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Business improving? Continue!

Using the Better Practices Process to improve the outcomes from working with groups of dairy farmers in Victoria

by Melinda Mann

DPI Victoria, Kyabram

Victorian dairy farmers have found ways to improve on-farm performance not only by using specific management tools but also by thinking hard about which tools they need.

As part of a strategic initiative within Target 10 (a dairy-based extension project), the Continuous Business Improvement (CBI) program was developed to complement the existing suite of programs for the Victorian dairy industry. After an initial development phase four pilot programs were trialed across the state.

The emphasis of this extension research project was to develop a program that aimed to integrate all aspects of the Dairy farm as a system and allow farmers to measure performance and make improvements to their business.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Continued page 2 ...

IN THIS ISSUE

Marketing magic p3

Mark Casey makes a case for adopting marketing principles in extension and provides some handy marketing tips.

APEN update p6

- Your APEN - Your network. Chapter activity news from around the country
- News from the last NE meeting in Melbourne

Innovations p9-10

News, events, ideas.

New NE people p11

More information p12

From the editor

In an era when budgets are making it increasingly more difficult to travel, APEN chapters and members are bucking the trend by organising more events. There really is simply no substitute for face-to-face contact, and this edition is full of information about forthcoming events (we're very excited about the APEN Forum in Tasmania!). Do your best to get along to one or more of these events and help keep the professional community alive. It's guaranteed you'll meet some interesting people.

The APEN National Executive recently met in Melbourne to revisit the strategic plan and evaluate its role in making the plan happen. The strategic plan was largely left as is, but NE portfolios - the system we use to actually do the work we're asked to do - were slightly reshuffled thanks in part to the influx of some new NE members with plenty of marketing savvy. These new NE members are introduced on page 11; if you have ideas for how to market APEN more effectively, be sure to get in touch.

Darren Schmidt

APEN is pleased to acknowledge the support of:



Horticulture Australia

Business improving? Continue! (cont'd from p1)

The expected outcome from the pilot programs was:

"Dairy farmers are continuously using improvement processes to identify and act on specific opportunities which improve the enterprise, financial, people and environmental aspects of the farm business".

Overall, there was a strong and diverse interest in the CBI program. A total of 32-farm businesses were involved across the four pilot locations, carrying out 73 group activities within 12 months. The wide range of activities were: 21 meetings, 3 farm walks, 35 farm visits, 1 two day workshop, 2 mini field days, 8 interviews, 1 bus trip and 3 phone conferences. In addition, each business committed substantial amounts of time to their own projects between group activities.

Each of the four pilot groups were delivered using a flexible approach where the farmers controlled the direction and operation of the program. Each program worked towards achieving the 6 steps outlined in the Better Practices Process (BPP) and individuals were required to have an action plan. See diagram, below.



The Better Practices Process

Key Messages from the Pilot Programs

Over time facilitating the process was more about getting the philosophy and ethos embraced rather than a rigid 6-step BPP. The time taken to go through each step depended on where the farmers were up to, individual projects and the group's technical focus.

Facilitators put less emphasis on technical information and more on empowering farmers to improve their thinking processes to find answers for themselves. The focus was on individual farmer goals, particularly in relation to individual action plans.

Process (including the BPP) is not something that everyone seeks to engage in but it has the potential to achieve significant

gains and assist change. The challenge with all the pilots has been to develop an acceptable method of using process. All pilots had difficulty with process and as a result it has been suggested that process shouldn't be pushed "too hard too early". The skill in the future will be in keeping the theory to a minimum and ground the process in practical applications.

A challenge in the pilot phase was getting individuals to document and record their progress. This required a change in mindset and needs to be encouraged in future work. At a minimum each individual needs to write a detailed action plan (step 3), which includes key performance indicators (how they will measure the changes/improvement).

Future Challenges for using the BPP with Farmers

Philosophy

Facilitators and farmers alike need to understand and be committed to the philosophy of continuous improvement and innovation. Individuals need to be committed to meeting regularly, changing practices, participating and supporting others in the group.

Better Practices Process

The BPP should be transparent (to farmers); it is a simple practical process that can be used for a broad range of issues or situations. It is essential that each step of BPP is clearly defined and grounded in practice. Early success is recommended and identifying a short-term focus will achieve this. Experience suggests that the BPP should be used up front and at the pace set by the individual groups.

Tools and Techniques

A range of tools and techniques is essential to help individuals work through the cycle, however to avoid confusion between the BPP and the tools fewer tools should be introduced. The recommended approach is to have two simple and practical tools that can be used at each step in the cycle.

Jargon

The pilot phase of CBI identified that new terminology or jargon was distracting and not widely accepted by farmers. In future the use of jargon needs to be reduced or replaced with relevant words.

For further information or a copy of the final report please contact Melinda Mann, DPI Kyabram (03) 58520 500.



"Facilitators put less emphasis on technical information and more on empowering farmers to improve their thinking processes to find answers for themselves."

The process was more about getting the philosophy and ethos embraced rather than a rigid 6-step BPP

Marketing magic

You're an extension officer? You're probably also a marketer

At the APEN Qld Chapter's "Information Resources" forum in February, marketing consultant **Mark Casey** delivered an intriguing presentation that left some attendees scratching their heads. Some thought marketing was "purposive lying". Others suspected marketing was the answer to all of extension's problems. Who's right? Here's the lowdown on Mark Casey's presentation to Qld APEN .

Extension and marketing have a lot in common. Both enterprises are about influencing people to make a decision and then act. If extension is about change management, then extension is, at its core, a marketing exercise because this is precisely what marketing sets out to do. There are some differences in intent, to be certain, but a long hard look at the process will reveal an abundance of similarities.

So what are the differences? Extension might be thought of as an 'outreach' activity. It is often a public investment in a small section of the community with the skills and ability to communicate with as many people as possible who might benefit from 'the message'. Traditionally, 'the message' has been about managing natural resources, about learning, and about managing changing environments. Extension trades on the understanding that its outcomes are in the interests of the public good, and that the benefits from these outcomes can be accessed easily and equitably.

Marketing, however, might be thought of as an activity that 'reaches in' to the resources of the organisation in order to develop better relationships with those that it deals with. Client databases, existing client contacts and established relationships are used to obtain the maximum commercial benefit. Marketing has emerged, quite simply, to make more profit for organisations that practise it. However, that does not necessarily mean that marketing is about promoting dubious services or pushing the 'hard sell' (though sometimes it is). Good marketers go to extraordinary lengths to avoid any taint of impropriety. At its base, though, marketing is about money and market share.

Different name, same challenge

It is getting more difficult to reach people and get 'mind space'. Not only has there been an explosion over the last decade in the number of messages sent, so too have the avenues for delivery expanded, as any victim of high-volume spam can attest. There are many voices competing for 'top-of-mind' attention.

Some recent research estimates that in the United States the media spends \$1861 per person to transport messages. For some extension officers in Australia, that figure might actually represent their annual operating budget. One marketing rule of thumb has it that for some campaigns, a consumer needs to register a message eight times before it 'gets through'. In high noise environments - for example, cities like Sydney or Melbourne - it might be as much as 20 times before anyone takes the slightest notice of a message.

Marketers are desperately trying to get their message to 'stand out' from this noise. And the challenge is the same for extension officers. So what hope have we got with miserly budgets, slim resources and, sometimes, complex messages to deliver? Time to look at some 'first principles' of marketing.

Marketing concepts

Marketing has many definitions, but basically it's a process whereby individuals and groups *get what they need and want* by creating and exchanging goods and value with others. Good marketers are expert in discovering clients' needs.



Mark Casey is the CEO for *Drawbridge Communications*, a marketing, training and public relations consultancy. Contact him on (07) 4630 8440 or email the man on drawbridge@hypermax.net.au

Mark also runs a marketing course through crri.q - see ad on back page for details.

Continued page 4 ...

“Excellence in marketing translates to knowing and understanding the customer *so well* that the product or service ‘fits’ more or less exactly with what the customer expects.”

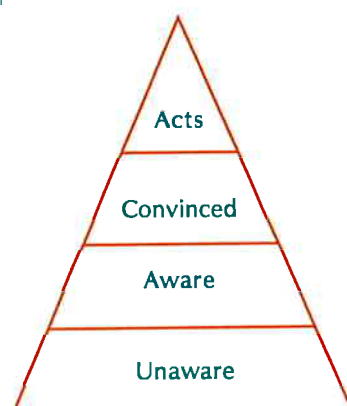
‘Selling’ is only a small component of marketing. In fact, according to Peter Drucker, the aim of marketing is to make ‘selling’ - as it is conventionally understood - virtually superfluous. Excellence in marketing translates to knowing and understanding the customer *so well* that the product or service ‘fits’ more or less exactly with what the customer expects. The product or service sells itself.

A marketing plan for extension?

How can extensionists make their message ‘sell itself’? How can we be assured that what we do and say ‘fits’ with the myriad people we’re trying to communicate with?

Ask them

What are the perceptions of clients, funders, the CEOs or their equivalents in your organisation? What do they know about your message? About you? Start asking anytime, anywhere, but start. And record the responses. Look at the ‘Promotion Pyramid’ and see where the responses fit.



Who are my clients?

There may be more than one, and they may need to hear different messages. Have you ever noticed how McDonald’s will play very different TV advertisements at different times of the day to accommodate divergent market segments? The same principle applies to extension.

What am I marketing?

This is often very difficult to answer. Are you marketing your department? Ideas? Change? Information? Or are you marketing the more conventional services and products? Sometimes, depending on the targeted segment, it is necessary to market your group or yourself. Sometimes it is extension itself that needs to be marketed. The most important thing to consider is that

marketing two or three or more of these ‘commodities’ to the one segment using the one message can get confusing for the client. Decide what you’re marketing and market it.

What are the differentiators?

Differentiators are what makes us different. They answer the question: ‘why would they use us instead of somebody else?’.

Government extension services in particular have some widely publicised and welcome differentiators that are not exploited as nearly as often as they might be.

Government-funded extension is often held to be:

- credible
- independent
- reputable
- low-cost and high value, and
- supporting and based on science.

Plan plan plan

An *ad hoc* approach to marketing is expensive. A shotgun might kill the duck, but at what price to your dinner? Draw up a marketing plan and draft a marketing budget, regardless of how tight the purse is (even more of a reason to draft a budget!).

Use a targeted approach and avoid distractions. With a good plan, dry gullies are easier to avoid. Marketing plan templates can be found anywhere these days - on the web, in graduate texts and so on. Measure results as soon as they’re available and *don’t forget to use them* to finetune your marketing strategy.

Key ideas

- *Don’t presume. Check it out.*
- *Know your clients and keep in touch*
- *Avoid the ‘same old approach’*
- *Provide an experience rather than just an event.*
- *Evaluate and improve*
- *Never never take clients for granted*
- *Use “WIIFM” (what’s in it for me?)*
- *Use “one percenters” (the little things make the difference)*
- *Customer service is marketing*
- *Put on the client’s shoes*
- *Use word of mouth - look for key influencers*
- *Lemons leave a bitter taste - doing the right thing pays off*

Appearances are everything

Avoid brand confusion. These days, even government departments have woken up to the fact that periodically changing the corporate image or hosting whole swag of sub-brands does nothing for the organisation's marketing potential. Keep brands clear and unambiguous. A good brand is seldom recognised (from within) for the asset it is, and it can add a lot of weight if it is used judiciously with an extension message. Big corporations spend lots of money developing a recognisable brand, using visual expression and a meaningful logo, and are extremely careful in how they use it. They also guard the brand's use jealously.

More bang for the buck

When resources are limited, as they often are in extension environments, a concentrated campaign approach works well.

Use combination of approaches:

- Adverts/inserts
- Direct mail
- Media releases
- Community announcements (ABC Radio).

Try to think outside the square. Have you heard of the teabag being posted out with the invitation to a meeting with the recommendation to make a cuppa whilst reading the invite? This is a cheap 'one-percenter' that can really grab the attention.

Keep the wheel turning

Marketing, like extension, is a program, not a project. Maintaining momentum will be easier if the right track has been targeted in the first place, but keep evaluating and change course if necessary. Enlist help and spread the good news about how marketing has led to success. That way, more people own or want to own the process.

ENR



Would you trust this man?
Appearances are everything!



Extending extension

Beyond traditional boundaries, methods, ways of thinking

Hobart, Tasmania

26-28 November 2003

APEN is proud to offer a first-class professional development and peer networking opportunity.

Extend your thinking about our business and how to improve practice. Expand on what extension is, how we do it, and what works. This will be the full deal ... keynote speakers, small group activities, open forums, workshops and training session. Social and professional networking all flavoured with the tastes of Tasmania. Bring your partner for a holiday!

This forum will attract a variety of like-minded professionals from different fields who'll help us refine what we think extension is. And what extension can be.

Papers will be published in a conference proceedings. Start thinking now what you'd like to share with your peers. More details in next edition of ExtensionNet. Keep an eye on the APEN website and the email listserve for more information.

Forum Convenor: Prof Frank Vanclay frank.vanclay@utas.edu.au

Your APEN - your network

Chapters fire!

There's been some great activities around the traps.

WA CHAPTER

Some postponements in the fair west but some events now coming into focus ...

Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture Roadshow: Chris Anderson, the Managing Editor of AJEA, will be back in WA in early April. AJEA publishes one issue per year showcasing extension work and the WA chapter plans to take Chris on a visit to regional WA. So far a sundowner is planned for Bunbury. Other areas will be visited according to demand, so contact a member of the state executive to register your interest and, more importantly, your willingness to organise a visit. Keep an eye on your email inbox for more details!

AGM featuring 'Networking' with Neil Drew: The AGM was held on the 4th April. The guest speaker was Dr Neil Drew, a community psychologist who is the Director at the Institute for Regional Development at UWA. More details of Neil's exceptional presentation in the next edition.

Forty people attended the WA AGM but the committee lost four office bearers to busier schedules and maternity. Prez Colin Holt is confident the vacancies will be filled shortly (Col's contact details p 12).

MEMBERS DIRECTORY

If things are running to plan, you should have been posted your APEN Membership Directory with this edition of ExtensionNet. If not, don't worry ... you'll soon receive one. Roe at the Secretariat says 'thanks' to all who've confirmed job and contact details. The Membership Directory will provide a platform for better networking and will have members listed in chapters as well as the whole A to Z listing. Why not introduce yourself on the phone or by email to a member you haven't met before?

APEN event in the pipeline? Let us know! ExtensionNet is mailed to nearly 500 subscribers so it's fantastic publicity for your event. Simply email details to the editor (details back cover).

QLD CHAPTER

The Queensland series of APEN forums continues apace. These forums were plotted during a one-off meeting (actually a belated chapter AGM) in September 2003, and two out of the three planned have been and gone. The first, back in November last year, focused on group work and how diverse sets of people can work together to bring off some spectacular results.

The dust is still settling on the second. The focus of this forum was **Information Resources** and the speakers came from a diverse set of backgrounds to provide the expertise (Qld DPI, Qld Uni of Technology, and private consultants). The topics included "groundtruthing" information products with clients, media relationships, marketing (see the report on Mark Casey's presentation, page 3), 'headspace' and online relationships with producers. These forums seem to work well as half-day events with a lunch at the end for some social interaction. For more information on the February event, contact Darren Schmidt on 07 4160 0725 or darren.schmidt@dpi.qld.gov.au.

The next forum in this series will focus on *Industry Extension programs*, July 2003, Kingscliffe. Contact: Peter McGuire, phone 02 6670 1700.

More events equals more members

Expanding membership for the mere sake of it is rarely a good idea, but APEN is still very keen to broaden its fellowship to involve as many extensionists as possible. A proven way to do this is to organise local events. Inevitably, non-members - who may not have even heard of APEN - attend the event and some will recognise the benefits of belonging to an organisation that 'walks the talk' and join on the spot. It's a good argument for organising an event in your area. Contact the NE if help is required.



Get along to an APEN event and network. With a cup of coffee, you'll also look pretty cool like these guys

Poorly organised events - as any extension officer knows - can be expensive, time consuming and counter productive. Done well, however, and events can be a potent vehicle for galvanising action, developing a sense of community and common purpose, and generating enthusiasm for further work.

With all of this in mind, APEN's National Executive (NE) has backed plans for a more vigorous APEN event schedule. During a meeting in Melbourne in February (see *report over the page*) the NE decided that helping organise some key event activities would be the best way to energise the network and expand the membership base.

We're in the planning stages at this point, but the firm indications are that we're all headed to Tasmania in November (see *notice, page 5*). A very busy committee has already gathered to talk about the scope and logistics. This Tasmanian forum is the latest in a series of national events which have been put in place to ensure that APEN has a continuing face-to-face community of membership. The last major event was the national forum in Tatura 2002.

Pulses are quickening

The WA Chapter - through running events that are locally relevant and good fun to attend - have expanded their membership and established the positive perception that APEN is 'out there' doing its stuff. In Queensland, recent events have been very well supported and have shown that extensionists are keen to graze in diverse and different professional paddocks.

But the effort required to organise events in your region needn't be a hurdle. The APEN National Executive (NE) is keen to help with advice, support and guidance and there's a growing database of tried and proven topics that are virtually guaranteed to generate interest amongst extensionists in your area.

Over to you

Volume 10 Number 3

NE REPORT

Each member of the NE is assigned a 'portfolio' to administer, a system that has worked well for the past 18 months. Now, each administrator also has a 'buddy' to help out.

Wouldn't know an NE member if you fell over one? Have a look at the APEN website for the NE Mugs Gallery

National Executive expands and finetunes

The APEN National Executive met in Melbourne over 17-18 February to revisit the plans they'd made in 2001. This was an opportunity to critically appraise first

principles and base assumptions about APEN and its place in the world. Below is Vice President Greg Cock's summary of the way the NE see their role in APEN

VISION for the profession

Remains as "people successfully managing change".

VISION for APEN

Remains as "the peak body for change management professionals"

Our ROLE in contributing to that vision

Remains as "providing a platform for networking, professional development and representation of members' and the profession's interests."

Our GOALS are:

1. To be recognised as the peak body for change management professionals
2. To have a vibrant and effective network of change management professionals
3. To provide professional development opportunities for change management professionals
4. To provide representation of members' and the profession's interests.

GREAT! How do we do all of that?

The following sets out the objectives for each of those goals and the portfolios established to service them.

Goal 1 (recognised as peak body)

This is largely a job for the 'management' portfolio, whose objectives are to ensure:

- the NE management is highly effective with efficient and effective Secretariat support
- members, potential members, partners, sponsors and funders are efficiently serviced
- there are clear policies on extension / change management.

Also contributing to Goal 1 is the 'financial resources' portfolio whose objectives are to ensure:

- robust financial systems are in place and are being used.
- APEN is financially stable and resilient through membership, sponsorship and other funds

The 'evaluation' portfolio also helps out.

Goal 1. Objectives are:

- practise continuous improvement and innovation in developing and implementing portfolios
 - collect data efficiently and effectively to evaluate progress and impact of portfolios.
- Lastly, the 'marketing' portfolio contributes to Goal 1. Objectives:
- Know the needs of potential members, policy makers, sponsors and funders
 - Gain a high profile amongst members, potential members, policy makers, sponsors and funders.

Goal 2 (vibrant and effective network)

This goal is partly tackled by the 'chapter support and membership services' portfolio. Its objectives:

- chapters cultivate responsibility, a sense of belonging and APEN importance
- NE and chapters have better linkages
- chapters helped to increase chapter activity
- members are aware, informed about, and satisfied with APEN.

The 'internal communication' portfolio also helps out with Goal 2. Objectives:

- The newsletter, web page, email discussion list provide members a platform for sharing facts, opinions, and experience
- APEN's purpose, quality and integrity reflected in hardcopy promotional materials.

Goal 3 (professional development)

The 'activities' portfolio is the prime mover here. Objectives are:

- run one international conference every four years
- run one National Forum every four years
- facilitate program of professional development workshops for chapters.

Goal 4 (represent APEN's interests)

The objectives of the 'research/representation' portfolio are:

- advise on contemporary principles, philosophy and practice of change management (extension)
- change management policy and practice influenced by APEN.

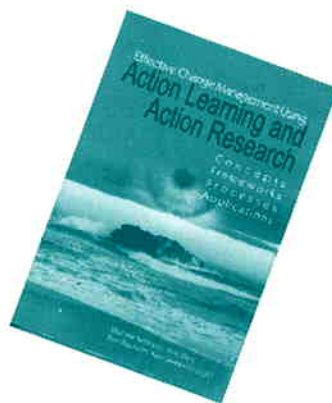
Diffusion of innovations

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"Effective Change Management Using Action Learning and Action Research"

- Editors: Shankar Sankaran, Bob Dick, Ron Passfield, Pam Swepson

A book review by Gerry Roberts, DPI Queensland



If, in your extension work, you've ever thought something like what do I have to do to make a change happen, then a handy tool is this new book that values practical outcomes.

In four sections – concepts, frameworks, processes and applications – the editors present material from 31 authors taking the change practitioner from theory to practice on action learning and action research.

The concepts section offers a simple and specific grounding in the theories of action learning and action research.

Section two presents frameworks for creating awareness in the practitioner and other participants, of what to look at in projects and how to look at it.

When using action learning and action research it is the processes that deliver outcomes. Section three offers process options including examples of changes achieved. Attention is given to processes of

reflection where the social pressure is to act rather than reflect then act.

Action learning and action research emphasises considered action. Section four on applications shows the versatility of each approach for introducing change. Two features of this section are the demonstrations of adapting the applications into the cultures of the Asia-Pacific area and the personal learning evident for users.

An overarching theme appears to be having practitioners improve their practice through thinking and acting critically. For me there is a wonderful first step offered for doing just that in Learning logs: structured journals that work for busy people, a chapter by Bob Williams and Bill Harris.

All this makes it a handbook (keep-it-in-your-hand) for extensionists looking for action approaches for extension situations.

Available from Southern Cross University Press \$54.95, tel: 02 6620 3326

ENET

Extension online



In the February 2003 edition of the *Journal of Extension (JOE)*: How do you convince a community that human biosolids (sewage sludge) are a good idea when spread on the farm? This edition contains several articles on community engagement in all its varied forms, as well as some excellent stories on evaluation and impact. My favourite is the yarn about bold labelling for grain grown under IPM, similar to what the organic industry does. What a great idea! JOE is always worth a look, if only to discover that APEN members deliver projects every bit as well as the Americans.

There's some older articles on a website 'maintained' by extension staff in Wageningen University, The Netherlands. Check out the Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension at bib.wau.nl/ejae. It says it was updated late last year but the most recent articles are from February 2001.

The US-based Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) publish the *Journal of AIEE*. Find it online at ag.arizona.edu/aiaee/journal.htm. Again, articles only go back to mid-2000.

Diffusion of innovations

NEWS EVENTS IDEAS NEWS EVENTS IDEAS NEWS EVENTS IDEAS NEWS EVENTS

FACE TO FACE

First Farming Systems Conference gains momentum

The first Farming Systems Conference is going to be a great event. The first port of call for anyone looking for details about this conference is www.afsa.asn.au which has all the necessary information.

More than 160 abstracts were received, which means there will be something for everyone. People from every state and territory submitted an abstract, and titles draw from a variety of subjects. The website will soon have a searchable database of all abstracts so prospective attendees can begin sorting out what they're want to hear.

Deadline for full papers is May 15.

Keynote speakers will include Sri N. Skriskandarajah (Denmark), Anna Ridley (NSW Ag), Pierre Berniot Polly (France), Jessica Dart (Melb Uni), and Jack and Joyce Mitchell (Samford). The international flavour of the keynote speaker selection reflects the fact that 'farming systems' - as a set of philosophies, principles and practices - already has an established global presence.

Conference organisers have identified a number of major themes. They are **Concepts behind farming systems approaches** - how are conceptual models now being shaped in FS projects and why has this changed over the last 20 years?

Sustainability and the contribution of farming system approaches - how have FS approaches contributed to a new appreciation of sustainability issues and what challenges lie ahead for FS work on sustainability?

Resilient farming systems in a complex world - how responsive are FS approaches to changing and unpredictable circumstances?

Monitoring, evaluation and learning for farming systems improvement - how are we using methodologies and methods to make sense of learning and change?

Uncommon processes and partnerships for FS change: international, alternative and social - why will practitioners build working partnerships across their conventional disciplinary boundaries and what issues require such approaches over the next 5 years in Australia?

Where? What? When?

The Conference will be held at Toowoomba, Queensland, 7-11 September. A field trip program is well into the planning stage and there will be a full and fun social schedule to help promote fellowship. Cost looks like being in the range of \$550 per person, but check out the website to confirm costs when they are finalised. Phone the Conference Secretariat on (07) 4631 2190 or email stewartc@usq.edu.au

Deadline for full papers is May 15 !

The 3rd National Conference on Environmental Management Systems in Agriculture

Agriculture, Business and the Environment - Advancing the debate

This conference will provide attendees with the opportunity to compare ideas and approaches with regard to the development and application of Environmental Management Systems (EMS). You will hear about the latest developments in Australia and overseas and contribute to the debate on how to make EMS work for improved environmental and business outcomes in agriculture.

The conference will be held Monday the 10th to Thursday the 13th of November, 2003 at the Barossa Arts and Convention Centre, Tanunda, South Australia.

For more information, contact Erica Hancock
Service Development Consultant Field Crops Rural Solutions SA
P.O. Box 245, Nuriootpa 5355
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M: 0401 122 091
E: hancock.eric@saugov.sa.gov.au

VALE OLE

In the last edition of ExtensionNet, we reported that a Danish Masters student from the University of Qld, Ole Frederiksen, was looking closely at pig extension in Queensland. Tragically, Ole lost his life in a farm accident in February this year in Dalby, Qld. Through ExtensionNet, the APEN fellowship extends its sincere sympathy to Ole's family and colleagues.

New NE members

The National Executive (NE) has enjoyed a new flush of blood in the past six months. The NE now spans two countries and comprises a diverse mix of professionals with wide-ranging backgrounds. The NE meets via

teleconference every two months, so if there's an APEN issue you want to raise, contact your local friendly NE member and it'll be dealt with promptly. Meanwhile, introducing the new NE people ...

Cynthia Mahoney (Victoria)



Cynthia works for the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment (a new department in Victoria) at Box Hill in Melbourne as a Business Improvement Facilitator on change management and continuous improvement projects such as staff engagement and internal communication. Originally from Benalla, she graduated from the Uni of Melbourne in 1992 (Agricultural Science) and also has a Masters in Farm Business Management Economics/Rural Sociology.

She's strongly interested in rural economic and social issues.

After eight years at Tatura DNRE as a research economist working on rural adjustment issues in the Murray Darling Basin, she worked as an industry development officer and then as a facilitator in the Farm\$mart program conducting workshops on strategic, business and personal planning for dairy, cropping and grazing farming families. Two years ago she headed down to the big smoke for a stint as the Co-ordinator of the Victorian Rural Women's Network and then made a move from working with rural communities to working with DNRE staff on business improvement processes.

Liz Kellaway (South Australia)

Liz designs communication programs which encourage Australian farmers to take up new technologies and best practice. She heads an Adelaide-based team focussing on rural and regional communications for the public relations company, Porter Novelli. She's won several awards for her work and in 1999 she received a Churchill Fellowship which took her to six countries, studying communication tools and strategies which encourage farmers to take up new technology and best practice. A partner and director of Porter Novelli Adelaide since 2002, Liz had amassed a huge range of skills and provides advice to a wide range of clients. She was a journalist in a previous life. She grew up on a dairy farm in Mt Gambier, SA.



Greg Leach (Queensland)



Greg was raised on a beef cattle property at Beaudesert SE Qld which founded his interest and career in property and natural resource management. Following uni, Greg began work in central Qld with QDPI in soil conservation extension which was "very rewarding". He moved into property management planning extension role in Longreach central western Qld and after evaluating seven years service to find producers needed less structured planning approaches than PMP offered, Greg tried to find this Holy

Grail through his Masters in Holland. Instead he found a Russian woman who enticed him to spend quite a period in Mother Russia. Greg and Anya married, came back to Qld, and Greg's career in extension moved to the development of an extension strategy in the Department of Natural Resources. Now that legislation is maturing, Greg is now being asked to coordinate the refocusing of extension on NRM compliance.

Neels Botha (New Zealand)

Neels spent the first part of his career in his native South Africa where he was busy at the social systems end of agricultural extension in Namibia and Pretoria. He is now the NE's link to New Zealand where he has been the team leader of the Social Systems Research Group, AgResearch, Ruakura Research Centre, Hamilton NZ, since 2000. Neels' knowledge of agricultural extension literature is extensive; he is widely published himself and formerly held some key international positions in the editorial and academic arenas. He still does, but his favourite is APEN.



Welcome to these new members who have joined since December 2002

Mr Gavin Brock, Vic
Mr Col Freeman, NSW
Mr Stephen Hazelman, Pacific Community
Mr Jerry Lovatt, Qld
Ms Mascha Raymond, Qld
Mrs Debbie-Sue van Rangelrooy, Qld

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Guidelines and deadlines

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

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Letters and contributions to ExtensionNet are welcome. Suggestions for topics include marketing extension, extension theory, evaluation, or professional development.

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