



# EXTENSIONNET

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## Extension research comes of age

### An update on the state-of-play of extension in Australia

by Jeff Coutts

I am constantly amazed how extension in all its forms is continually being 'rediscovered'. In the 1970s, the Federal Government played a significant role in funding extension through the states before opting out in the early 1980s. Now in the early 2000s the Federal Government through NHT, NAP, AFFA (FarmBis) and the R&D corporations are again directly funding extension and education programs across Australia to the tune of millions of dollars!

What adds to the excitement is that a number of R&D corporations have banded together to provide a critical mass to support extension research. The purpose of the *Capacity Building for Innovation in Rural Industries Co-operative Venture* is to fund research and development into human capacity building to foster innovation in rural industries and so help rural Australia become more sustainable and financially viable. It kicked off this year by commissioning three projects:

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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*Basil Sheehan*

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#### From the editor

Seasons greetings on behalf of the NE to all APEN members and casual readers of ExtensionNet. We've worked this year to bring you four jam-packed newsletters and we've made a few changes along the way, both in layout and features. I hope you think the changes are for the better and continue to enjoy your newsletter.

I'm a keen advocate of the theory that if you've got something intelligent to say, then say it. I'd like to encourage all APEN members to consider writing their work up

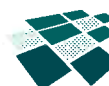
periodically and subjecting it to the scrutiny of their peers (say, in the pages of ExtensionNet!). The benefits are many: when you record your work, it helps you focus on what you've done and clarifies how you'd do it better next time. It also means you've got some more ammunition to fight the wars in this publish-or-perish world we work in. Last, it allows others to build on your successes, learn from your mistakes and do extension better. That's what newsletters like this are all about.

*Darren Schmidt*

APEN is pleased to acknowledge the support of:



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Horticulture Australia

## Extension research comes of age (cont'd from p1)

- A National Extension/Education Review - what works and why?
- Fostering Involvement - how to improve participation in learning (contact Jenny Andrew [jenny@repol.net.au](mailto:jenny@repol.net.au) );and
- Institutional Arrangements - improving institutional support for learning in the rural sector (contact: Neil Inall [inall@planet.net.au](mailto:inall@planet.net.au) ).

These projects are well underway and there was a recent call for new project proposals in these topic areas (as well as the program area of supporting rural educators).

I am in a project team working on the National Extension/Education Review. Kate Roberts (Victoria) and Fionnuala Frost (Western Australia) are also members of the team helping to provide national coverage. We are focusing on collating (using a data base), evaluating and analysing innovative extension/education projects across industries, issues and geographical location. The aim of the project is to allow agencies, industries and funding bodies to learn from innovative and successful approaches tried and tested in other arenas. This will open the window on opportunities to modify and build on these lessons to improve their own strategies, avoiding 'reinventing the wheel' and 'making the same mistakes'.

What a great excuse to go digging into a whole lot of fascinating extension projects! For too long we have all worked in our own little silos. We've done tremendous work but as a rule we have not shared our learnings –

nor, in many cases, learnt from others' successes and problems.

We have developed a 'Program Analysis Framework' to provide a common basis from which to analyse and compare projects. A key element has been to identify the specific 'niche' of the project – the specific objectives using specific methodology with specific groups in specific areas. This provides the context of the project to put it clearly into perspective. Through this process we have teased out the learnings that have emerged about extension/education models and application.

The project is initially for two years, but already some significant findings are coming out of the analysis. Some of these findings are as follows:

The "bottom-up" approach to extension (we refer to it as the "group facilitation/empowerment model") in Australia is alive and well! Projects such as BestWool 2010 and BeefPlan are demonstrating that a focus on supporting producers to seek their learning needs is an effective platform for human capacity development.

There is a parallel significant growth in comprehensive training courses/workshops (we refer to these as the "programmed learning model") with many being linked into the Vocational Education & Training (VET) sector. MLA's Edge Network is making significant inroads here, but there are also significant examples in the horticulture

*Continued page 3 ...*

**For too long we have all worked in our own little silos. We've done tremendous work but we have not shared our learnings**

A screen from the developing data base which will provide a memory of extension & education projects for research and analysis.

**Bestprac** EXIT

Project No:	<input type="text"/>	Street Address:	<input type="text"/>
Name:	<input type="text"/>	Suburb and Post Code:	<input type="text"/>
Commenced On:	<input type="text"/>	First Contact:	<input type="text"/>
Completion Due:	<input type="text"/>	Second Contact:	<input type="text"/>
Completed On:	<input type="text"/>	Email:	<input type="text"/>
Annual Budget:	<input type="text"/>	Phone:	<input type="text"/>

Funders	Providers	Industry Issues, Methods and Models	Beneficiaries, Competitors and Geographical Range
<input type="checkbox"/> Australian Wool Innovation P <input type="checkbox"/> NSW Dept of Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> QLD Dept of Primary Industries <input type="checkbox"/> WA Dept of Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Business Plan Consulting <input type="checkbox"/> Rural Extension <input type="checkbox"/> RFL Dept of Primary Industries <input type="checkbox"/> RFL Extension <input type="checkbox"/> Rural Extension Centre <input type="checkbox"/> SA Dept of Primary Industries	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry Wool <input type="checkbox"/> Issue Profitability <input type="checkbox"/> Method: Individual Cycle <input type="checkbox"/> Method: Group <input type="checkbox"/> Method: Individual Migration	<input type="checkbox"/> Merino/Wool Producer

Evaluation				
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## Extension research comes of age (from previous page)

industry and elsewhere. Participants in projects such as BeefPlan and BestWool are finding ready sources of 'packaged learning' through these available courses. FarmBis is playing a major role in supporting learning in this way.

On-farm visits, demonstrations and trials have also found to be critical to developing and applying specific technologies for productivity or natural resource management. The Rural Water Use Efficiency Adoption Program in Queensland is one example of a concerted extension effort across a number of industries to facilitate on-farm change.

As we analyse projects falling under each of these approaches, a number of 'lessons

learnt' are showing up. These are being used to develop guidelines on ways to maximise the effectiveness of using these approaches to bring about desired outcomes.

A critical part of this review is to work in concert with the other projects funded by the Cooperative Venture. In November we will all be pulling together our learnings to date at a workshop with the Steering Group and planning refinements in the on-going research and analysis. We will certainly keep APEN members up to date on what is emerging from the projects – and we continue to seek out interesting and innovative projects to maximise the learning. Please contact me (details front page).



# Christmas greetings from the President !

Everyone has had a busy year (that includes me!) so I wish all APEN members a blessed, peaceful and safe holiday break.

Much has happened since our Toowoomba AGM in 2001. Some of the highlights:

### Achievements

For me, the pinnacle was our third international conference, where 250 people from six countries gathered in Toowoomba. I enjoyed the mix of formal presentations and the open space technology which allowed participants to interact and network at a high level. It was healthy for APEN to use a different format for our conference. We received a \$20,000 surplus from the event, which will help support our other activities.

### Chapter activities

It's good to see the high-level of activity in some of the Chapters. The WA Chapter has been extremely industrious, and their workshops have been well received by members and a good introduction to APEN for the non-members attending. The Melbourne Chapter has also been busy and the Qld Chapter has just launched into a program of activities that will continue into 2003.

While it is good that those three Chapters have been offering activities for members, it is a concern that the rest are rather quiet. The National Executive is better supporting Chapter representatives and we hope this will flow through to better activities for members.

### President's activities

I attended the AAAC/APEN workshop on developing a national accreditation scheme for NRM and agricultural practitioners in Canberra in March. I gave a presentation on APEN to the cooperative Joint Venture in Human Capacity Building in Sydney in May and also to the NSW Agriculture conference at Tocal in July. I attended a SPAN meeting in Sydney in July which looked at how various small to medium sized organisations like ours could better work together. I coordinated two funding applications on behalf of APEN to the Joint Venture in Human Capacity Building. One was a proposal to run a workshop for national extension managers, the second for funding to further increase the effectiveness of APEN. We were invited to submit a full proposal for the second one and await the outcome.

The National Executive has met by teleconference every second month to progress a range of issues and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank each of the members... Amanda Miller (as Vice president until she needed to resign for personal reasons a few months ago), Heather Shaw, Greg Cock, Darren Schmidt, Jon Warren, Terry Reid, Paul Ainsworth, Janet Reid, and Jane Weatherley. I would also like to specially thank our Secretariat, Rosemary Currie, who enables most of the work to actually happen.

APEN President  
John James



# Tools for extension planning

## A checklist guide for any extension program

Colin Holt

*President, APEN WA Chapter*

Jenny Crisp

*Development Officer*

*Department of Agriculture, Western Australia*



Colin Holt, consultant for Extend West in Bunbury WA, is a long time APEN member and recently elected President of the Western Australia Chapter of APEN. Email: [colin.holt@bigpond.com](mailto:colin.holt@bigpond.com)

Careful planning gives any project the best chance of success and if you answer yes to any of the following questions, then we can make your job easier.

- Have you ever had the task of developing an extension strategy for a large project or program and didn't know where to start?
- Have you been busy planning short-term events and activities without really knowing how they fit within an overall strategy and how they contribute to achieving project outcomes?
- Have you had to organise field days, workshops or similar events and weren't confident all your bases were covered?
- Are you making the best use of resources to deliver your project outcomes?

We have developed two planning frameworks that will help overcome these issues and provide a springboard for your extension planning.

For more than ten years we have been extension officers working with farmer groups and communities in rural Western Australia. During this time we have developed and delivered a number of training programs specifically for extension officers. Whilst exploring the theory and principles behind extension, we discovered several gaps in the available tools.

Planning tools often depended on the user's level of experience and we felt more specific guidance and detail was needed to help the inexperienced as well as the experienced users. Critical thinking and consistency checks are both part of rigorous extension planning. Finally, we decided that one tool was needed for strategic extension planning on a program or project level, and a different tool to help plan short-term activities or events.

This led to the development of two specialised extension planning tools:

- Framework for planning an extension activity: matching process to purpose
- Framework for planning an extension strategy with rigour.

Both frameworks have a series of steps to provide a practical planning sequence. Each step includes guiding questions to stimulate and expand thinking. The frameworks have been tested in the field by a number of extension officers. This has helped fine tune the tools so that they have practical application.

### Tool 1

#### Framework for planning an extension activity: matching process to purpose

This tool will help you design relatively short-term extension activities and events such as workshops, field days, meetings and presentation sessions. It can also be used to plan more passive things such as information and show displays.

The tool intends to:

- guide you to develop an effective process that matches the purpose and outcomes of an activity
- help you consider a wide range of ideas, tools and processes before finalising an overall activity process
- help you consider ways to incorporate principles of adult learning and good communication in process design.

**Critical thinking and consistency checks are both part of rigorous extension planning.**

#### WHYTEBOARD WONDERPHRASES

**"If you fail to plan, you plan to fail"**  
There must be a million of these hoary old extension standbys ... words of wisdom that sum up hours or pages of explanation. Know of any more? Email them to ExtensionNet and we'll publish a collection.

# Tools for extension planning - cont'd from previous page

## Tool 1 steps

- 1 Identify purpose of activity
- 2 Identify target audience for activity
- 3 Identify desired outcomes
- 4 Check back for consistency of outcomes to purpose
- 5 The 'big brainstorm' of ideas
- 6 Fine tune ideas into activity running sheet
- 7 Check back for consistency of process to outcomes
- 8 Pre-activity tasks
- 9 Post-activity tasks

## Tool 2

### Framework for planning an extension strategy with rigour

This tool is written as a forward planning tool for the development of an extension strategy at the start of a new project. However, it can also be used as an analysis tool to review existing extension situations.

The framework provides a practical structure for developing (or analysing) an extension strategy at the 'higher' project or program level. It will help you identify the broad extension methods needed to help deliver project outcomes.

The tool also provides:

- a planning process to help achieve project (or program) outcomes while maximising extension resources
- a process to build rigour and depth
- a logical sequence of steps to guide the planning
- critical thinking checks through the planning process
- some pointers as to how to evaluate your extension strategy.

## Tool 2 steps

- 1 Gather project background
- 2 Identify stakeholders
- 3 Develop extension purpose, objectives and outcomes
- 4 Check for consistency
- 5 Test assumptions
- 6 Analyse situation in more detail
- 7 Think about broad extension models
- 8 Brainstorm possible activities
- 9 Choose activities to best achieve outcomes
- 10 Prioritise
- 11 Putting it all together
- 12 Evaluation and review

## More information

The two extension planning tools are available in electronic form by contacting Colin (details below) or visiting the website: <http://users.bigpond.com/colin.holt/>

In addition, we have been delivering half-day introductory workshops on the development and use of the frameworks.

The workshops aim to:

- Increase the understanding of a tool that will help you plan an event or project
- Help you know how to use and apply the tools by working through some of the planning steps
- Provide some examples of how the tools have been used by others for good results
- Lead to increased confidence to use the tools for your own work.

If you are interested in attending or hosting one of these workshops, please contact:

Colin Holt  
Extend West  
(08) 9797 0316 or Int. +61 8 9797 0316  
Email: [colin.holt@bigpond.com](mailto:colin.holt@bigpond.com)



Jenny Crisp is a Development Officer with the Department of Agriculture in Western Australia.

Email: [jcrisp@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:jcrisp@agric.wa.gov.au)

## Dud newsletter alert

We trust this Christmas edition of Extension arrived with the full complement of pages in their right order.

Unfortunately, owing to a compilation error, some APEN members received mis-compiled versions of the last edition.

Roe has already emailed APEN members with a call to notify her of any problems, and this is another prompt to ensure that you receive a proper copy.

It also lets us know how many problem copies were posted, so please take the trouble to notify Roe (if you haven't already done so) to tell her if your last copy of ExtensionNet had a compilation problem.

## Four ExtensionNets: better value for your subscription

This year (2002 - where on earth did it get to?) the editorial team has worked very hard to bring you **four** editions of **your** newsletter. ExtensionNet is the best way to keep up with national extension developments and what's happening in your profession.

# Your APEN - your network

## Enough guilt!

**Other chapters move to finally catch up with WA and Victoria in the activity stakes. Workshops, seminars proliferate. Programs are planned, networks activated!**

### WA CHAPTER

Yes, of course WA are busy again. In early 2003 ...

#### *Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture Roadshow*

Chris Anderson, the Managing Editor of AJEA, hopes to be back in WA sometime in February. AJEA publishes one issue per year showcasing extension work. There's a possibility Chris may undertake a tour of major centres.

#### *The right stuff*

In the new year, continuing their service to support WA extensionists' personal and professional development, WA APEN are planning workshops on **active networking** and **presentation skills**.

If you have any suggestions for activities to support your development needs, or wish to register your interest in any of the upcoming events, please contact your nearest State Executive Member.

### ICEBREAKERS

Heard of "ditloids"? You've probably had a go at them without realising such a silly game deserved a name. Here's a hint: 3BM? The answer is three blind mice. They're good for group work brain-starters. Some more: 10DS, 13 L in a BD, 5 T on a F, 3W on a T, 9L of a C.

An old standby: raise passion for discussion by simply asking people around the room to **nominate their favourite** book, movie, 70s TV show, travel destination, etc. Ask them to explain their choice. It reveals something of their personality and allows subsequent discussion to "flow" better.

More reports on the Queensland events in the next edition of *ExtensionNet*. Some very interesting themes emerged!



Julie Ferguson (left) kicked off a wonderful session in Toowoomba. Organiser of the day was Ingrid Christiansen (right). Wonderful job, Ingrid!

Brassica grower Kevin Niemeyer, John Bagshaw and Gavin Graham at the "Dynamic Groups" Chapter activity in Queensland



### QLD CHAPTER

Following the Queensland chapter AGM held in September 12, and stung by reports that to participate in any extension-flavoured self-help one has to fly west for five hours, some enterprising souls have undertaken to organise some activities.

A series of forums, each focussed on a different extension tool, will give extension specialists across all industries in this part of the world a chance to see how other extension specialists do their thing and find out first hand what works and what doesn't. Above all, the best strategies and techniques from a range of different programs will be carved up on the table and shared amongst the dinner guests. Also on the menu: experiences, approaches and challenges. Sound appetising? Have a nibble on these:

#### Dynamic Groups

21 November 9:30am-1pm, Toowoomba  
This collection of diverse case studies generated some lively discussion amongst the 35 people who attended. Featured: Area Wide Management Groups - growers and consultants work together to manage pest populations across a region.

*Julie Ferguson* - QDPI / Cotton CRC  
Brassica Improvement Group

*Larissa Bilston*  
Collaborative Marketing Program (Horticulture) - Stonefruit producer groups explore options for collaborative marketing and increase profits by 15-30%  
*Rho Sandberg* - Creative Edge facilitators  
Net meeting for decision support groups  
*Peter Carberry*, APSRU / CSIRO  
Grazing for Profit and Biobusiness Farming Groups  
*Jill Wigney* / David Hanlon RCS

#### What's next?

More activities are in the planning phase. *Information Resources*, February 2003, Eumundi. Contact: Darren Schmidt 07 4160 0725 (he's a busy boy, isn't he?). *Industry Extension programs*, July 2003, Kingscliffe. Contact: Peter McGuire, phone 02 6670 1700.

# Your APEN - your network

## APEN AGM - what's the goss?

The APEN AGM was held at Tatura on November 8. A snapshot of the major points of discussion:

### Meetings

President John James has represented the NE at ...

- The AAAC/APEN workshop on accreditation in Canberra in March
- The SPAN meeting in Sydney where similar bodies came together to see if they could join together in any way to save costs
- A NSW Ag Horticulture extension meeting.

### Finance

APEN's finances are currently healthy because of the profit from the APEN 2001 conference in Toowoomba, sponsorship of ExtensionNet by Horticulture Australia and the Dairy Research and Development Corporation, and the modest rise in membership subscriptions.

Nearly \$20,000 sits in the chapters' cheque accounts – members should consider how to use it for APEN's benefit. Some chapters have had activities, but only about three showed this in their financial records.

### Membership and Chapters

A member from the floor reminded the NE that APEN needs to reach more young staff in agencies and let them know about the benefits of APEN – Chapters should target these people.

To increase activity in APEN chapters, the NE may organise a roadshow to visit chapters, encourage activities that promote APEN, and take opportunities to visit key contacts.

There was also a proposal to restructure the chapters. One suggestion: form state branches with each state having a committee and a NE rep. Each state would have regional clusters with no bank account - just a budget from APEN national and minimal paperwork.

"Cluster" models already exist (eg Melbourne and Gippsland) and these groups will be consulted to find out how they work. This information can then be passed to less active chapters/clusters; perhaps a personal visit is all that is needed to invigorate some activity!

APEN members can contact the NE's Jane Weatherley (Chapter Support Portfolio) with their ideas. Other NE contacts on back page.

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**Got an idea for your Chapter? Contact Jane Weatherley who carries the Chapter Support Portfolio for the NE. She'd love to help!**

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## Managing in a time of climate and landscape change

### NRE, Institute of Sustainable Irrigated Agriculture, Tatura Victoria November 8

A great event! The Institute has excellent facilities and in time our numbers reached almost 50, two guest speakers, 28 through APEN, 16 through AAAC (Australian Association of Agricultural Consultants) and a few who are members of both.

Dennis Toohey, President of AAAC, opened the workshop and pointed out the trends he saw happening in the way that agricultural and natural resource management advice is being given.

Dr Martin Barlass, Director Agriculture Industries, Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE), gave the keynote address on future landscapes. He described situations where decisions have been made due to community pressure, without the full scientific story being known and resulting in less than desirable outcomes.

Dr Peter Whetton, Leader, Climate Impact Group at CSIRO Atmospheric Research, presented the keynote address on a changing climate and also facilitated the workshop on this topic later in the day. His message was that global temperature is rising, causing greater rainfall in the tropics but less in the sub-tropics and Australia is headed for warmer, drier times.

- After lunch, workshops discussed
- a. climate change and risk management
  - b. environmental stewardship
  - c. future landscapes
  - d. accreditation of adviser and consultant practitioners.

Most participants agreed the day was value for money.

Both groups split for their respective AGMs but later rejoined for closing drinks and dinner. The workshop was followed up with visits to some local environmental sites.

Proceedings of the "Managing in a time of climate and landscape change" workshop will be available early next year, with transcripts of the speakers' talks and the discussion in the workshops. Bound copies or email copies can be requested now from Rosemary at the APEN Secretariat. The cost will be \$15 incl GST and postage (in Australia) for the bound copies, \$5 for the email copies.

## First Australian Farming Systems Conference needs your input

A call for papers has gone out for the first Australian Farming Systems Conference slated for September 7-10, 2003.

The conference has been set up to bring together the best of this country's thinking in the broad field of farming systems: how commodities, economics, environment, politics and sociology interact to operate as a definable whole.

A good number of APEN members have found themselves on the organising committee, including Valerie Sapin (Qld), Jane Weatherley (Tas) and former ExtensionNet editor Mark Paine (Vic).

Conference organisers have identified several themes that encapsulate the cut and thrust of farming systems in Australia:

- farming systems concepts, principles, values, and approaches
- sustainability
- resilience of farming systems in a complex world (think globalisation, intellectual property, food safety, QA)
- monitoring, evaluation and learning for continuous improvement
- 'uncommon' processes (theories and practices from outside the square).

Abstracts (300 words) are due 8 February 2003 and full papers 8 May. Christine King is the conference convenor, email [christine.king@dpi.qld.gov.au](mailto:christine.king@dpi.qld.gov.au), and the Conference Secretariat is with the Meetings and Events Dept, Uni of Southern Queensland, PO Box 282, Darling Heights, Qld, 4350. Phone 07 4631 2190, email [stewartc@usq.edu.au](mailto:stewartc@usq.edu.au).

### OOPS!

Theo Nabben's article in the last edition garnered requests for further information, which is fantastic. However Theo, retiring professional that he is, modestly points out that Ross Colliver should have been noted as an author of the article. Theo alleges that Ross basically crafted most of it, and for himself claims merely a co-author role in the sense he initiated the idea, sent stuff to Ross who then re-shaped it. Ross, for his part, applauds the fact the article is now "out there" and that the issue is now receiving publicity.

## Public extension, market forces and Ugandan pigs

Ole Frederiksen is a Danish national undertaking a Natural Resource Economics Masters degree at University of Queensland. He wants to know if the public/private extension arrangement in Australia has been carefully considered, whether privatisation and sustainability live in the same universe, and whether market forces actually solve anything at the farm level. Ole has a particular perspective: pigs are his thing and he's been a farmer and agricultural advisor in Denmark and Uganda (!). Now he's looking closely at pig extension in Qld (until mid-03). Got an interest in the project? Contact Ole: [s4023117@student.uq.edu.au](mailto:s4023117@student.uq.edu.au).

### PAGE FLIPPING

Jules Pretty's new book "Agri-Culture: Reconnecting People, Land and Nature" is available. It explores a widely reported paradox: despite the great progress in greater productivity in agricultural and food systems in recent decades, hundreds of millions of people remain hungry and malnourished, and further millions suffer for eating too much food or the wrong sort. The book highlights the need to look for ecological principles in harmony with cultures, knowledges and collective capacities of the producers themselves. Case studies are reported; a new agricultural revolution is argued for. Available from Earthscan at [www.earthscan.co.uk](http://www.earthscan.co.uk).

Another wonderful book that's been on the shelves for some time now goes by the title "Rurality bites". Written by Stewart Lockie and Lisa Bourke, it successfully manages to graft practical experience and observation of modern Australia's relationship with the land onto a solid theoretical base. The book shows that seaboard-based governments and electorates often expect that the land can provide various goods and that rural people are in a "contract" to care for the land and the historical mythology that has sprung from it. Sometimes, rural people have difficulty achieving either. "Rurality Bites" is available from Pluto Press in Australia. ISBN: 1864031697.



Ole wants to know the state of pig extension in Australia. No porkies. See story right