems in another country.

The tour started in Salinas, California with a good exploration of horticulture systems from leafy greens, berries, nuts and citrus before attending the Salinas Biologicals Conference, organised by a consulting company out of New Zealand, Wharf 42. Use of biologicals within a conventional farm business for an integrated pest management system is becoming a norm in California and other states, breaking three industry-held notions around their inclusion on farm:

1. Adopting biologicals within your existing integrated pest management system does not mean you need to convert to organic or another labelled certification system.
2. Using biologicals alongside chemical and physical pest management approaches leverages the overall efficacy of the pest management system, hence widening the IPM rotation.
3. There are no good bio-herbicides! Yet!

This is an emerging challenge in Australia, for extension staff and consultants to improve their knowledge about how biologicals can be applied within production systems to achieve better system outcomes translating into economic farmgate returns. Finding products available here in Australia with the trial data and support is key, along with developing import protocols for products manufactured outside of Australia that are not destroyed through our biosecurity regimes.

### Value #1: Observing a different mindset

The AgriFutures immersion tour continued onto Iowa and Kansas to visit farms, research centres and universities to check out how innovation is supported at a broadacre scale. The close relationship between farm policy bodies (funding advocates), research centres, value-adding industry and farmers was impressive, especially in-terms of making local initiatives happen to support regional economies. The local US contacts were envious of our Research & Development levy system and how it is used within Rural Research and Development Corporations.



Visiting and observing some of the innovations across these sectors in horticulture and broadacre provided cross pollination for tour participants to think about in their own farm systems. Production sector differences in resource allocation and scarcity (such as labour) drive innovation of which we were able to witness from autonomous robotics for field work and harvesting, CRISPR-enabled root bacteria producing nitrogen fertiliser in-situ, and green-on-green weed identifying cameras for spraying.

Seeing the innovation within the farm system and interviewing those farmers taking up this technology allows for tour participants to take another perspective of their own challenges and practice their R&D enterprise on-farm (rip-off & duplicate) selecting parts that might suit their own system.

### Value #2: Stimulating problem-solving through observing innovation elsewhere!

The challenges of producers regardless of sector were similar between Australia and the US; disconnect from consumers, ideology based policy, increasing regulation, tight labour markets.

“

**Seeing the innovation within the farm system and interviewing those farmers taking up this technology allows for tour participants to take another perspective of their own challenges**

”

Ultimately consumers want to know what and how their food and fibre is produced, requiring farmers to fill that knowledge gap in the supply chain by providing transparency around the social, environmental and economic sustainability of production practices.

**Value #3: Solidarity of producers, we are not alone in facing challenges to feed and clothe the planet!**

While there are many other values obtained from investing in a study tour, these three above can provide the drive to enable practice change across farm systems regardless of sector. The next step is disseminating the learnings gained from the tour in an effective manner. The use of a study tour to drive change is witnessed by individual programs such as Nuffield and Churchill Scholarships, leading change in their own business. Practice change using a group of people to drive initiatives enables the diversity in thought to be collated and revisited, leveraging the shared experience to share the learnings.

**Karen Smith WA Regional Coordinator** based in the central wheatbelt of WA, on a mixed enterprise farm near Cunderdin, with her husband and two teenagers. “I am very keen on innovating and agtech for our farm business, finding ways to improve efficiency and risk within all facets of our farm”... “In my dual role within the agricultural industry representing producers on committees, and as a grower (business manager and sheep enterprise manager) it is apparent the importance of connecting good research to growers in a meaningful way, so very dependent on good quality extension being funded into each piece of research.”





## E-Tipu IFAMA World Conference 2023 Christchurch, New Zealand

### “Transforming the Global Food & Fibre System”

**Delegate Update by Danielle Lannin England,  
Ag Institute (SA Division) and APEN member**

Danielle’s reflections and key themes across the four days:

- While agriculture is a key contributor to greenhouse gas emissions; it is also the industry which has the biggest part to play in reducing global carbon levels
- Globally we will grow enough food to feed the world population between now and 2050, even with the expected population increases - the issue remains how we distribute it equally across the globe
- Animal protein will need to remain a critical part of our global food systems - plant-based protein will play a larger role in feeding the world; but choosing an animal-free diet will only be available to the richest global citizens
- Technology is being adopted by the food and fibre industries as it becomes available – and is likely to lead to big changes in the next 5-10 years (including fossil-fuel-free-farms)
- Natural fibres, like flax, wool, cotton, and hemp have a major part to play in the future of everything from building materials to health products
- The future of our industry is in good hands - the IFAMA Young Board and case study competition was exceptional, as were the NZ Food Waste Champions
- Entrepreneurialism in agriculture is alive and well
- Māori’s have a saying “for our grandchildren’s grandchildren” in how they manage land - I like this!!!

One highlight of the World Congress was the IFAMA case study competition for undergraduates, graduates, and early-career professionals. They needed to pull together an approach to “empower smallholder farmers through effective, and sustainable private sector Non-Government Organisation (NGO) partnerships”, to develop a food chain partnership sustaining private sector non-profit collaborations. Across the four days they developed program outcomes, set strategies, identified stakeholders, planned activities, and created a budget. Universities across the globe competed for the title (plus prize money). It was a real-life scenario where a global international corporation wanted to partner in an international development project to develop sustainable agriculture, in a third world country, where long-term self-sustainability, productivity and food security were priorities.

People are the centre of our industry. It is what we love about our industry. It is what will solve the problems we currently face. Agriculture is changing. Global expectations are changing. We have the knowledge, science, technology, and capital to step into that change.

What’s going to be your role?

**Danielle Lannin England** is a farm business coach, consultant and facilitator based in Adelaide. She is a thought leader in sustainable family farming, a supporter of The Voice to Parliament, believes there’s a role for everyone in agriculture, and a science nerd (so long as it is someone else doing the science).



“**Agriculture is changing. Global expectations are changing. We have the knowledge, science, technology, and capital to step into that change.**”



## Co-design – Same, Same or Different?

The Southern NSW Innovation Hub has developed eight articles for extensionists to '[Come on a journey of co-design](#)'. The articles will challenge, teach, and motivate you to explore and use co-design in your work. All updates are written by the team of Jo Eady, a human centred facilitator, strategic designer with a keen interest in social change based in Victoria and Dale Stringer, innovation specialist and key knowledge broker with Southern NSW Innovation Hub.

Thank you to the Southern NSW Innovation Hub for sharing Issue 1 in the series of articles that contain resources and offer tips, tools and support for extension endeavours – including co-design, an approach to designing “with” and not “for” or “to” people.

### A Key Question

Ok, let's keep this real from the get go! Since working with the Hub, the most frequent questions we're asked from facilitators, project leads and officers has been “How is co-design different from what we've always done?” We're not sure what you've always done with your work, so we're not going to say that it is! We are, however going to invite and challenge you to think about how you can draw on co-design to become more conscious about how you design projects, interactions, groups and facilitate change.

### Current Context

Our interest in co-design spans decades. It's fuelled by an unwavering interest in supporting those in agriculture and rural communities to not only have their say, but to go the next step, to commune, communicate, collaborate, co-create and collectively improve something that they care deeply about. This can be different for each person, so co-design provides points of time, space and place for them to come together to achieve this. It's no longer okay to bring people together (usually funding dependent) to have their say and not create a shared vision of where this process could go. People are genuinely consultation fatigued. The design component of co-design means that when you design a process for change, it's important you design beyond a one off get together consultation phase. People genuinely want to be part of an outcome.

### The Role of Co-design

We love this from Kelly Ann McKercher “Overall, the primary role of co-design is elevating voices and contributions of people with lived experience. Beyond writing on sticky notes, co-design is about how we are being (our mindsets), what we are doing (our methods) and how our systems embrace the participation of people with lived experience (social movements).” We invite you to hit pause now and think about the following three things. And we encourage you to think about these in regards to groups you currently work with or new ones you are looking at creating

- Your mindsets
- Your methods and
- Your systems.

### What Underpins Effective Co-design?

We hope by now, you might have started to reflect on your current facilitation and design practises and be open to learning more about co-design. What you do (or don't do) really can change someone's world, a business, a community or an industry. We really believe this. We want to introduce you to four principles that drive effective co-design. Read through these and see what you think. We've added a question at the end of each and invite you to take time to use each question to reflect on your current facilitation and design practices.

**POWER** – power exists, and when left unacknowledged / unaddressed, it stands that those who have the most power will have the greatest influence “over” decisions and direction regardless of their knowledge. In cases we've seen, this is often a funder. Co-design allows us to share the power across research, decision making, design, delivery and evaluation. Without this, co-design is not at play. A question to ask yourself here is: will this event / activity share power?



Australian Government



Future  
Drought  
Fund



SOUTHERN NSW  
**Innovation Hub**

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE,  
LANDSCAPES AND COMMUNITIES

“

**Co-design allows us to share the power across research, decision making, design, delivery and evaluation**

”

**RELATIONSHIPS** – Co-design is a social process. It relies heavily on relationships and social connections. Trust underpins this and must be earned to extend across and between the organisers, the co-designers and the funders/investors. Only with this trust can open conversations about hard things (sometimes things that have not been talked about or through ever before) occur. Healthy social connections will see better involvement (especially with those with lived experience) better processes, and hence better outcomes. A question to ask yourself here is: are we supporting the development of trusting relationships?

**PARTICIPATION** – Picture a gathering of people. Where is the gathering? How is it set up? Do people have positions of power? Is there a presenter / PowerPoint presentation about to happen? Co-design is about moving people from being participants to active partners. There are lots of ways for people to participate and express and share their thinking. It's not all about talking. The role of a co-designer is to facilitate across a range of visual, oral, auditory and kinaesthetic ways. Be creative. A question to ask yourself here is: am I providing a variety of ways for people to take part and participate – inside and outside the gathering?

**CAPABILITY** – It can be important to provide support and encouragement so that people learn, can express their thoughts, share feelings and take on new ways of doing things. This doesn't always come easily to people. If you are accustomed to being in an expert role, consider moving to more of a coaching role when you bring people together. Co-design is all about learning and developing together. People can learn a lot from each other, and this is to be encouraged. Of course, there's room for guest speakers, but not at the expense of wisdom sharing amongst a group. A question to ask yourself here is: am I supporting the development of people's capability through inputs and activities in the session?

### Over to You

We hope this article gives you food for thought. And that it supports you when planning your next group activity / gathering.

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To view all eight co-design articles – please visit the [Southern NSW Innovation Hub website](#) and scroll down to 'come on a journey of co-design'.

Thank you to the Southern NSW Innovation Hub for sharing these resources with APEN members – this article was re-published with the support of the Southern NSW Innovation Hub.

*Stay up to date*

Use the QR code or [click here](#) to sign up to receive the NSW Drought Hub Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub Newsletter



## Meet John Ladley | APEN Director

The APEN ExtensionNet team recently caught up with APEN Director John Ladley. John has a passion for supporting farmers and ensuring organisations can deliver positive outcomes for growers.

I grew up surrounded by opportunities in the primary production sector and many experiences have helped shape not only myself but also the direction of my career. As my career has evolved, I was able to draw on my broad knowledge and experience base, and applying this in the agribusinesses I have worked for throughout my career. Having a strong people focus I see my role being to support, encourage and connect people in the rural community - it is, after all the relationships we have within our rural communities that create the success.

So back in 2021 APEN were seeking a director to join the Board, and with my experience and skills I thought that it would be a great opportunity to give back to an organisation that was providing opportunities to fellow rural professionals. This year I will step down as a director. However, reflecting on the past 18 months and my time as a director, there have been plenty of challenges and plenty of opportunities, not only for me, but also for APEN.

As a not-for-profit organisation, there is always the balance between governance and the doing - and being able to separate the two around the board table. The Boards' role is to govern the organisation, set the direction, strategy implementation and ensure the legal obligations are met. The doing piece is the role of the committees, and in my time on the board, I have been involved in the Business Development and Governance and Strategy Committees. The Business Development Committee is where all the cool stuff happens, APEN Conference, Awards, and Regional Events such as the Catchment Forum run in Tauranga, NZ in September 2022. Also needed are robust processes policies and a clear strategy, to protect the organisation. This is the role of the Governance and Strategy Committee.

As a board, we have overseen some significant changes, the transition to TAS for our admin support, improving the way we manage our board papers and discussion docs, both have made significant differences to the organisation. With change comes challenges and as the

Board is spread from Western Australia to New Zealand, time zones and distance can be, or could be, problematic. Being receptive to acknowledging this as a challenge is always positive along with being able to have open and honest conversations is a strength of the APEN Board. The diversity of skills, knowledge and experience on the Board has also been a strength with the APEN Board. It has also been important to ensure that the needs of my fellow Kiwi Rural Professionals are not forgotten and APEN is delivering to all members, not just our Australian members!

This year marks a significant milestone in APEN's history, a 30-year anniversary of contributing to the success of our primary sectors across Australasia and the Pacific. The challenge for APEN is to continue evolving and to maintain relevancy as members' needs evolve to meet the changing needs of our primary producers.

It has been a great experience being part of the APEN Board, being able to contribute to the success of an organisation that provides many opportunities for rural professionals to develop and grow. APEN members, if you are looking for an opportunity to start your governance career, joining the APEN Board is a safe and supportive environment to do so.

I will watch with interest to see how APEN continues to deliver value to members.

All the best.  
John Ladley







## Field Days that Rock!

**Adapted from an AgInnovate webinar with Beck Burgess  
Written by Jessie Daniel, Graduate Consultant, AgInnovate**

Field days are a key plank in the extension of most agricultural research programs, especially research around increased crop and livestock production. Have you ever stopped to ask why? There is much more to field days than 'farmers like looking at things'.

Field days give you a chance to present your research in a practical way for the pragmatists and visual learners; it also allows you to tell a story (our preferred way of deciphering information). They also allow us to present the 'act and review' parts of the action learning cycle. So YES - field days are an important part of imparting information and giving farmers a chance to make meaning of that information.

To do this successfully, good field days have two or three key tricks that make them work. The biggest, most important approach for a field day is to ask... What's in it for them?

Farmers will attend field days for several reasons, and it is important you target those objectives and desired outcomes – not what you want the producer to get out of it, but what the producer wants from it. Objectives need to directly highlight how the innovation increases productivity and profitability, because 'if it's not broken, don't fix it', as the saying goes.

How you do this is all in the planning - it's about using one of a myriad of extension/facilitation activities in-between presentations. It's about making time for learning and understanding, followed by discussion activities that allow them to apply the research to their enterprise.

Good planning is crucial for producing effective field days. Get everyone (organisers and presenters too) on the same page with the use of clear agenda and briefings. To ensure the day is transparent and runs smoothly, the following should be included in the agenda:

1. The purpose of the day should be addressed to give relevance
2. Objectives and outcomes for the day – again highlighting what's in it for the farmers.
3. What will be discussed and by who (a good idea to have a bio/blurb)
4. Start/break/end times.

Providing presenters with a brief sheet is important to have as a reference to ensure they know exactly what needs to happen, and what will happen on the day. The brief sheet should provide event details and agenda; specify the required content/topics, outcomes, time allocations, and the audience in attendance (demographics) – this provides accountability.

Whilst it is all well and good to have a good agenda – of course, things don't always go to plan. Developing a detailed contingency plan may seem a waste of time but it will become a saviour to ensure the day continues if the unknowns happen to intrude. Some of the potential unknowns to consider might be internet/tech issues, unexpected weather, presenter sick or no-show etc. Also, don't rely on 100% of participants to bring their hats, water bottles, notepad, and pens as you might have requested – providing sunscreen, water, paper, and pens is a good backup.

Providing participants with a hard-copy worksheet with prompted questions or areas where they can note ideas and takeaways is great to encourage interpretation and planning. This can also be used in discussion activities which is also helpful for evaluation purposes – what did participants take away from the day? Were the outcomes achieved?

Take the time to plan your field day with adult learning and change at the forefront - and watch your field days start to rock!



## Empowering ag extension with ChatGPT: Unleashing efficiency and increasing impact!

**Dr John James, Director, Enablers of Change**

In today's fast-paced world, technology continues to revolutionise the way we work and connect. Among these transformative technologies, ChatGPT stands out as a powerful tool that can revolutionise our field of agricultural extension. In this article, we'll explore how you can leverage ChatGPT to save time, increase impact, and take your work to new heights!

ChatGPT is an AI-powered assistant that's been around for less than a year, so while I'm sure you've heard of it, I wouldn't be surprised if you haven't used it yet. It's an AI language model that is designed to understand natural language and generate human-like responses. Think of it as your virtual assistant, eager to help with a myriad of tasks, from idea generation to content creation. What makes ChatGPT remarkable is its ability to comprehend context, understand prompts, and provide relevant responses. I like to think of it as an eager intern with an overactive imagination—it's very clever but also very naive. It can be so eager to please us, that it'll make up the answers it thinks we'll want to hear. Unfortunately, these electronic hallucinations, as they're politely called, are often stated in a very convincing matter-of-fact way. So don't believe everything ChatGPT tells you, as it isn't an encyclopedia. While it can provide interesting ideas and inspiration, it shouldn't be your sole source for factual information. Its knowledge is limited to its training data, which might be outdated or incorrect. The bulk of the material it was trained on was uploaded in September 2021, and it currently can't access information on the internet. So, it knows a lot, but not everything!

One of the biggest advantages of using ChatGPT is the instant access it provides to a vast pool of information. As agricultural extension practitioners, we often need to quickly review agricultural research, trends, and practices. With ChatGPT, we can gain insights on various agricultural topics, reducing the time spent on extensive literature reviews. Simply input a well-crafted prompt, such as "explain regenerative agriculture and its benefits" and ChatGPT will generate valuable suggestions. This speedy access to information allows us to quickly review material and saves the tedium of doing multiple Google searches and following dozens of potentially unhelpful links.

ChatGPT can help us by refining concepts and exploring new perspectives. Ideation (or what some call brainstorming) is a common aspect of our work, and ChatGPT excels at generating creative ideas. By engaging in a conversation with ChatGPT, we can explore multiple perspectives on a given topic, gaining fresh insights that may have been overlooked otherwise. This can help us overcome our biases, whether we're aware of them or not. Let's say we're organising a workshop on soil health improvement. By conversing with ChatGPT, we can uncover innovative approaches, potential challenges, and case studies from other regions. This opens up new horizons and enhances the quality of our workshop content, making it more engaging and relevant.

It can also enhance our communication with farmers. ChatGPT can be used to craft well-worded messages, newsletters, or educational materials to share with farmers and stakeholders. With the ability to adjust the tone and style of responses, ChatGPT can create content that resonates with our audience. For instance, you can instruct ChatGPT to compose an informal and engaging email inviting local farmers to a workshop. The personalised and friendly language will increase the chances of farmer participation and engagement.

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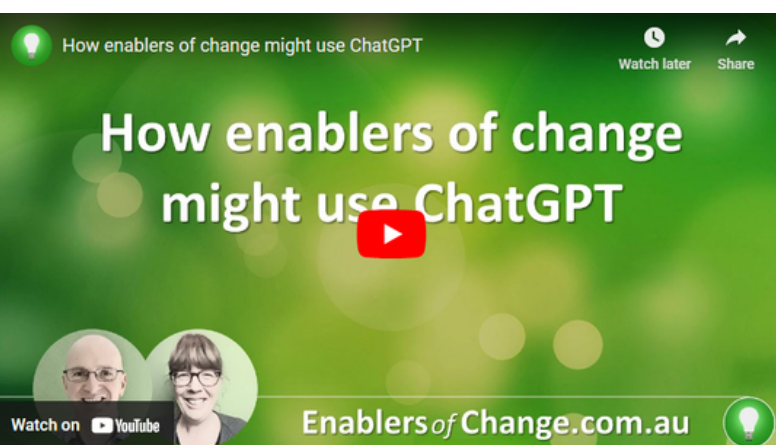
ChatGPT's iterative nature enables us to refine its responses to align better with our requirements. If the initial output doesn't fully meet our expectations, we can request additional information or ask the AI to rephrase its response. This process helps in fine-tuning the generated content and ensuring its accuracy. For instance, if ChatGPT offers general advice on improving soil health but misses regional considerations, we can ask it to provide insights tailored to our specific area. This iterative approach ensures that the AI becomes an even more valuable resource over time.

Language barriers can be a challenge in agricultural extension, especially in diverse regions with multiple languages spoken. ChatGPT supports over a dozen languages, making it an inclusive tool for practitioners worldwide. By translating prompts and responses, ChatGPT enables us to reach a broader audience, disseminating information and knowledge to diverse farming communities. Once again though, I recommend that you get a fluent speaker of the language to proofread the material to check its accuracy.

My greatest use of ChatGPT is to overcome the Blank Page Syndrome. As extension practitioners, we're often faced with the daunting blank page when creating materials or reports. ChatGPT can be our creative collaborator, helping us overcome writer's block by generating starting points for our content. I regularly use it to help get me started with blog posts and newsletter articles (just as I did with this one!). I then probably spent another 30 minutes proofreading it and tweaking it to convey the right message, whereas it might have taken me two hours to write it from scratch.

It's important to acknowledge that ChatGPT is not a replacement for human expertise or traditional research methods. Instead, it serves as a valuable addition to our extension toolkit, amplifying our capabilities and augmenting our work. But by combining the strengths of human knowledge and AI-generated insights, we can create more holistic and impactful communication materials.

I encourage you to embrace this exciting technology and leverage its capabilities to unleash your efficiency and amplify your impact! If you'd like to learn more about how we might make better use of this new technology, read our recent Enablers of Change blog post, [‘How enablers of change might use ChatGPT’](#). We've also just published [‘Seven suggestions for making better use of ChatGPT’](#). In that episode we link to the Extended Horizons webinar where the delightful Pru Cook interviewed me about this new technology.





# "30 Years & Flourishing"

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**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: Adrian Englefield

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