



EXTENSIONNET

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EXTENSION NETWORK (INC)

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EDITOR'S NOTES

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

APEN is proud to be sponsored by:

- the Dairy Research and Development Corporation;
- the Department of Primary Industries, Queensland;
- Agriculture Victoria.

APEN'S PROGRESS

APEN currently has 244 paid Members (a minimum of 300 is needed) and four Corporate Members (a minimum of 14 is needed). We will then be just about viable at the very minimum level, but not yet a strong organisation. A concerted effort is needed early in the next financial year to reach 500 Members, 14 Corporate Members and six Sponsors by October 1995. Details of what Members, Corporate Members and Sponsors will get are given in Volume 2, number 3, page 2.

Eight Chapters have been, or are being, formed; Tasmania, Melbourne, SE NSW/NE Vic, Sydney/Hunter River Basin, Murray Riverina, SE Queensland, South Australia and Northern Territory. Eight more potential Chapters need your support if you live in those areas; Central Queensland, Darling Downs, Northern NSW, Central NSW, ACT, North/Central Victoria, WA and New Zealand. A group at Hawkesbury is looking into supporting the forming of chapters in Pacific Countries. Details will follow in the next issue which is being prepared by the Sydney/Hunter River Basin Chapter.

APEN has advertised in The Australian of 27 May 1995 for expressions of interest to provide 'Administrative Services and Production of ExtensionNet'.

Expressions of interest closed on 16 June, details are available from Ian Simpson, ph (063) 91 3748, fax (063) 91 3208.

APOLOGIES

I offer my sincere apologies to Alistair Primrose, Tasmanian Agricultural Teachers' Association and Head of Agriculture, Sheffield District High School. Alistair wrote the article 'The Untapped Extension Network in Rural Tasmania' in the last ExtensionNet. His photo was printed next to it, but through some unimaginable mishap his name and other details were left out. Sorry Alistair, we'll do better next time.

Peter Van Beek, Interim Editor.

CHAIRMAN'S THOUGHTS

By Terry Makin

It is encouraging to see the progress of APEN as shown in the next article. Regional Chapters are forming around the country, albeit



slower than those of us wearing our rose-coloured glasses envisaged at the outset. It is in the local Chapters where the real strength and effectiveness of APEN will be developed. It is here that we will achieve the membership strength that is necessary for our future viability.

The Chapters will be the basis for our permanent management structure. They will nominate candidates for the permanent APEN management group. These candidates are then voted into office by the Chapter convenors, expressing the majority opinions in their Chapters. The current interim 'gang of four' can then step down and make way for properly endorsed 'new blood'.

The stimulating, energetic discussions that took place at the ComEx Forum in Melbourne were further signs of the change and dynamism that is taking place in the extension world. The perceived need for further education and learning by practitioners, the emphasis on the project cycle and evaluation, and the role of the extension network to help share our knowledge and information with each other were again emphasised.

I was pleased to read some of the material that is being published in the newsletter that shows the breadth of the extension profession; from the sustainability of the Great Barrier Reef

to Best Farm Practice, to creating change in ethnic communities, to improving the effectiveness of our quarantine barriers. It is precisely this breadth that APEN needs to encourage and utilise for our mutual benefit.

We have had some discussion about what networking means and I think that this is healthy in a new organisation. We, just as our clients do, need to look at how we do things and change to effect improvements in our practice. Let us have more discussion about what APEN and extension need to do.

I would also refer members to Amabel's article in the last issue on making your meeting a learning experience. This is what extension is about. It is not about technology transfer or the injection of new information. It is the learning process that we need to understand and experience. And where better to try new ways than in the safe environment of our peers? When we better understand this process we will be better extension practitioners.

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CHAPTER ROUND-UP

SE QUEENSLAND CHAPTER ON THE GO

By Larissa Wilson,
Convenor SE Queensland Chapter

News from the SE Queensland Chapter is that the plans for the Action Learning Workshop at Nambour are well under way. The workshop will be on 28 June 1995 at the Maroochy Horticulture Research Station, Nambour, with coffee at 8.30am for a 9am start and a 4.30pm finish. It will be a day of stimulating discussions for all participants. Three 'Action Learning' case studies will form the basis for discussion, one each from Waterwatch (building project review and evaluation into project structure), Dairy and Horticulture. The day could change the way you think about extension forever.

The charge for the day is: \$25.00 for members, \$35.00 for non-members, and a very special \$60.00 membership plus workshop attendance for new members.

Contact: Michelle Riedlinger,
CRC Tropical Plant Pathology,
ohn Hines Building,
University of Queensland,
Ph (07) 365 4776, Fax (07) 365 4771.

Please put the date for our next activity in your diary as well: Friday, 29 September 1995, details to be announced later.

APEN SOUTHERN VICTORIAN CHAPTER FORMED

by Horrie Poussard,
YarraCare, Melbourne

A meeting was held in Melbourne on April 6 to discuss the formation of a Southern Victorian Chapter, taking in an area of about 100 kms around Melbourne. In this area, there are a number of major extension centres such as Ballarat, Colac, Alexandra, Geelong, Frankston and Melbourne. The area is very diverse and contains a huge number of community groups as well as agency staff - all of these play an important role in disseminating valuable information to the community on land and water management.

The meeting was attended by 18 interested people from government agencies and the Victorian Farmers' Federation, along with Terry Makin, the Chairman of the Interim APEN Committee. The meeting resolved to set up an interim committee of all present, with David Beckingsale as Convenor and Cam Nicholson as Treasurer.

The meeting identified a number of areas where APEN could assist in improving members' extension performance. These

will be further explored to develop a future program. There was also concern with the lack of clear definition of what the term 'extension' means and what are the professional boundaries for APEN.

TASMANIAN CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP

How to plan, implement and evaluate media campaigns? What the media is looking for? How the media works? Getting your article in the media. These and other topics will be the focus for a conference and workshop in Tasmania, titled 'Working with the Media'. It will be held on Thursday, 13 July 1995, from 9am to 4.30pm at the Sir Raymond Ferrall Centre, University of Tasmania, Launceston. The Tasmanian APEN Chapter will be officially launched at the conference.

Keynote speaker, Neville Sice of Media Works, Launceston, will talk about 'Planning, implementing and evaluating a media campaign'. Ian Bradshaw of Tasmanian Breweries, and Martin Buggy of Finlay Media Services will present case studies. During the afternoon Trevor Sutton, News Editor with WIN TV, Sharon Webb, Chief of Staff of the Examiner, and Deb Goundry from ABC Radio will overview the workings and needs of the different forms of media. This will be followed by skill development workshops.

The list of sponsors includes: ABC Radio, The Examiner, The Advocate, Southern Cross Television, The Mercury, DRDC, GRDC, HRDC, CIBA, AgrEvo, Abbott Laboratories, C and M, Serve-Ag, Top Qual, Cyanamid, Pivot, Birds Eye, McCain, DowElanco, Edgell, and DPIF.

Cost: \$40 for members, \$80 for new members, and \$90 for non-members. Cheques payable to APEN Tasmania Chapter. Contact: Jane Fisher, phone (004) 217 649 for a brochure or more information.

[The interim committee has a data base of over 300 names of people involved in extension, and thus potential APEN members. They also arranged sponsored advertising. Tasmania is leading the way! Editor]

**OPEN A NEW CHAPTER
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MANAGEMENT OF TREES ON CENTRAL QUEENSLAND BEEF PROPERTIES

By Jane Gray, Postgraduate Student
and

Geoffrey Lawrence

Director, Rural Social and Economic Research Centre,
Central Queensland University

During 1993 and 1994, the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation funded a social research study involving producers from a beef growing region south of Rockhampton. The overall purpose of the study was to ascertain how beef producers made decisions in relation to tree retention and clearing. It was known, for example, that much of the land had already been cleared and that regrowth was seen by producers as a major problem in the area. Very little was understood, though, about the motivation among producers for certain forms of tree (and other vegetation) management. The specific objectives of the study were to: establish the best tree management practices; establish what deterrents existed to better tree management; and to identify gaps in producer knowledge.

The methodology adopted was that of action research. Two groups comprising eight producers were formed in the Bajool area and, over a period of some twelve months, were taken through a participatory problem solving cycle. Men and women, and older and younger members helped to 'balance' group discussions. The learning cycle was based upon the Local Best Practice (formerly Local Consensus Data) approach pioneered by, among others, Richard Clark of the Queensland Department of Primary Industries (QDPI).

The research study found that while producers valued trees for shade, erosion control, provision of nutrients and for their aesthetic appeal, there was a general belief that trees competed directly with the growth of grass and so limited beef



Geoffrey Lawrence

production. It was concluded that new means of demonstrating the value of maintaining tree corridors on regional properties will be required if producers are to be convinced of the desirability of altering the existing 'treescape' on their properties.

Farmers have what might be termed an historically-derived preference for a 'scattered' tree landscape. Producers like the park-like look of tall, single, trees in their paddocks and justify this on the grounds of aesthetics as well as their provision of shade for cattle. Yet, what is being suggested by those who have studied the best pasture/tree management strategies, is the development of tree 'corridors'. Single trees - and even small stands of trees - are seen to be vulnerable to insect and fungus attack, to limit the extent of bird and other native life, and to be of dubious value in providing benefits to farm animals. At this time, while farmers agree that trees add value to their properties, they tend not to follow the clearing guidelines which have been developed by the QDPI. There was no evidence of regular and supportive contact between those agencies which have developed new vegetation management guidelines and the producers in this study.

The method employed in the study was deemed to have been successful on at least two counts; first, it allowed producers to share local knowledge in a non-threatening manner (although, whether this resulted in behavioural change was not determined in this short-term study); and it identified - and provided a unique environment for the discussion of - local problems which were common to producers. Thus, it helped to raise the consciousness of producers about tree management - even if, at this stage, it cannot be determined whether this has led, or will lead, to changes in farming practice.

While recognising the limitations of the study, it was nevertheless possible to draw the following (tentative) conclusions:

- There needs to be a more integrated approach to tree management on Central Queensland beef properties. Collaboration between producers, government agencies and grower organisations will be crucial to any success in altering tree management.
- There is a pressing need to increase farmer awareness about tree management. Farmer organisations, as well as individual farmers, need to be better informed about optimal tree management strategies - including the reasons why some practices are desirable and others undesirable. The extension of Landcare may be one means of helping to inform farmers. Other, education-based, options should also be discussed by government agencies.
- There needs to be more open debate about tree management in general. Different stakeholders should be encouraged to join catchment management groups in the Central Queensland region as a basis for more informed decision-making in relation to tree management.

- The DPI should consider organising further Local Best Practice groups in the beef producing regions of Central Queensland - not only as a means of stimulating discussion about tree growth strategies, but also to provide opportunities for the region's producers to better understand the bases of farm decision-making and local 'best practice' in land and vegetation management.

The small scale nature of this project has limited the extent to which results can be 'generalised'. The results can be viewed as having shown the limited understanding of best tree management practice by a small number of beef producers in a particular region of Central Queensland. In this sense, while it would be unwise to suggest that all producers throughout the region are as equally ill-informed, it nevertheless points to the need for more work to be undertaken to establish the degree to which the region's producers are unaware of 'best practice' in tree (and other vegetation) management. Such research - possibly based upon different social science methodologies - would enable results to be generalised across the region.

The value of the Local Best Practice approach was demonstrated in this study. The 'thinking processes' in group discussions and decision-making allowed the researcher, as well as the growers who participated, to learn and to share information and to do so in a non-threatening environment. The groups are continuing to meet, even though the researcher has withdrawn from the district.

For further information please contact Ms Jane Gray, Postgraduate student, CQU, Rockhampton.

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DPI-CQU-LCD – Where are the Changes?

By Pat Moran, Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Central Queensland University; and Bobby Harreveld, Principal Teacher, Rockhampton TAFE

Working together to bring about change is an everyday expectation in most of our jobs. For extension officers, the change hoped for is in the producers who may or may not be receptive to the ideas offered. Yet how receptive are extension officers to change their ways of thinking and working with producers?

As tertiary educators, we experienced the joys and frustrations of working with people from 'different worlds'. The world of the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is different indeed - where else would one have regular discussions with people known as 'animals, soils, water and grasses'?

Our experiences with extension officers were many and varied over twelve months as consultants to the Sustainable Beef Production Project undertaken by the Department of Primary Industries in the Central Queensland area and funded by the Meat Research Corporation. The project involved the DPI using the Local

Consensus Data technique to discover the needs of local beef producers and respond to those needs using the principles of action learning.

During this time, we worked collaboratively with the extension officers examining their practices. Video taping presentations and using peer feedback, we worked through challenges in the instructional/presentation skills area, helping to include such things as alternate media use and inclusion of the audience in presentations. We also participated in the editing of producer generated reports, facilitation of small groups during producer workshops, educational mentoring and collation of evaluation feedback. Thus we 'lived' the action learning/research cycles as we planned, acted, checked, planned, revised, acted and so on with our colleagues from the DPI.

What did we learn? We learned the 'old' lesson, that the transfer of learning and changing practices does not occur



Pat Moran

Bobby Harreveld

readily. The DPI extension officers were trying to challenge the beef production methods of the producers. When working with these extension officers, we were challenging their present knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as modelling future practices as their jobs are redefined within the context of organisational change. We also learned how much other organisations have to offer. We were challenged to review our way of presenting new ideas. And, most importantly, how effective it is to work collaboratively to achieve a common goal.

DEVELOPMENT IN ACTION

By Pat Page, Development Officer, WA Department of Agriculture, Merredin

Reflecting on the change of role that accompanied our recent name change (from Advisers to Development Officers), the extension officers at Merredin recently harnessed community interest to run the AgTernatives Expo.

A major part of our new role as Development Officers is to assist farmers to develop new, sustainable farming systems. AgTernatives, now in its second year, is a two day Expo aimed at illustrating to farmers and townspeople, the many and varied alternatives to mainstream agriculture into which innovative farmers may diversify. On show by 60 exhibitors were many options, including alternative animals (ostriches, yabbies, snails, buffalo, alpacas, fish, etc), alternative crops (nuts,

oil mallees, wildflowers, etc) and many value-added options (wool products, crafts, fruit wines, etc).

Visitors to AgTernatives say that much of its success is due to the fact that it is farmers showing their enterprise to other farmers. It is not a collection of large agricultural suppliers aiming to sell their wares, as is traditional at a lot of agricultural shows. Failures were on show too - the guest speaker at the AgTernatives dinner was the owner of a failed sheep dairy and he talked of some of the pitfalls involved in developing new agricultural industries.

The AgTernatives concept has proven of great interest to the farming and local community, with both exhibitors and visitors coming from many hundred kilometres away. Farmers relished being

able to talk to other farmers about their successes and failures and to be able to see so many alternatives collected together.

It has been a challenging and interesting exercise for us as Development Officers too - many of us have had to curb the impulse to tell farmers what we know. Instead we have worked hard to get farmers to talk to each other. We carefully considered information networks and effective information transfer systems through which to encourage farmers to look at diversifying. From that process AgTernatives was born. Our challenge is now to facilitate the local Merredin community in taking over the entire running of AgTernatives, for what looks like its long future ahead.

Extension in the Real World

*A precis by
Matt McCarthy,
Bendigo,
of the speech
by Betty Buzza
on March 22,
1995*



Betty Buzza
Guest Speaker at the
APEN Discussion
meeting at Bendigo.

The real world is about the complex relations between people, the technology they use and their environment.

Tonight I want you to focus on the idea that people skills are a key part of extension. I am not suggesting that the humanistic approach, or people skills, should stand alone or be isolated from technology, etc. It needs to be a blend, an integrated part of extension. If you say this is already happening, I am saying that you expand and build on the skills you already have. I believe it is happening in our region, being involved in Target 10 (A Dairy Project, editor). There is evidence of how it is working as a collaborative approach, rather than the dissemination of information from a high place, they are actually listening and learning what farmers are saying. There is dialogue between farmers and scientists. So I think there are great possibilities.

Tonight I do want to focus on the humanistic approach. 'Start where the people are before you take them where you want to go'. I stand up here rather reluctantly, being someone who thinks deeply and reflects deeply on things. I remember when I was nursing, the idea was you focused on the patient or the surgical procedure. But I found that I focused on the people and I was always getting into trouble for spending too much time talking with patients, but I was not talking so much as listening. Quite often, what I found was the

anxiety, the distress, the anger, the pain, the grief was not related to what it was perceived to be related to, it was something personal, it was about the person. That is what I found throughout my life, if you take the time to step back and reflect, you see it, you hear it, you feel it and you act on it. The way we work with people should be the same, not just from the head level but in a whole way.

An example is a farming family where the son is brimming with information and keen to get things done on the farm. But the father is uncertain about the future and change and the daughter-in-law, and is reluctant to hand over the reins. In this situation information is not the problem and we need to talk with these sorts of people to find out where they are at.

For each of us our experience of 'reality' is different to the next person. My background, my upbringing, my parents background, my religion, all these things have an effect on the way I think and on my perception of reality. Reality is a personal thing.

So the idea is to work in unison, none of it should be in isolation. Every time you talk about an extension project or put in a submission, put in a people dimension. You might say that we do that already, but I suspect that there is a lot of rhetoric spoken and a lot of lip service paid to this sort of thing. In actual fact we often don't do it. So we need to stretch further; collaborate with someone else if you are not comfortable with it.

We can teach farmers about the process of learning. We can give them a recipe, but let's not give them the exact recipe, let them find their own direction. Get farmers to look at their options, you as extension people should be innovative about options at all levels. Another quote from experience: 'Take time to gather the past so that you will be able to call on your experiences and invest them in the future'. Don't discard the past entirely.

We generally change ourselves for one or two reasons, as a result of inspiration or desperation. You really have the

potential to effect inspiration with the farmers you work with. You might be sitting there thinking, "If we all go out there saying: 'tell me your problems, etc', we won't get anything done". And there has been over-reaction to change, an example is the 'demand-feeding' of babies fad in the 1970s. That was an over-kill, an over-reaction to a new idea. So, I am not asking you to over-react, but just to keep the notion up there.

Before I close I want to reflect on the Dairy Issues project. The final report to DRDC was titled 'Understanding the Dairy Industry: Knowledge, Beliefs and Values'. It is not a particularly readable book (but there is an interesting translation in the back from one of the participants). I want to finish with a quote from the Dairy Newsletter about this Issues project which was worked on by a team of people from different backgrounds:

'Dairy farmers are feeling the stress from the relentless pressure to cut costs and increase farm productivity, according to a recently released report. A study team from the University of Western Sydney has put the spotlight on the major issues for dairy farmers. A series of individual interviews and group discussions canvassed the ideas and concerns of farmers, advisers and researchers. This work was a watershed for voicing concerns of farmers and farm families.

People mentioned that in the past they rarely expressed their concerns when discussing the technical side. Farmers are reluctant to admit that they are stressed or struggling, but it did come out. Personal concerns that came out were lifestyle, personal and family health, educating children, the future of the family farm and how to handle retirement. Perhaps one of the biggest benefits of the study was to bring human issues out into the open so they could be discussed, better understood, and then acted upon. Many changes that are currently happening in the dairy industry were concerning farmers.'

So I close by reminding you to leave with an open mind. Thank you.