

Merry Christmas and
happy new year to all
APEN members!



Developing decision support systems for farm management

**A conceptual framework from the
sociology of science and technology**

Story by **Emma Jakku, Peter Thorburn
and Clare Gambley**

CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems

Remember decision support systems? They haven't gone away, and the technobabble that accompanied their development in the 80s and 90s has given way to a more sophisticated and human-centric approach. Here, Emma Jakku (CSIRO) tells how DSS development has benefited from an injection of good old sociology.

Decision support systems (DSSs) are increasingly being identified as a means to improve the management of complex farming problems. However, making DSSs relevant to farmers is a challenge. We have looked to concepts from the sociology of science and technology to help with this challenge and increase our understanding of the social factors and processes that influence the development and adoption of DSSs. These concepts will then be used to guide the implementation of strategies to encourage broader uptake of DSSs.



Principal author Dr Emma Jakku is a Post-Doctoral Fellow looking closely at participatory research. She's with the Tropical Landscapes program under CSIRO's Sustainable Ecosystems division. Contact Emma at Emma.Jakku@csiro.au

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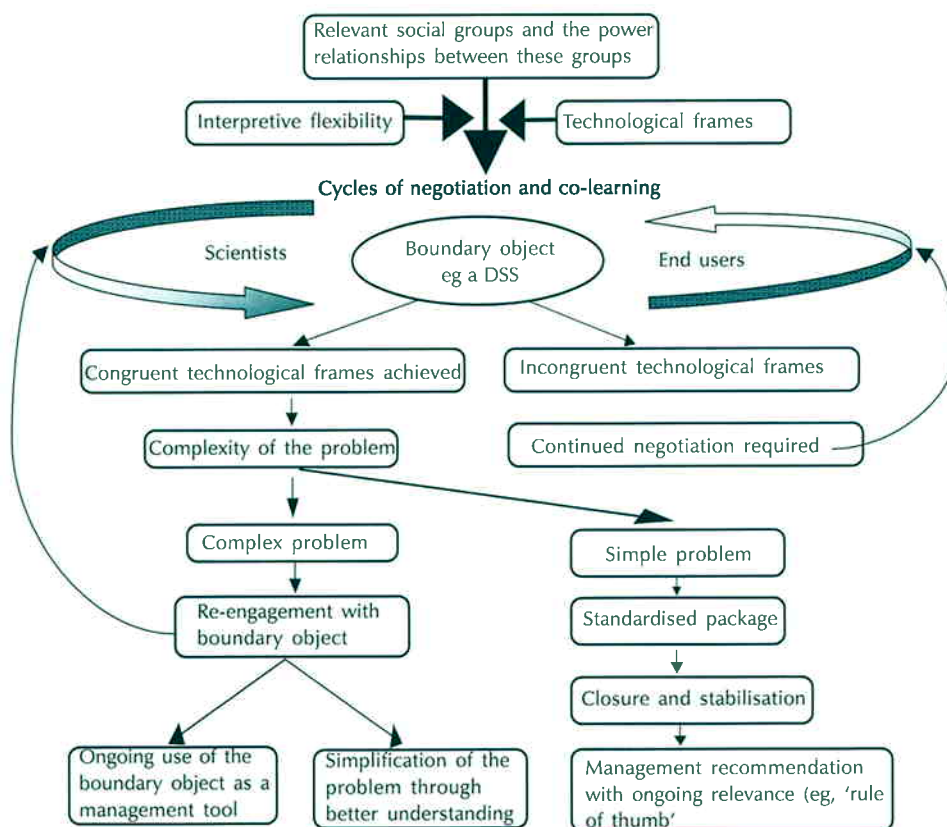


DSSs for farm management (cont'd from p1)

Conceptual framework for understanding the development and implementation of DSSs

The figure on this page illustrates the way in which concepts from the sociology of science and technology provide a framework for understanding the development and implementation of DSSs.

Below: Framework clarifying the social processes influencing the development and application of agricultural DSSs



A boundary object provides a common point of reference for conversations and a means of translating abstract and complex ideas



Relevant social groups, interpretative flexibility and technological frames

- In the case of agricultural DSSs, the *relevant social groups* usually include farmers, scientists, extension agents, government officials, agribusiness and possibly other community groups. Power differences between these groups can influence the level of involvement of each of these groups in the design of DSSs.
- *Interpretative flexibility* highlights the way in which DSSs can mean different things to the various relevant social groups.¹ This reinforces the value of participatory action research, since by working more closely together, scientists and end users can learn from each other.
- *Technological frames* clarifies the different meanings that social groups attribute to

DSSs by providing an analytical structure for identifying the different assumptions, beliefs and expectations that social groups hold about a DSS.²

Boundary objects

- The concept of a *boundary object* is valuable for understanding the *cycles of negotiation and co-learning* that are important in the development of a DSS. A boundary object provides a common point of reference for conversations and a means of translating abstract and complex ideas.³ A successful boundary object is able to mean different things to different people and still maintain a common identity.
- A DSS can act as a boundary object because it allows for negotiation, cooperation and co-learning between multiple social groups.

- Through repeated cycles of negotiation and co-learning, the different social groups may develop a shared understanding of the problem, which leads to the establishment of *congruent technological frames*.

Complexity of the problem

- The *complexity of the problem* that the technology addresses is a key feature that influences the way in which a DSS is developed and used.
- DSSs that address *complex problems* need to go through a longer phase of acting as a boundary object. Through these further cycles of negotiation, a better understanding of the problem can develop, which may allow for *simplification of the problem* within the management and biophysical context of the social groups.
- If simplification of the problem is not possible, then the *ongoing use of the boundary object* is required, whereby the DSS continues to influence management through its role as a boundary object. This raises the issue of who undertakes the ongoing operation of the DSS.
- DSSs that address *relatively simple problems* are more likely to act as *standardised packages*, which provide a more clearly defined set of guidelines for practice.⁴
- This allows for *closure and stabilisation*⁵ of the problem, which facilitates the development of a *management recommendation* with ongoing relevance. The implication of this is that for simple problems, a DSS may become redundant once it has fulfilled its function as a tool for co-learning and the development of a shared understanding of the problem. This should be interpreted as a positive outcome for the application of the DSS.

Conclusion

Concepts from the sociology of science and technology can add to our understanding of how social factors influence the design and use of DSSs, including the way in which different people will perceive and interact with DSSs. The framework outlined in this story encourages critical reflection on the way in which DSSs might be more effectively developed in partnership with relevant stakeholders. When applied to

agricultural DSSs, these concepts highlight the potential for DSSs to facilitate negotiation and cooperation between the multiple groups of people involved in farm management, making the process and product of DSSs more relevant to key stakeholders and therefore more likely to be adopted. We are applying this framework to case studies of DSSs for seasonal climate forecasting, irrigation scheduling and nitrogen management to empirically test how much this framework could contribute to our understanding of the challenges and opportunities for developing agricultural DSSs and facilitating the wider adoption of these new technologies.

References

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- ² Bijker, W. (1987) 'The social construction of Bakelite: Towards a theory of invention', in Bijker, W., Hughes, T. and Pinch, T., (eds) *The Social Construction of Technological Systems*, Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press;
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- ⁴ Fujimura, J. (1992) 'Crafting Science: Standardized Packages, Boundary Objects, and "Translations"', in Pickering, A. (ed.) *Science as Practice and Culture*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- ⁵ Pinch and Bijker, *op. cit.*

Acknowledgements

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DSSs that address relatively *simple problems* are more likely to act as *standardised packages*, which provide a more clearly defined set of guidelines for practice

Agricultural departments in flux in Australia

Agricultural and kindred departments are evolving in each state and territory of Australia – as well as in New Zealand – as governments struggle to keep pace with a diversifying primary production base and a growing emphasis on export-related agriculture.

In this special ExtensionNet report, we'll try to bring you up-to-date with some of the major changes that have been happening around Australia. It might help when you're next talking to interstate colleagues who announce they're from an organisation about which you've never heard before ...

In many ways, the challenges faced by the state government agricultural departments are similar to those faced by the country's primary producers, who have had to diversify, expand or completely change their operations (and sometimes all three) as a way of staying competitive in a fast-changing environment.

The changes have necessarily seen repercussions flow through to the extension sector. In some states, extension has been more significantly affected than in other states.

Not only that, the pace of change has left even extension veterans operating at the national level somewhat bamboozled. In some states, the changes in extension policy appear to have been made, un-made and re-made in the time it takes some extension officers to start and finish an extension project.

The general theme appears to reveal a desire to amalgamate departments that share interests in land, water and natural resources. Thus, some primary industries organisations around Australia have evolved to become "super-departments" incorporating extractive industries like mining and petroleum.

Some states have also sponsored positions that could generally be described as "Chief Extension Officers" whose role involves plotting the extension futures for their respective departments.

In **Queensland**, the Department of Primary Industries changed its name to the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) after the last state election.

Extension services have moved to an "investor-delivery" model with Industry & Investment and R&D strategy being the main investors and extension has been charged with delivering outcomes on their behalf. Current extension activities linked to projects is continuing. It's early days yet and extension staff may soon be partaking in short courses to help them understand the new opportunities. Chief Extension Officer is Dr Gus Hamilton. Queensland DPI&F is at www.dpi.qld.gov.au. Queensland also has a Department of State Development and Innovation, a Department of Natural Resources and Mines, and an Environmental Protection Agency.

In **New South Wales**, a recent amalgamation of departments saw minerals, fisheries, forests and agriculture come together under the banner of the NSW Department of Primary Industries which can be found at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au. The former NSW Agrisc specialised Extension Support Unit in the Regional Relations & Education Branch will be set up to look after extension training, property management planning, and monitoring and evaluation. There are still between 350 and 400 front line extension and education staff in NSW.

In **Victoria**, an amalgamation that foreshadowed what was going to happen in NSW brought together agriculture, fishing and aquaculture, minerals and petroleum, science and R&D, and trade and investment. On the website at www.dpi.vic.gov.au, the Agriculture and Food page has a link to "Research and Education".



Qld: investor-delivery model



NSW: extension support unit to be set up



VIC: post amalgamation planning



TAS: stable over last few years

In **Tasmania**, the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment incorporates numerous divisions including quarantine, fishing and aquaculture, food and agriculture, environment, water, and land information (maps, titles etc).

Feedback from Tasmania indicates that extension services are thinly spread over the island, but that - unlike the other eastern states - there has been no significant organisational restructuring in recent years. Because of the scale of enterprises in Tasmania, state-sponsored extension often happens in partnerships with other organisations such as RDCs. One officer added there was a "lift in energy" in Tasmanian extension after the APEN forum in late 2003.

In **South Australia**, the Departments of Primary Industries and Resources (PIRSA) and Water Land and Biodiversity Conservation (DWLBC) provide the bulk of rural extension services. PIRSA – www.pir.sa.gov.au – has policy responsibilities for aquaculture, biosecurity, energy, field crops, fisheries, horticulture, livestock, minerals and petroleum and owns two corporatised entities: SARDI, which is the research arm, and Rural Solutions, that is charged with handling the 'delivery' (extension) work.

Rural Solutions operates on a fully commercial basis and - though a preferred provider for the government - competes in the private sector for extension type activities that is now increasingly delivered through the consultant and agri-business sector.

The word 'extension', is now seldom used or heard, although much activity is carried out that appears to look very much like extension!

Extension in the production sector is now largely paid for privately or subsidised by industry funded programs and delivered by Rural Solutions, consultants or agri-business. Where market failures and public good are more clearly defined, FarmBis subsidies have been instrumental in delivering better planned, more accountable and learning outcome focused extension.

By far and away, the bulk of government-funded extension occurs in the NRM sector, where very few have ever heard of extension, but where there are significant employment and professional development opportunities.

In **Western Australia**, the Department of Agriculture incorporates agribusiness and markets, animals, crops, biotechnology, farm management, horticulture, pastures, pests, sustainability, and finally land, water and environment. Find it at www.agric.wa.gov.au.

Feedback from Western Australia suggests that state is in transition with private agencies increasingly delivering services formerly supplied by government. The WA DoA, however, is still keen to engage with primary producers and provide access to government information at a physical level (technology transfer) and at an intellectual level (capacity building). There is no Chief Extension Officer in the west but there is an Extension Development Group that meets and tries to inform policy development.

In the **Northern Territory**, primary industries comes under the banner of the Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development (DBIRD). Find it at www.dbird.nt.gov.au.

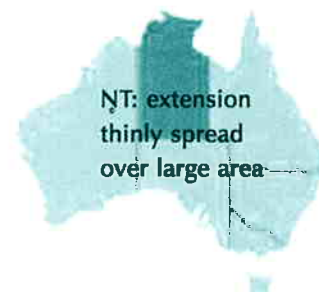
Top end extension officers haven't felt the winds of organisational change as keenly as some of their southern counterparts, but longstanding challenges remain: isolation, distance and a wide range of agricultural enterprises requiring advice and service. Feedback from the Northern Territory suggests that extension officers have had to accommodate the needs of mature industries (eg mango) that are embarking on serious export programs as well as start-up niche focused crops. This work is carried out over the vastness of the Territory and it's difficult for extension officer to get together regularly (or even occasionally) to discuss their profession.

Dr Gus Hamilton, from Qld DPI&F, says most departments and extension agencies are undergoing "some restructuring and realignment at the moment" in Australia.

"On one level it's an opportunity but on another it's hard work because there are frustrations with the limitations on what can't be done anymore," Gus says.

"Everyone's trying to find their own place in the sun and finding new mechanisms to navigate through different models and approaches," he says.

"But there's been some across-the-board recognition, I think, of the role that extension plays and in some departments it's got a higher profile than it did before."



John James



Our last AGM was held at Meadowbanks Estate in Tasmania, during the successful 2003 Forum "Extending extension: beyond traditional boundaries, methods and ways of thinking". APEN celebrated its 10th birthday at that event and we thought it timely to discuss the possibility of restructuring APEN to help make it even more effective. We were given a mandate to progress this and much has happened since then, so let me outline some of the highlights.

In my mind the main achievements for this year were:

1 The APEN Management Committee (MC) continued its efforts in better communicating and engaging with its members by sending out regular eBulletins, using an informal communication style to highlight items of importance to members. This and the online surveys helped us better engage with members about the proposed changes.

3 We have received a significant influx of new members this year. A total of 112 people from varied backgrounds have joined our ranks. The trick now is to continue meeting their needs so they become long-term members. As a professional association we aim to provide opportunities for networking, professional development and representation.

There have been good levels of activity occurring in some of our Chapters and I congratulate those who have done the organising and kept things moving.

- 1 An APEN display at the ANZRSAI conference and sponsored delegate – September 2003
- 2 Part sponsorship of visit by Dr Dindo Campilan (Philippines) and workshops at Northam, Buntine, South Perth and Manjimup – March 2004 .
- 3 AGM and presentation from Sergeant Geoff Dixon (WA Police) on Change management in the WA police force – May 2004.
- 4 Networking workshop – Professional development for members, Andrew Huffer – July 2004.

- 1 Community engagement in the developing world – learning from the Crawford Fund's experience in community and agricultural development, Ted Hayes – August 2003.
- 2 Environmental education extension and evaluation in the land of the thunder dragon – an experience of living and working in Bhutan, Penny Richards and John Weiss – November 2003.
- 3 Conditions influencing on-farm implementation of education and training learning outcomes, Kevin Balm – March 2004.
- 4 Engaging small and culturally linguistically diverse landholders – learning new approaches from the USA experience, Richard Molinar, University of California Cooperative Extension Service – April 2004.
- 5 Effective community engagement – ideas for the new millennium, Robert Chaffe – August 2004.

Your APEN - your network

The **Tasmanian Chapter** organised the 2003 Forum in Hobart and three other activities:

- 1 Partnerships in extension between private and public industry workshop and AGM – March 2004.
- 2 Stonefruit industry first to sign partnership with State Government, Anna Steinhäuser – August 2004.
- 3 Managing change in the fishing industry, Sandra Gillanders – August 2004.
- 4 The trials and benefits of running Woolnorth and other Tasman Agriculture properties, Colin Armer and Colin Glass – November 2004.

The **SE Qld/ N NSW Chapter** ran the following events:

- 1 Extending extension – insights from the Tassie national forum, Caloundra – February 2004
- 2 A forum on evaluation, Brisbane – August 2004.

The **NZ Chapter with AgResearch** will be run a Learning and Human Capability Conference on November 23 and 24, 2004 in Hamilton, NZ.

All these activities have had both member and non-member presenters and participants. They have provided valuable networking and professional development opportunities. Our intention is that all members will have more opportunity to be involved in such activities with clusters meeting within regions and interest group clusters meeting over the internet in email discussion groups.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Greg Cock and I have invested a lot of time and effort into the restructuring of APEN by revising the constitution, which I hope will lead our organisation into an even more effective and viable future. We will talk more about this later on.

ExtensionNet continues to go from strength to strength with Darren Schmidt at the helm. He has done a great job sourcing relevant articles and increasing the people focus of the newsletter.

The joint AAAC/APEN accreditation project stage 1 report was reviewed by RIRDC and a decision made not to progress with the project as it was thought that the end users (farmers and landholders) did not demand accreditation of practitioners in agriculture, NRM and related sectors.

The Management Committee has met by teleconference every second month to progress a range of issues, all under the umbrella of the business plan. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank each of the members... Greg Cock (vice-president), Jane Weatherley (secretary), David Bicknell (treasurer), Darren Schmidt (editor), Greg Leach, Neels Botha, Liz Kellaway, Cynthia Mahoney, Jess Jennings and Greg Owens. I would also like to specially thank our Secretariat, Rosemary Currie, who enables most of the management committee work to actually happen.

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*Has your job changed?
Moving or shaking?
Tell us about it!*



From the editor

Since the last edition, I've changed jobs. Fortunately, I'm still in the extension sphere and I've been encouraged to continue my editorship of ExtensionNet which is wonderful. Even though I had reservations about leaving my old job (unfinished business, ideas yet to be put into action etc) I'm glad I took the plunge. The challenges are new, the people are new and the in-tray has filled again to its familiar groaning capacity.

As professionals focused on - amongst many other things - change management, extension officers can often be conservative with their own career progression and just as frightened of change as anybody else. Take it from me: change is scary!

A new year is as good a time as any to have a close look at your experiences, skill sets and qualifications and determine for yourself if you've changes to make.

Darren Schmidt

Treasurer's Report 2003/04

David Bicknell

former APEN Treasurer



"The APEN financial position remains sound with total assets of \$52,558".

Dave Bicknell was APEN Treasurer for a short term. The Treasury has now been handed to Jess Jennings who was already on the MC. Thanks for your input, Dave.

This report is based upon an audit of APEN's finances conducted by Peter G. Chandler, Chartered Accountant of Yackandandah.

The APEN financial position at June 30, 2004 remains sound with total assets of \$52,558.

APEN had a surplus this financial year of \$6,207 largely as a result of the successful 2003 APEN Forum in Hobart.

Some salient points include:

- Surpluses are accumulated in years of a successful conference or forum, and are tied to surpluses, sales of reference resources and increased membership associated with the events. Historically, APEN is dependent on conferences generating a surplus of around \$20,000 and forums \$10,000. The surplus is from sponsorship deals and registration income. While this helps maintain low membership fees, it does place a burden on event organisers. It also means we are financially vulnerable if an event does not reach these financial targets.
- Sponsorship of ExtensionNet through the Horticulture Australia Limited funding and

assistance from RIRDC and the CVCB has enabled more funds from membership subscriptions to go towards the development of APEN through strategic planning. Unfortunately the HAL funding has now come to an end.

- Chapter assets have shown a reduction because of bank fees in the inactive accounts. Some chapters have also been sponsoring members and speakers to events. While this is a desirable thing to do, it is hoped that APEN events can at least break even with a surplus of 10% being a target and member and non-member fees being charged. This helps build our financial base.

A healthy surplus is essential for APEN to be able underwrite future conferences and forums as well as cluster activities. Therefore steps are being taken to increase general (non-conference or forum) income by at least 20% to ensure the efficient and effective running of APEN. The proposed amalgamation of funds from the Chapter accounts will not only reduce money lost in bank fees, but will help us better manage our funds through investment opportunities.

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More on APEN's Qld evaluation forum

The friendly bunch that attended APEN's evaluation forum in Queensland came from a range of organisations: Qld's DPI&F, the Evaluation Society, CSIRO and NSW DPI. They heard from a range of speakers including:

Jeff Coutts (Coutts J&R Ltd) - evaluation in practice around Australia

Ingrid Christiansen (Australian Cotton CRC) - using multiple evaluation methods to measure impacts

Lisa McDonald (CSR Sugar) - using Harvard's 'balanced scorecard' to evaluate progress

Larissa Bilston (R&D Extension Service) - Bennett's hierarchy and pest management.

Your APEN - your network

"Clusters" are GO!

APEN has undergone one of the most significant transformations it has seen in its 10 year history - an overhaul of the organisational structure which saw chapters - which were more or less state-based - make way for "clusters" which will be based on communities of practice. Here, ExtensionNet answers some of the commonly asked questions.

What are communities of practice?

This term loosely refers to a group of people who share work interests, professional goals or other attributes. To meet those goals more effectively and more efficiently, communities of practice often emerge to share ideas, stories and inspiration. They are usually self-starting and self-maintaining because they run on members' enthusiasm for the the topic or issue at hand. They might typically have 10 or so members and they emerge and dissolve as needs or interests determine.

What does this mean for APEN members?

Probably the best news is that people formerly on chapter executives will now be relieved of the onerous tasks of organising AGMs, conducting audits and all of the attendant legal checkboxes. Instead, that time can now be devoted to doing what APEN does best: networking with peers and extending professional horizons.

It also makes it much easier for groups of APEN members to simply get together and organise something of interest to them. The common interest may well be agro-geographic, but it could also be technological, sociological, or just plain social. A cluster meeting needn't even be constrained to a time and place - it may be held online over several days. The key to clusters is flexibility and the only limits are our imaginations.

What else has changed?

Not much: if you're already part of a vibrant chapter, now you're part of a vibrant cluster. Financial responsibilities will have been absorbed into the greater APEN organisation (many chapter accounts were going backwards because of bank fees) and you'll be free to network and workshop to your hearts' content. If you were part of a chapter that didn't seem to be doing much, possibly for a number of years, then expect that the activity levels might start to rise. You might even want to run an event yourself. Under the cluster model, it couldn't be easier.

Hasn't this discussion been going on for an awfully long time?

It certainly seems that way! Most of the time has actually been spent tweaking the APEN Constitution which, as a legal document, demands more than a few late nights in front of a word processor. It's not something the MC considered lightly and because of the huge amount of fiddly work required for constitutional change, it needed to be done right first time.

Can I start my own cluster?

Sure can. If you think there's a group of people in your area or field of study that might benefit from getting together, then APEN's right behind you. Go for it.

What if I need help getting my cluster together?

You'll get support and encouragement from the Regional Co-ordinators, who will still be state-based. The Regional Co-ordinators will make up most of the MC (see how streamlined this is?). Obviously, cluster co-ordinators will be doing the lion's share of the work in organising, advertising, running and evaluating events and meetings, but that's what networking is all about.

Do I really need to know the difference between chapters and clusters?

No. Just get out there and start networking!

Intending to hold a big APEN event? You'll need to plan a budget and approach your Regional Co-ordinator who can then source the necessary seeding funds. Regional Co-ordinator contacts are on the back page.



Some things just seem to work better as clusters

ENET

MC keen to move after “cluster” model approved by members

MC REPORT

A major hurdle has been cleared with APEN membership voting unanimously to pass the resolution to change APEN's constitution to accommodate the new cluster model.

The constitutional change has consumed much MC time and energy (see *story, previous page*) and John James and Greg Cock in particular will be keen to move on to other projects.

Members were consulted in a step-by-step process which included discussion at last year's APEN AGM in Tasmania, several e-bulletins and online surveys. The process culminated in a vote that was put to the AGM on the 18th November. The vote was carried unanimously and chapters are now, officially, history.

APEN experiment: AGM via teleconference

All APEN members were eligible to participate in the AGM which ultimately attracted 18 attendees out of 24 that indicated they would join in. Some may be curious to hear how the AGM progressed. In short, it was quite a different experience to a conventional meeting. The technology worked well, although some crackly phone lines generated some noise. Discussion doesn't flow as naturally as it would during a conventional meeting and it certainly helped that attendees were well briefed on the topics beforehand. Voting was anonymous (how? this'll be an APEN patent) but most participants had opportunities to put forward their point of view.

Ultimately, a teleconferenced AGM had some major advantages. First amongst these were the benefits of reduced cost (no flights or taxis or motels involved) and plenty of saved time. It was good to hear some voices from Western Australia, for instance, which might otherwise have been silent at a conventional meeting convened on the east coast. The technology is relatively straightforward, it's easy to keep to time, and it doesn't matter if you're wearing shorts and a singlet!

It's important for a low-budget, international organisation like APEN to explore options for reducing the cost of meetings. Teleconferencing technology is no substitute for face-to-face negotiations, but it's hard to beat for cost savings.

MC position changes

Positions on the MC cycle through regularly. We're saying goodbye and thanks to Dave Bicknell (treasury portfolio), Liz Kellaway (marketing portfolio) and Greg Leach (member representation). We managed to squeeze a Treasurer's Report out of Dave in his short time with the MC. Liz has done a superb job in getting APEN's marketing on track and has drafted a sponsorship prospectus which will be printed soon. Greg has been instrumental in pushing the extension policy line and will continue in this vein but from outside the MC. Thanks, Dave, Liz and Greg for your fantastic input.

And it's welcome to Jeff Coutts (Qld), Jennifer Repper (SA) and Tracey Gianatti (WA) - see sidebar for photos of these wonderful people.

Philippines host first extension conference

Joyous news from our sister organisation in the Philippines: the Philippine Extension Network (PEN) has organised the first National Agriculture Fisheries, Forestry and Natural Resources Extension Symposium. The theme was "Revitalising Philippine extension system toward national recovery".

The conference was held in early December at Laguna and was organised by Dr Virginia R. (Gigi) Cardenas, whom some APEN members will have met at APEN 2001 and other functions in Australia.

PEN has close ties with APEN to the extent that APEN President John James was invited to give an opening address to the conference. John says agriculture and extension is facing stiff challenges in the Philippines but is buoyed by the enthusiasm and dedication of the extension professionals who attended the conference.

Congratulations, PEN. Let's hope there are more get-togethers like this in the pipeline.

CONSTITUTION CHANGE NEWS

If you're feeling a little out of the loop with all of the changes that have been happening with the constitution and clusters, visit the APEN website and browse the "News and info" section. All the information is there and you can read what other members have said about the changes.



New MC members: from top
Jeff Coutts, Tracey Gianatti,
Jennifer Repper

New APEN members

A warm welcome to the members that have joined in the last quarter (see sidebar, right). There seem to be quite a few from Queensland this time! On this page, we try to introduce some new faces to help them

feel part of a human organisation and to let long-standing APEN members know their organisation is picking up new members all the time. In a people-focused organisation like APEN, there are no strangers.

Sandra Baxendell - Regional Director, Qld DPI&F

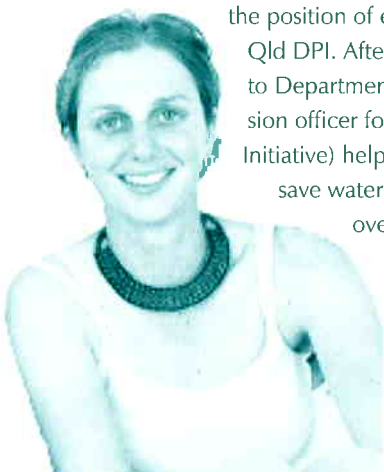
A trained veterinarian, Sandra did her research PhD straight after graduation and joined the DPI in Qld. After a long stint as a dairy cattle husbandry officer, she worked for a private farming company in WA, then worked at Curtin University, based in the wheat belt outside Perth. Later, back at the Qld DPI in Toowoomba, she was one of the very first students to graduate from the Rural Extension Centre (now CRR1-Q: ExtensionNet sponsor!) with a certificate and later with a Masters qualification. She did all this at the same time as working full time in DPI&F (Qld) in various managerial positions and all the written assignments were based on real projects (her evaluation subject involved a survey of all DPI managers and the qualitative analysis of their comments. This survey was later used by the DPI Organisation Development unit and a steering group to develop a Management Development Strategy). Sandra has also ensured that many of the extension staff that have reported to her have undertaken extension training at (CRR1-Q). Again all their projects were on key extension projects and resulted in significant improvements.



Sandra says: "I regard good management as just another form of extension and use many of the extension skills I have learnt working within the DPI&F (Qld) community. I am often asked to help facilitate across Departmental meetings and recently was involved over an 18 month period with the Balonne Indigenous Negotiation Table. Sometimes these two day meetings were very challenging to facilitate, but I enjoyed them."

Katrina Warman - NRM facilitator, NRM South, Tasmania

After completing a BSc in Natural Systems and Wildlife Management at The University of Qld, Gatton, Katrina moved out to Charleville, south-west Qld to take up the position of extension officer (grazing land management) with the Qld DPI. After two years on this project, she then transferred across to Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy as extension officer for GABSI (the Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative) helping landholders cap and pipe their bores in order to save water pressure in the GAB. After this she spent a year overseas travelling, volunteering and working in Kenya and Europe. This included 3 months volunteer work in Kenya where she got the opportunity to see what extension activities were taking place within ICRAF (International Centre for Research in Agroforestry) and with the Ugunja Community Centre. Back home, Katrina's now Local NRM Facilitator with NRM South in Tasmania.



Welcome to these new members who have joined since last edition:

Gordon Stone, Qld
Lyndell Stone, NSW
Che Murray, Qld
Kirsty Wild, Qld
Sandra Baxendell, Qld
Nancy Rowe, Qld
Katrina Warman, Tas
David Swete Kelly, NSW
Trevor MacLeod, Tas

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WHERE TO CONTACT APEN:

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

John James (President) Ph: 07 5460 1495 john.james@crriq.edu.au	Jennifer Repper , Ph 08 8535 6413 repper.jennifer@saugov.sa.gov.au
Greg Cock (Vice-President) Ph: 08 8303 9346 cock.greg@saugov.sa.gov.au	Jeff Coutts , Ph: 07 4636 0848 couttsjr@couttsjr.com.au
Jane Weatherley (Secretary) Ph: 03 6226 2651 jane.weatherley@utas.edu.au	Neels Botha , Ph: 64 7 838 5106 neels.botha@agresearch.co.nz
Jess Jennings (Treasurer) Ph: 02 9692 0474 j.jennings@uws.edu.au	Tracey Gianatti , Ph: 08 9380 3410 gianatti@agric.uwa.edu.au
Darren Schmidt (Editor) Ph: 07 5460 1494 darren.schmidt@crriq.edu.au	Cynthia Mahoney , Ph: 03 9296 4628 cynthia.mahoney@dse.vic.gov.au
	Greg Owens , Ph: 08 8999 2220, greg.owens@nt.gov.au

APEN SECRETARIAT

Rosemary Currie, PO Box 1239, WODONGA 3689, AUSTRALIA
Ph: 02 6024 5349, Fax: 02 6056 1967, info@apen.org.au

APEN Website www.apen.org.au

REGIONAL AND CLUSTER COORDINATORS

Queensland Jeff Coutts (see MC)	Northern Territory Greg Owens (see MC)
Noel Ainsworth Ph: 07 3839 2677 nainsworth@wwf.org.au	Leslee Hills, Ph: 08 8999 2348 leslee.hills@nt.gov.au
New South Wales Jess Jennings (see MC)	South Australia Jennifer Repper (see MC)
John McKenzie, Ph: 06 6366 5000 mckenzj@ix.net.au	Tasmania Jane Weatherley (see MC)
Anne Currey, Ph: 02 6628 7079 natres@naturallyresourceful.com.au	Ursula Taylor Ph: 03 6225 1828 ursula.taylor2@bigpond.com
Victoria Cynthia Mahoney (see MC)	Western Australia Tracey Gianatti (see MC)
Chris Sounness, (Ph: 03 5362 2111 chris.sounness@dpi.vic.gov.au	New Zealand Neels Botha (see MC)
Jo Vigliaturo (Melbourne cluster), Ph: 03 9296 4613 jo.vigliaturo@dpi.vic.gov.au	

Guidelines and deadlines

Submissions should be made in MS Word with minimal formatting. A portrait photograph of the author is required. All photographs, figures and/or tables ought to be provided as separate files (preferably 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.

Editing and layout: Darren Schmidt, Centre for Rural and Regional Innovation - Queensland (CRRI-Q), Gatton.

Production management: Rosemary Currie, APEN Secretariat, Wodonga, Victoria.

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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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