

Landscape change - working with small and life- style farmers

**Towards an understanding of the 'new'
agriculturalists and landscape dwellers**

Reporting by Darren Schmidt

In many regions around Australia, small-scale farmers have moved in big numbers toward establishing themselves as a tour-de-force in traditional farming districts. Labelled with a variety of names, such as 'sub-commercial', hobby farmers, and some others that are less complimentary - these farmers - often escapees from the urban rat race - are beginning to dominate discussions about rural landuse in an articulate, persuasive and - some would say - refreshing way.

DPI Victoria are having a close look at how small-scale farmers are contributing to the debate about how land and water resources should be used responsibly.



Carole Hollier, Practice Change Social Research Team Leader, is focussing on improving delivery mechanisms to the small and lifestyle farming sector.

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APEN is pleased to acknowledge the support of:



Landscape change (cont'd from p1)

New research is providing valuable insights into the location and motivations of the growing small and lifestyle farm sector.

In Victoria, small farms greatly outnumber large farms, and clusters of small properties dominate the rural and peri-urban landscape in some catchments. Small and lifestyle landowners now manage more than a quarter of the state's agricultural land.

The Catchment and Agriculture Services (CAS), Practice Change social research team at Rutherglen has been building knowledge about the small, lifestyle landholders in north-east Victoria to improve understanding of the sector to influence extension practice.

The team is investigating spatial association using GIS mapping, the views and values of the sector and current attitudes and opinions of the small farm sector to natural resource management and extension delivery. As a key stakeholder group in multi-use landscapes, small and lifestyle landowners may be viewed as a potential threat or as possible allies for improved natural resource management, industry development and biosecurity.

The research is funded by the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building and the Victorian government's Ecologically Sustainable Agriculture Initiative.

Understanding the location (place) using socio-demographic and industry trends coupled with knowledge of the characteristics of the sector, the work is providing the signposts to help develop appropriate practice change tools.

Since the project's inception, more than 170 extension providers and 450 small, lifestyle landholders have been involved in the research through in-depth interviews, surveys, workshops or discussion groups.

Why is working with small, lifestyle landholders important?

Small and lifestyle landowners are a growing client base for voluntary capacity building programs within the farming landscape. There has been an increase in subdivision of farmland creating a landscape mosaic. Small and lifestyle landholders are important because of their;

- Dominance in some areas (eg North East region)
- Place in the landscape (ecosystem services)
- Contribution to rural communities (bring skills, new ideas, new money)
- Contribution to agricultural systems (threats and opportunities in food/fibre production).

*Practice Change
Small Farms
Research Team
(left to right)
Carole Hollier
Michael Reid and
Kirsty Fenton*



This social research aims to better understand this sector of landholders that own between 2 and 100 hectares, and derive most income from non-farm sources. More than 60% of all farmers in the north east region fall into this category and farm small areas.

Most of the small properties are located in the Indigo and Wangaratta Shires. Small farms occupy 17% of all agricultural land in the north east region.

The research team is working with extension and education providers, local government and small landholders to develop an understanding of relevant and appropriate environmental education strategies to encourage sustainable land management and industry development.

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Leading the future

APEN National Forum, Melbourne June 15-16

The effectiveness of facilitating change in rural Australia can be greatly increased by improving support for the hundreds of young professionals working in industry development and natural resource management.

A report on key strategies for improving the effectiveness of young professionals working with Australia's farmers and rural communities was released on July 11th, 2005 by APEN President, John James.

The strategies were identified at a national forum in Melbourne on June 15-16. The forum initiated action plans to progress:

1. Mentoring
2. Development of national policy and advocacy for the extension profession
3. Provision of clear direction and purpose for new staff and
4. Professional development and training.

According to John James, "young extension professionals have contact with tens of thousands of the nation's farmers and rural community members."

"The national forum agreed that not enough is being done to ensure these young people are adequately trained and

supported. Without this, they are restricted in their capacity to facilitate the changes needed to ensure agriculture and our rural communities are vibrant, profitable and sustainable."

The forum brought together an enthusiastic group of young professionals and committed managers from around Australia, plus two from New Zealand. The 31 participants identified key processes and structures that can be put in place to maximise the effectiveness of young people.

The report from the forum can be downloaded from www.ruraldevelopmentservices.com

A Preliminary Report summarising findings from focus groups held prior to the national forum is also available on this website. These were held in conjunction with the series of Leadership in extension workshops around Australia.

Derek Foster, DPI&F in Qld, leads the future. For those interested in such things, Derek's facial hair, once considered for heritage listing, has been shaved off



Attendees at the National Forum in Melbourne. Space prohibits a listing of everyone in the photo, but you can again see Derek without his beard and moustache. It's an unnerving image.

Your APEN - your network



Jane Weatherley

Young extension practitioners taking control...

Report from the national forum

Jane Weatherley

Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment Tasmania

Jane attended the national forum as the youth representative from Tasmania. Representatives from each of the workshops preceding the forum were also sponsored to attend.

It's all about action, action, action for us young pups involved in extension...Wow, what a great room of people! Full of enthusiasm, commitment and real passion for what we do and wanting to make a difference. Just to get together with other people in the early throws of their career and keen to do the best job they can was fantastic. A breath of fresh air. Not one jaded, cynical doom and gloom, grumpy person in the group – we were all there to create a hugely exciting, supported and positive future for ourselves! And here's how we intend to go about it.

Mentoring and networking

Four key issues emerged that we (the participants) are all taking action on in some way. The first was the opportunity of mentoring and networking with all you extension gurus out there! There is a wealth of knowledge within our own organisations and beyond, including tricks to the trade that many of us have to spend years to find through a process of trial and many unnecessary (and embarrassing) errors.

The ideal in 3 – 5 years is that key extension organisations within each State have their own mentoring system using guidelines developed as a result of the

workshop. APEN aim to play a key role in designing a mentoring system, and developing an electronic directory of mentors. In the meantime, many participants were keen to go home and set up their own mentoring program within their workplace and have it built into their work programs.

Professional development and training

No great surprise that professional development and training came up. It is something we would all like to have, even the over 35ers! During this session it was established that many are not aware of the opportunities available to improve their skills. Getting our hands on what is out there was the key and so the intention is to source funding to develop a directory of training providers and resources that we can all use as a toolkit to plan our own professional development. The aim is to see it happen over the next two years, with APEN seen as the central hub.

Clear direction and purpose

Issue three was addressing that problem of getting a clear direction and purpose for your job when you start out.

How many of you started a new job as an extension officer, and asked your boss, "OK, so can you tell me what I am supposed to be working on?" Only to hear the response, "Come back in three months and you can tell me!"

Your APEN - your network

Young extension practitioners taking control... (cont'd from previous page)

For those lucky enough to have never experienced this, you'd be amazed at the number of people this has happened to. You have no clear direction from management and as such, have an unnecessarily steep learning curve and end up being extremely unproductive for a long period of time.

Options for dealing with this are linked in with mentoring, but also taking action yourself to make sure you are clear about your role. As an individual, be pro active and go to management with the issue to nut out a clear pathway.

APEN'S role

APEN will play a vital role in supporting this process, by developing a checklist for new extension practitioners to take to their employer.

The list will provide a framework for your discussion and help you address all the issues and map out your own plan. Also if you're an APEN member and hear of a new employee starting, another opportunity would be for you to let them know about APEN and the support processes and networks available to help them settle in.

Policy and advocacy

And finally the biggy... policy and advocacy for extension. There was a host of issues that fell into this category including the extension profession and discipline not being valued, the lack of recognition of extension in organisations' formal policy

recommendations and finally (an oldie but apparently still a goodie) the lack of integration between research, development and extension.

A group of Queenslanders committed themselves to reviewing and developing the Queensland DPI&F extension policy with a view to improve the existing model and also assist other State and Federal organisations to develop or update their own policies.

The issues addressed have been around since Adam was a pup himself, but this time around we have a group called the State Extension Leaders Network (SELN) that may make some ground in these areas. SELN emerged as a result of the APEN policy workshop held in July 2004 and consists of high flying organisational representatives from each State who are working to develop policy for extension.

Phew! So these are the key areas that young people in extension are taking action on. Its exciting, and being involved has a way of inspiring you and making you all gooey and enthusiastic about the profession we work in.

For more information, have a look at the final report from the workshop that can be found at www.ruraldevelopmentservices.com.au. Or if you are keen to be part of any of the action, give John James our President a call on 07 5460 1495 and he will steer you in the right direction.

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Ed sez

Space is short this edition so I need to jam my few words in here!



I've changed jobs (again) and I'm now working in the community relations department of mining company Rio Tinto. It's been an interesting transition, not least because this is my first professional-level experience with the private sector. Rio Tinto is heavily into 'community relations' (extension by another name), so I'm happily back in the field of extension practice and learning some new skills.

This edition is dominated by stories from the 'Leading the future' National Forum which resulted from a partnership between APEN and Rural Development Services. A great partnership and some great outcomes. Be inspired by the stories.

I'm really looking forward to the 2006 International APEN Conference in Victoria. If you haven't already done so, get busy writing your contribution!

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Enjoying a refreshment break at the Leading the Future Forum: (left to right) Polly Hall (Corangamite CMA), Peter Beal (Murrumbidgee CMA), Cara Reece (DPI Victoria) and Iva Quarisa (NSW DPI)



Your APEN - your network

APEN's National Leadership Series

The 'Leading the future' national forum was the culmination of a national leadership series for young professionals working in agriculture and natural resource management in roles such as industry development officers, field officers, Landcare coordinators, and consultants.

The forum was preceded by five leadership workshops held around Australia attended by over 90 young professionals, along with input from around 50 experienced practitioners and managers.

The series was an initiative of APEN with sponsorship by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

Project Manager for the national series, Amabel Fulton of Rural Development Services Pty Ltd in Hobart, said the team had found that the issues experienced by young people were similar around all the States.

"In many cases, these young professionals have short-term positions, are isolated, un-mentored, un-networked, poorly directed and have almost no background or professional training in change management," Amabel said.

"Yet they are well qualified, keen to learn, and talented, with great potential to influence the future of rural Australia and the Pacific," she said.

"Data gathered from the leadership workshops found that a typical young professional in rural change has a direct influence on an average of 261 land managers, and 1153 indirectly."

Amabel said that it appeared that organisations such as Departments of Primary Industries, Research and Development Corporations, and private agricultural businesses that employed young people could do more to maximise their return on investment in facilitating rural change by investing more in the people facilitating this change.'

Doing the extension thing with butchers paper and whiteboard



Your APEN - your network

Workshop evaluation

Participant evaluations of the three-day Leadership in Extension workshops gave them an average rating on overall satisfaction of 4.0 out of 5. Participants emerged inspired and enthusiastic to use the APEN network to further the links developed during the workshops and to progress solutions to shared issues facing them.

Comments about the workshops included:

- Do it - you want regret it! It may change your life!! – Tara Crommelin, Development Officer, Dept of Ag WA, Katanning
- Jump in and have a go. I regard myself as pragmatic & technical & haven't had a real affinity with the 'touchy feely' side of extension. The workshop provides the base & the reinforcements for truly effective extension and leadership – Scott Vaessen, Cotton Industry Development Officer, NSW DPI, Griffith
- Well worth it regardless of how long you have worked in an extension role - I only started 6 weeks ago! But the others around me have been doing it for years and seem just as satisfied as myself – Olivia Kemp, EMS Project Officer, DPI Vic, Rutherglen
- Anyone seriously interested in being involved in extension for the long term should attend – Julie Ferguson, Extension Officer, DPI&F, QLD, Pittsworth
- The workshop allows you to create a network far beyond your current industry/program. – Leo Quirk, Viticulturalist Extension, NSW DPI, Wagga Wagga
- Interested in being challenged, to be the best you can in both life and work? Then make the effort to attend, I felt revitalised and charged up to follow my passion in my working career. – Andrew Whitlock, Precision Agronomist, DPI Vic, Geelong



*Attendees at dinner
in Toowoomba*

Your APEN - your network

APEN partnerships – a model for delivering greater services to members

The APEN Leadership Series was a partnership between APEN and the private consultancy, Rural Development Services (RDS) of Hobart. The partnership used APEN's name and networks to organise and promote the series, while RDS delivered the content and bore the financial risk if the project didn't run to budget. It is a model that APEN could repeat with other organisations to deliver other services.

The partnership developed after a joint application to DAFF to run five focus groups and a national forum was only partially funded. Rather than deliver only what was promised to DAFF, it was decided to take an entrepreneurial approach and use DAFF's investment as seed funding to develop an ongoing service with a life well beyond the project. Instead of half day focus groups, 3-day leadership workshops were offered with participants paying registration fees.

This partnership approach created a project with far greater impact than the original plan. It allowed APEN to deliver services at a regional level; promoted APEN nationally; attracted 80 new, enthusiastic members; registration fees contributed \$3.31 for every \$1.00 provided by DAFF; and State Governments, industry organisations, and organisations such as NRM regional groups and Catchment Management Authorities, invested substantially in the project through supporting their staff to attend regional leadership workshops and the national forum.

Further workshops are planned for each State in 2006 following the success of the 2005 Series. A course could also be organised specifically for you if you have a group of 10 or more interested people from your industry/region/workplace. Contact Roe Currie on 02 6024 5349 for more information.

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Partnerships being forged on an informative bus tour in Albury



A field trip in Albury brought workshop participants up to speed on local problems and local solutions

Promoting salinity solutions through agribusiness

Carole Hollier

Victoria DPI, Rutherglen

An innovative partnership with Landmark agronomists and livestock specialists is supporting change in land use practices to lessen the impacts of dryland salinity.

Promoting salinity solutions through agribusiness aims to increase the area of lucerne and other perennials into profitable farming systems. This collaborative project partnership between the Catchment and Agriculture Services (CAS) and Landmark seeks to make the latest information on the establishment and management of lucerne readily available to farmers through the state-wide network of local agribusiness agents.

The national project is a key component of the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Plant-based Management of Dryland Salinity, Program 1, Education and Technology Transfer. Perennial plants across large areas of our agricultural landscapes are the key to fighting rising watertables and the incidence of salinity.

Agribusiness is proving to be a powerful ally to support the scale of change. Landmark (an AWB company) is the nation's largest employer of agronomists, with a nation-wide network of 230 branches and over 200 affiliate agency locations.

The success of the project and new knowledge exchange network hinges on the relationship Landmark staff have with their clients, based on their ability to offer the latest services and information.

The CRC has the research expertise, CAS partners have extension expertise and Landmark has the network for one-on-one extension. They know their clients, their business and the environment in which they are farming. In this way, agribusiness provides a vital link between the CRC and land managers.

The Victorian project team has conducted workshops in Hamilton, Echuca, Horsham and Bendigo. More than 70 Landmark officers have participated to improve skills and knowledge to influence on-farm practice change. Two lucerne demonstration sites are currently being established to help facilitate farmer feedback and participatory research.

A feature of the workshop training program has been the recognition that salinity management and adoption of lucerne can be integrated with other farm business decisions.

The workshop format has evolved from a programmed learning extension model to a group facilitation/empowerment extension model. The rationale for developing the knowledge exchange program was the belief that workshops, which could be taken across regions/states and be applicable to a diverse group, could be developed and packaged to achieve change on private farm land.

Workshops are grounded within an adult learning philosophy that recognises the knowledge already held by the participants and encourages active information sharing. Facilitating information sharing between all participants is seen as a critical element of the project. Regional DPI researchers present the latest findings on profitable, sustainable and innovative use of perennials in farming systems.

A spin-off from this approach has seen Landmark staff more readily seeking advice from DPI. This helps to ensure research stays relevant to the farm business.



The 'salt of the earth' inspects the salt of the earth to search for salinity solutions.



Agribusiness is proving to be a powerful ally to support the scale of change

APEN conference moves up a gear

MC

REPORT



The conference logo. APEN members should know that the Victorian DPI is a Platinum Sponsor of the international conference. Look for more stories about the conference in future editions of ExtensionNet.

Planning for the 2006 APEN conference at La Trobe University in Beechworth, Victoria (March 6-8, 2006), is now well underway and the Management Committee is proud that there's a great team in Victoria hard at work making it all happen. There's not much for the MC to do except cheer from the sidelines!

Important notes about the conference:

- the theme is "Practice change for sustainable communities: *Footprints, pathways, possibilities*" which is a very neat way of looking at where we've been, where we're going, and where can we go next
- contributions (workshop ideas, presentations) papers and posters have been called for and abstracts are due mid-September (about now!). Get busy writing!
- we're still happy to accept (read: desperately seeking!) sponsorship for the conference, so lean on your contacts if you think there's a possibility of securing some support
- all the information you need is on the APEN website (conference link). More material is being added all the time, so stay up-to-date by checking the website frequently.

APEN AGM looms

Following last year's successful (and inexpensive!) experiment with a teleconferenced AGM, we've decided to do it again using. This year, the AGM will be held Tuesday 15th November at 2pm EST (check time variations closer to date). All APEN members are welcome to join. Watch future e-bulletins for more info.

New APEN brochure hot off the press

Hope you liked the new APEN brochure that came with your membership renewal letter. It's the result of many months of writing, re-writing and half-starts. See cluster co-ordinators if you're after multiple copies to distribute.

Rush of new members good news for APEN

The recent big influx of members (see facing page and story above) was largely an outcome of the APEN/RDS partnership workshops, and of course it's good news for APEN because our membership base expands, our subscriptions rise and we can harvest so much more expertise for the development of the organisation.

Of course, we don't seek to increase membership for the mere sake of it, but for the reasons given above, please consider encouraging peers to join.

APEN partnership success around Australia

The MC is proud of the DAFF project success and its partnership with Rural Development Services (see stories on pages 3 to 8).

A huge benefit to APEN - though one that was not explicitly sought - has been a great influx of new members (more than 80 and rising).

We'd like to hear from others who may be able to work in partnership with APEN on professional development activities to benefit members.

APEN/CVCB roadshow set to roll

APEN has been working with the Co-operative Venture for Capacity Building to organise a roadshow around Australia to get the results of their research out to the practitioners and for extension people to have a chance to talk to these researchers and discuss implications and real situations. Presentations from Jeff Coutts and Bob Macadam, two leading Australian extension practitioners and researchers, will headline the day workshops which will also include a number of workshop sessions and interactive/networking time. The travel itinerary is to Toowoomba, Mareeba, Darwin, Adelaide, Melbourne and Wagga between November 9 and 23, 2005. Watch APEN website for more information.

New APEN members

A warm welcome to the members that have joined recently. On this page, we try to introduce some new faces to help them feel part of APEN to let long-stand-

ing members know their organisation is attracting new members all the time. New members continue to bring fresh ideas and energy to APEN, so welcome to all!

Caroline Sandral - Extension officer, grazing lands, Qld DPI&F



Caroline has been working in the area of extension for the last seven years. Her first role was as a Landcare Facilitator in Charleville in South West Queensland before she moved south to Bourke in Western NSW. In that capacity she worked with graziers in finding solutions to better manage their grazing land. That covered a whole range of issues from riparian management, weeds, native pastures and managing tree/grass balance.

Caroline moved up to Central Queensland 12 months ago and now resides in Emerald. Her role is an extension officer with a focus on grazing lands. She has helped customise a Grazing Land Management (GLM) education package for the Fitzroy Basin and she's now involved in delivering the workshops in conjunction with other extension officers. Her team's target audience is cattle producers with an objective of improving productivity and sustainability of grazing lands in the Fitzroy Basin.

Caroline joined APEN through the 'Leadership in Extension' workshop in Toowoomba. To date she has "found it a really useful organisation to be part of as it does provide a network and an opportunity to discuss problems and to find solutions." She continues: "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."

Elaine Anderson - PhD student, University of British Columbia, Canada

Elaine's a PhD student at the University of British Columbia (UBC). She has a Master of Science degree in Environmental and Natural Resource Planning as well as a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and a Bachelor of Arts in English (all from UBC). She's currently working on contract as an Environmental Planner at the Greater Vancouver Regional District helping to develop a Biodiversity Conservation strategy for the region. Prior to that, Elaine worked as an Environmental Planner for the Township of Langley (a community of about 90,000 on the outskirts of Vancouver). She recently started a sustainable agriculture network in Langley (www.lsan.ca) with the Langley Environmental Partners Society where she also works on contract as a Wildlife Program Coordinator. She says: "I am most interested in environmental sustainability along the rural/urban interface. I joined APEN because I am also interested in extension and I liked the sounds of what APEN was doing (or trying to do). Please drop me a line at eanderso@interchange.ubc.ca if you are interested in learning more about what I do and where I live or telling me about what you do and where you live!"



Darold E. Klindworth - research and extension scientist, DPI Victoria

Darold is currently working as a research and extension scientist with the Department of Primary Industries in Victoria in the area of milk harvesting. His main activities for the last couple of years have involved developing and delivering a field day nationally to dairy farmers relating to making milking easier and more productive.

Before DPI, Darold worked in secondary education with an interest in cooperative learning and thinking styles. He was attracted to Ned Herrman's Whole Brain Model, and he completed a Master in Professional Education and Training in 2000.

Darold says: "I have finally joined APEN to try to link into a network where I may continue to develop my interest in how people think and learn."



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

Elaine Anderson, Canada

Fiona Best, WA

Tom Croft, VIC

Kellie Winfield, WA

Tania Paul, NT

Tim West, NT

Annie Perkins, New Zealand

Selvie Kannan, Vic

Kym Johnson, Qld

Diana Carr, Vic

Darold Klindworth, Vic

Zubair Shahzad, Vic

Dr Digby Race, NSW

Annie Black, NT

Emma Bradshaw, Qld

Gerrit Rootman, Sth Africa

PLUS about 83 new members who've joined after attending the leadership series of workshops! Phew!

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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 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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