



EXTENSIONNET

October 2003
Vol. 11 No. 1

Newsletter of the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (Inc)

A0029919P ISSN 1445-2111 Contact: 07 4160 0725 Australia Post approved PP347637000014

APEN Tassie forum set to impress

APEN members and others flock to Tasmanian forum

by Prof Frank Vanclay
Forum Co-ordinator, Tasmania

How do we 'extend extension'? What can we do to push the boundaries of our traditional extension roles and make them even more relevant to the social, ecological and industrial needs of the 21st century? What will someone in 'extension' be doing in 10 years' time?

The APEN 2003 Forum in Hobart will help answer some of these questions and, of course, many more. More than 120 people, from within APEN and further afield, have already registered and the standard of papers received has been excellent. As an extension professional, can you afford to miss out on this top-shelf networking event?

Continued page 2 ...



Apple a day? Tasmania no longer uses the 'apple image' exclusively to promote itself. Maybe there's a lesson there for APEN. At the National Forum in Tasmania, meet peers, develop networks, and hear how others 'do extension'. Not to be missed! Haven't registered yet? Hurry!

IN THIS ISSUE

Babies, bathwater 3

Founding member Bob Macadam argues why APEN should maintain its rural focus

MLA's super extension program 6

Neale Price outlines how and why MLA's EDGEnetwork program is reaching so many clients

Forum news 7

News, events, ideas.

Network news 8

Stories from around the traps

More forum news 9

APEN's marketing plan 10

New NE people 11

More information 12

From the editor

This edition is overflowing with Forum news! The Tassie team have done a great job in putting the forum together. Hope you also enjoy the stories from Bob Macadam and Neale Price ... some insightful and well constructed arguments. *Darren Schmidt*



Slow to register?

You can still register for the APEN Hobart Forum, but you'll need to be quick. Email Amabel Fulton on naom.rds@bigpond.net.au, or check out the Forum corner on the APEN webpage. Deadlines for papers and posters have now closed.

APEN is pleased to acknowledge the support of:





The Forum Convenor is APEN member Professor Frank Vanclay, a Professorial Fellow in rural sociology at the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research University of Tasmania.

Induction workshop for the "New Extensionist"

Remember the first time you ever went to a conference? Or to an APEN activity? Did you feel out of your depth? A bit unsure of who to talk to and what questions to ask? To make sure newcomers feel welcome, the School of Agricultural Science at the University of Tasmania will host a special workshop for 'new' extensionists on Wednesday November 26 preceding the Extending Extension forum in Hobart.

The aim of the meeting is to give first timers to either conferences, or to extension, an opportunity to find out how to make the most of the APEN forum. Participants will be given an overview of the conference, and an introduction to some of the key people and other newcomers.

Topics to be covered: networking, jargon busting, getting the most out of conferences, and who's who at the APEN forum.

Participants will be allocated to mentors who will be available throughout the forum to help newcomers make sense of what is going on. The free workshop runs from 12.30 to 4pm and includes lunch. All forum delegates will be given an opportunity to register for this workshop.

APEN Hobart forum looking good! (cont'd from p1)

A number of 'themes' (what might be called 'business drivers' in the corporate world) will underline the structure and process of the Hobart Forum. These 'business drivers' will reflect the needs of the sorts of people that conventionally practise extension:

The nature of the beast

What do we do? Can we provoke some thinking about *our business* and to improve our practice: about what it is, the way we do it, and what works? We can address these questions along a range of parameters, but it is the process of active reflection that is important here, and the one that probably separates the good extensionists from the also-rans. No extension forum ever leaves out the question: 'What is extension?' - what does that say about our capacity for reflection?

Ying and yang

There will be a balance of small group activities and large sessions and there'll be ample time for networking and with social events peppered with the taste of Tasmania. Extension people are usually 'people' people - why spend all the time sitting down and taking notes when most of us want to get out for a coffee and an animated chat?

Shouldn't they call you an extension officer?


Part of the forum discussions will reflect the reality that other fields we are connected to and linked with also practise 'extension' under a host of different labels. Invited speakers will be drawn largely from outside traditional extension circles thereby exposing us to other but related disciplines and thinkings: outreach, interpretation, change management, community development,

public participation, adult education, environmental education, communication, evaluation, PR and marketing, health promotion, tourism promotion, organisational learning and the media. Listen for case studies illustrating best practice in our business.

Hobart, Tasmania - you're standing in it

Delegates will *know* they're in Tasmania! The taste and feel of Tasmania will extend from the selection of the venue and range of accommodation available through to the provision of food and refreshments, as well as through the optional field trips and sightseeing opportunities. Extension takes place 'on the ground'; so too should forums that focus on extension.

How to become a 'pracademic'

'Pracademia' is sometimes colloquially used to describe the thought that academic pursuits can also be solidly grounded in practice and needn't be high-flown or abstract to the point of uselessness. For many extensionists, this is not a new concept and most of our best use solid theory backed up by long practical experience virtually every day. However, the goal posts always change and the 'theory' of extension is no longer restricted to the realms of adult learning and agri-economic development. Consider these competing claims: public/private, farm/business, farmer/customer/client, opinion leaders/champions, change management/technology transfer/capacity building, extend/empower, agriculture/community ... see? Priorities change, systems change and extension changes. Grab your board, catch the wave ... it'll be a fun ride! 

Fun bits

Wednesday

Derwent Valley tour (extension focus)
'Tassie Day' - how do they 'do extension' in the Apple Isle?

'Induction Workshop' - new to extension?
This is your special event! (see column left)

Thursday

Cruise the Derwent on the historic MS Cartella for the conference dinner (see p9).

Friday

John Glover exhibition opening at the Tassie gallery. Extraordinary colonial art

Saturday-Sunday

East Coast weekender (post-forum) diverse farming systems focus. Top notch tucker, too.

The beautiful Derwent River



The baby and the bathwater

Why APEN should keep playing in the rural playground

By Associate Professor Bob Macadam

Rural Enablers, NSW

I pressed the point during an APEN Extension Policy workshop at the Women's College in Sydney in July this year that APEN should retain its rural focus. Being the good editor he is, Darren Schmidt asked me to put the case for this in writing (*flattery gets you everywhere - Ed*). Here are my thoughts on the subject. They draw heavily on recent work with my Rural Enablers colleagues on the link between rural capacity building and institutional arrangements¹ - Bob Macadam

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Associate Professor Bob Macadam is from Rural Enablers in Winmalee, NSW. Email him on r.macadam@uws.edu.au

APEN is a network of people who share two broad interests. The first is their involvement in extension. The second is their knowledge of and commitment to improving the situation of rural people and places.

I see APEN as the champion of improving the lot of rural people through the provision and facilitation among them of learning opportunities. The latter captures my appreciation of the purpose of extension and the former my notion of its context as far as APEN's mission is concerned.

A counter argument in recent years has APEN as a network of professional change agents - without regard to the context of their work. The underlying rationale is that the potential membership of APEN is then both larger and more diverse. Larger in the sense that it draws in the many change agents working in urban contexts, and more diverse because it sweeps in 'non-aggies'. My concern with this argument is that it may be a case of "throwing the baby out with the bath water".

The "baby" I see is the provision and facilitation of learning opportunities **among** rural people. This is still in its infancy, and owes much to its agricultural extension and adult education parents. The dirt in the "bath water" is the residue of a pre-occupation with agriculture and increased agricultural productivity as the goal of extension, and an implied belief that rural and agricultural are somehow synonymous.

Rural capacity building is a concept with the potential to accelerate the growth and development of the "baby" and APEN can play a leadership role in nurturing it. An underlying premise is that rural people are confronting challenges which are similar to but different to their urban counterparts. These can be summarised as a common interest in improving:

- business profitability and sustainability;
- industry profitability and sustainability;
- the ecological health of catchments;
- the well-being of residents; and of their communities.

Continued page 4 ...

The baby and the bathwater (cont'd from p3)

In our study we defined rural capacity building: *as externally or internally initiated processes designed to help individuals and groups associated with rural Australia to appreciate and manage their changing circumstances, with the objective of improving the stock of human, social, financial, physical and natural capita in an ethically defensible way.*

What are the implications of this definition for extension programs? It means that unless a program focused on a particular stock of knowledge incorporates utilisation of the knowledge to improve a 'real-world' problematic situation (i.e. an improvement in the stock of capital) it is **not** a capacity building program.

Knowledge (human capital) is only one of the categories of capital likely to be involved and this highlights the importance of working with people who have access to the other forms (e.g. physical, financial and natural). This in turn highlights the developmental nature of capacity building - increases in the stock of capital are the basis for further increases, and improving the quality of relationships (social capital) is likely to be a high priority.

The stock of human and social capital is developed through learning, and facilitating its development is the forte of APEN and its members.

But what does "rural" mean? It is usually construed as a place but we contend it is more useful to think of it as it encompassing the people and activities that impinge on the

welfare of rural areas - and this often includes people from beyond a rural district or region. Who should be involved depends on the situation to be improved.

The relevant communities of practice have to become a learning community that is agile in responding to the particular challenge confronting them, and this means drawing into its deliberations people who live outside the region but whose activities impinge on it. Their capacity to contribute to the welfare of the people of the region may be critical. For capacity building purposes they should be 'swept in'. Their welfare is also enhanced to the extent that the region prospers. They are stakeholders and potential actors and beneficiaries.

APEN is well placed to play a leadership role in promoting rural capacity building as an alternative to the out-moded notion of agricultural extension. This will extend its sphere of influence and potential membership, while maintaining a unique identity. Doing so depends on having, and being seen to have, a commitment to: (a) the principles and practice of capacity building, and the key role of learning within this; and (b) the well being of rural people and places.

¹Macadam R, Drinan J, Inall N, and McKenzie B (2003) "Growing the Capital of Rural Australia - the task of capacity building" A report for the Capacity Building for Innovation in Rural Industries Co-operative Venture. RIRDC, Canberra, www.rirdc.gov.au

DET

"APEN is well placed to play a leadership role in promoting rural capacity building as an alternative to the out-moded notion of agricultural extension."

Post-forum field trip

"South-east experiences - a 2 day tour"

This trip visits horticultural and agricultural operations and some of southern Tasmania's best tourist destinations. The tour starts Sat. Nov 28 and returns to Hobart (via Airport) by 4pm the following day. Begin with a relaxed stroll around **Salamanca Market** and visit stall holders to hear how Salamanca complements their overall marketing strategy and to sample their produce. Then head to

Houston's Farm, growers of fine lettuce and salad mixes, where we will see first hand their excellent Quality Assurance Program. On to **Richmond** - once a strategic military post and convict station (with more than 50 19th century buildings) – now a vibrant farming community and tourism. Explore the town, the **Richmond Bridge** (the oldest road bridge in Australia), Richmond Gaol and more. Browse the many craft and antique shops in the town before having lunch at the **Richmond Wine Centre**.

Qew Apricot Orchard is the largest apricot orchard in Tasmania. View their computerised watering systems and high tech grading machinery and hear about the role of Horticulture Australia's industry development

officer in the orchard's development. The tour then heads to **Port Arthur** for dinner and the infamous 'Ghost Tour' through the old penal settlement ruins. Next day takes us to the spectacular cliffs and rock arches at **Eaglehawk Neck**.

On to Tom and Cynthia Dunbabin's '**Bangor**', winner of the 1996 Landcare Nature Conservation Award. Varied and rare flora and fauna live alongside the production of wool, beef, lamb and timber. Tom will talk about his experiences with extension over the years and discuss its future.

Last stop is Rob Morey's "**Flexmore Park**" which hosts a wide range of enterprises. Rob is a big player in Coal River Valley's development.

How does MLA do it?

An insight into how one of Australia's most successful 'extension' organisations gives livestock producers an edge

by Neale Price
Meat & Livestock Australia

Project Manager - Producer Innovation and Adoption

Some five to six years ago Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) in conjunction with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Victoria (now known as the Department of Primary Industries) responded to a need from producers. The need was to conduct an R&D project addressing the extension of information to livestock producers on a national scale. Thus began the journey to what is now known as "EDGEnetwork[®]".

Why did we do it?

The need, as identified nationally by livestock producers, arose from a number of existing situations:

- a lack of extension of information about the latest research results
- the existing mechanisms and infrastructure, from both educational and extension frameworks, were not adequately addressing producers' needs
- the absence of a commonality of language from course to course, workshop to workshop and delivery group to delivery group
- a lack of exposure to an 'experiential' learning environment
- the plethora of workshops/courses/information existing in the marketplace, including the provision of conflicting information.

The basic premise upon which this project was built was the provision of answers to our producers' questions. The driver for the development of these workshops was therefore to meet market and producer demand, rather than the previous push for supply of information based on perceived market need.

The parameters of the 'end product', as required by producers, can be defined as follows:

- consistent messages flowing from the latest R&D outcomes

- quality delivery and deliverers, utilising existing structures where applicable
- flexible workshops to address producer needs based on timing, structure and location
- adoption of a strategy of continuous improvement and innovation
- collaboration with associated organisations and groups to increase the breadth and scope of extension
- consistency of language and concepts across the broad range of subject areas to integrate all parts of the business
- delivery addressing all adult learning styles and each aspect of the action learning cycle
- linkage to the VET sector.

Key success factors

- **Ownership of the content, development and delivery by producers, scientists, researchers, educators and agribusiness participants in general.** The series of workshops was developed and customised by groups including all sectors of the delivery chain. The piloting process ensures that the information delivered addresses producer needs.
- **Use of a common language.** The workshops provide a consistent and common language of skills, knowledge and terminology on all aspects of livestock business management. This enables producers, agribusiness people, journalists and scientists to communicate on the same level. New research results are also presented to producers using these skills, knowledge and language, enabling a faster understanding and application of the research information. Also, the development of producers' skills and knowledge enables them to implement more productive and sustainable grazing systems.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Neale is a long-time member of APEN and travels the country regularly to maintain MLA's extraordinary extension effort. This photo suggests more hair in Neale's favour than is currently accurate. Email Neale at: nprice@mla.com.au

"The driver for the development of these workshops was therefore to meet market and producer demand, rather than the previous push for supply of information based on perceived market need."

Continued page 6...

MLA's extension edge (cont'd from p5)

VET: Vocational and Educational Training

- **Integration.** Information about pastures, genetics, marketing, business, natural resource management, people and livestock is presented in an integrated manner, enabling improved grazing decisions to be made by producers. There has been an alignment of 'learning outcomes' as defined by producers with the competencies addressed through the formal VET sector framework, as well as the development of a licensee network of quality deliverers positioned to access increased leverage from existing education/extension and delivery networks.
- **Confidence to make changes.** The workshops provide experiential learning by the enactment of practical exercises on case studies, which increases knowledge in a tangible manner. This in turn builds confidence to make changes on-farm, leading to improved management decisions. These changes also support the information being provided by a range of other products and services offered by MLA.
- **Group co-learning.** The group-learning environment enables effective 'three-way learning': producers learning from producers, facilitators learning from producers' experiences, and producers learning from the facilitators.
- **Upgrading knowledge.** As the education and training arm of MLA, EDGENetwork provides a useable and practical formal education option for producers to move forward productively, profitably and sustainably.
- **Monitoring and evaluation.** Over the first two to three years of delivery, ongoing monitoring and evaluation has taken place to ensure that the workshops maintain relevance and appropriateness of delivery and content. An independent review of the project has been commissioned which will assist in forging ahead to achieve greater levels of participation and adoption.

Where to from here?

After 30 months of delivery, with more than 6,000 attendees at a variety of the 40 plus workshops available, we have a target of 5,000 additional producers for the 2003/04 financial year. The following actions are underway to help us work towards this goal:

- further workshops are being developed in conjunction with other MLA programs, and as a result of market demand
- continuous improvements and innovation principles are being applied based on feedback from participants and deliverers
- implementation of both internal and external integration, which is targeted at both secondary and post-secondary levels of the education sector, and
- development and enhancement of the human capacity to deliver.

ENR

More information about MLA's EDGENetwork can be found at www.mla.com.au/content.cfm?sid=845

Extension online

Some of you may have already seen this (in fact some of you have authored it!) but in our scratchings around the web we stumbled across an online RIRDC report titled **Agricultural Extension, Learning and Change**. It's a very comprehensive piece of work that 'summarises the relevant recent and current research and development on agricultural extension, learning and change'. An expansive annotated bibliography, the report outlines some of the major national and international extension research that's been done. It's a must read for anyone interested in this profession and the theory that informs it. Go to www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/HCC/03-032.pdf. It's 81 pages long and takes a little while to download and print.



In September's edition of **Journal of Extension**

(www.joe.org):

- focusing extension evaluation to meet the business needs of organisations
- how the theoretical foundation of extension is flawed (!)
- information sources and extension delivery methods - fitting tools with demographics
- urban sprawl and how to deal with its effects on small to medium scale agriculture
- what are people prepared to pay for public 'greenspace'? - a role for extension

Powerpoint giving you the pips? For heaps of presentation tips and tricks, check out www.sony.com.au/SpeakerCentral/home/index.cfm?&auth=true.

'Improving agricultural extension: a reference manual' (1997, Swanson, B.E., Bentz, R.P., and Sofranko, A.J.) might be getting on a bit in years but the good news is that it's online for all the world to read, download or skim at leisure. And it's free!

It's a well organised reference and doesn't skimp on the history and context of extension. The book is organised into four parts:

- 1 Overview of extension in agricultural and rural development
- 2 Improving extension programmes and processes
- 3 Improving extension management
- 4 Current trends and development.

Under these headings, nearly everything you can think of that's connected to extension is included, such as extension's economic contribution to rural development, how to run strategic campaigns, evaluation, policy, training in extension, sustainability and privatisation to name only a few.

Thanks to APEN Treasurer Jon Warren in WA for bringing this resource to our attention. You can find it at www.fao.org/docrep/W5830E/w5830e00.htm into the address bar of your browser. Save it as a favourite. It's in HTML, not PDF, so it's easy to navigate.



Forum news

Rural Development Services – bringing you Extending extension

Discovering the possibility of inventing your own future has driven the development of a new Tasmanian small business, Rural Development Services Pty Ltd.

Established by former University of Tasmania researchers Dr David and Amabel Fulton, Rural Development Services has grown to a team of 12 officers since its inception in 1999.

Both parties have acted on the opportunity to turn their academic learnings into commercial realities. David had undertaken ground-breaking university research to support the Tasmanian pyrethrum industry's transition from the expensive process of establishing crops from cuttings, to the cheaper alternative of establishing crops from seed. Post-university, David commercialised this practical outcome and supported the development of low input integrated broad-acre pyrethrum production systems for Tasmania – transforming his scientific acumen into industry practices amongst the best in the world.

Amabel instigated a different but equally important development in Tasmanian agriculture with her appointment as the first Rural Sociologist in the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research.

In moving to the private sector David and Amabel have combined their science and social science perspectives in a way which has achieved significant outcomes for Tasmanian agriculture.

The company provides a range of services to Tasmania's rural sector – from highly technical research and development to individual servicing of small landowners and programs for women in agriculture.

In addition to providing personalised one on one advice, Rural Development Services offers research, training and support in crop production, farm management, leadership, marketing and environmental management.

"We visited Ireland in 1997 and saw the fantastic potential for developing Tasmanian agriculture and regional communities, and we returned determined to play our part in making this happen," David said.

Starting with two small contracts for Sustainable Grazing Systems and research and development in the pyrethrum industry, Rural Development Services has expanded its size and scope to deliver additional programs such WinHort (professional development for women in horticulture), Country Capers™ (helping small and large landowners achieve their vision for their land), FarmSolutions™ (a personalised brokering and support service for farm businesses) and most recently, Farm Management Planning (a workshop series to develop a whole farm plan).

"We see Rural Development Services playing a significant role in enhancing Tasmania's rural communities, and we are really excited about the future," Amabel said.



The Rural Development Services team - bringing APEN the 'Extending Extension' forum in Tasmania

Your APEN - your network

HOW SWEET IT WAS!

About 25 SE Qld Chapter members and friends got together in July for a look at the sugar industry. We met at Kingscliff on the far north coast of NSW to hear about several extension programs used in the industry. The "Compass" program involves self assessment workshops for farmers during which they compare their own practices to best management practice. We took advantage of having so much expertise in one spot and asked members how we might improve participation rates at the Compass workshops. Thanks for the suggestions guys.

On a short field tour local farmer, Robert Quirk described how the NSW sugar industry achieved self regulation for managing acid sulphate

soils. Allen Quirk gave us a first hand look at harvesting operations and explained the benefits of co-operative harvesting groups. We finished the day with lunch at the Tumbulgun pub on the banks of the Tweed River.

- Peter McGuire
pmcguire@BSES.org.au



Cane farmer, Robert Quirk, describes how the NSW sugar industry manages acid sulphate soils

NEWS FROM APEN WA

APEN at ANZRAI

APEN WA recently sponsored one of its members, Jay Anderson, to the ANZRAI Annual Conference in Fremantle. The conference theme was 'Regional Development – Who owns it?' Jay made a presentation at the conference about regional development in sensitive environmental areas. APEN WA also had a trade display at this conference. This was seen as a great opportunity to raise the awareness of APEN to potential new members outside our normal membership networks. Thanks to the team that did all this hard work to make it happen, especially Chookie Jones. APEN WA will continue to look out for these types of opportunities.

Other news from WA

The state executive met in Narrogin on the 3rd of October. They plan to run at least one more APEN WA event before the end of the year. This will be a ½ day or full day professional development workshop. The workshop will be advertised shortly.

Also welcome to new State Executive Members David Bicknell, Pam l'Anson and Tracey Gianatti.

The State Executive are also **very, very** willing to hear from any members about ideas for APEN WA networking or professional development events. Remember an association can only be as active as its membership, so please contact us with any ideas.

Qld-NNSW are planning a chapter activity based on reflections from the Tassie forum. What's stopping other chapters doing the same thing? It's a great idea!

Qld-NNSW celebrate successes

Qld-Northern NSW chapter met October 8 at a (noisy) Hare Krishna restaurant in Brisbane to plan for some more events following last year's successful series of workshops and forums (three in total). These worked so well, we decided that the chapter would first run a proper evaluation on the past events (we'll

probably combine this with an AGM (November 5, EPA Herbarium Officers at Mt Coottha Botanic Gardens) and then nail some dates for future events. These will include a reflection on the Tassie forum, a knowledge management study and a forum on capacity building.

- Jeff Coutts