

EXTENSIONNET

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALASIA-PACIFIC
EXTENSION NETWORK (INC)

AUSTRALIA POST APPROVED PP 34763700014

From the Chair

Terry Makin

On June 13 I will attend a meeting to form another chapter of APEN to cover Western Victoria. We need to continue to attract new members to ensure we are a viable and effective organisation. As a new organisation with scarce resources we need your contributions and creative thoughts.

APEN has been shaped by its history of people in agricultural extension, tertiary education and Landcare who provided much of the early impetus behind APEN's inception. Yet its future can be shaped to capture the early vision of a more diverse membership around the **facilitation of social change**. ExtensionNet wishes to embrace a widening constituency. This could include increasing APEN membership among farmers; rural politicians; local government politicians; primary and public healthcare workers; individual, group, community and regional forms of enterprise management; rural counselling and consultancy; community learning, support and action groups, etc.

There is a growing appreciation that community change is a process where by sharing our collective knowledge through a process of discussion around key issues, and focused questions, we can gain new insights into our current situations. These insights can give us the ability to improve these situations in new and creative ways. A broader APEN membership with a wider knowledge base, will bring new perspectives to share with each other. This will improve our ability to add value to what we do.

As the approach to community development becomes more complex, institutions change, and people often become more isolated, we need to have better ways of coming together to share our knowledge and experiences. One area that appears to have potential to improve our communication and networking is Email and the Internet. John McKinlay is convening a working group in this area and would welcome ideas.

Theme - Extension for Sustainable Rural Communities

Elwin Turnbull

Over the last decade or so there have been pressures on rural communities through the decline in the number of extension officers in the government sector and an increased community awareness in the environmental care area. New forms of government and non government structures have evolved under these conditions and there has been a parallel emergence of different extension theories to deal with this situation. This ExtensionNet is a chance to share some of the experiences of our group and to catchup on some of the guiding principles behind the initiatives. The first article by Robyn Penman uses insights from dramatic failures in communication in the PNG situation to analyse probable causes of poor communication between the scientific fraternity and farmers in Australia. The next article from Mary-Anne Young complements this assertion from some critical observation and action with farmers in the northern districts of South Australia. The clear inference is that people must be able to share a common intellectual framework if they are able to communicate effectively.

Experience from the Western Downs of Queensland shows the potential of teamwork by extension officers in building activities to help farmers which are within their framework. Property management planning and land care are not imposed constraints in this situation, rather they have become a means to an improved farming situation. It will be interesting to see if

CONTENTS

From the Chair	1	APEN International Conference 6
Theme	1	Have Your Say
Talking About Farming		ExtensionNet
Practices	2	Book Review
Attitude/Behaviour Study Changes		Book Review
Extension Approach	4	Chapter Roundup
		Tasmania
Property Management Planning-		Western Vic
Western Downs Style	4	APEN Contacts
		12

the early results of improved attitude to the DIP and better business management outcomes for farmers translate into more sustainable situations.

The final articles are book reviews provided by Horrie Poussard and Harold Mattner. The topics covered in

the books complement one another in that "Landcare; communities shaping the land and the future" tells the story of the movement to date and "The Environmental Imperative" takes a critical approach to the issue of environmental management through political and sociological concepts.

Theme - Extension for Sustainable Rural Communities

Talking About Farming Practices: The Didiman Said To Do It.

Robyn Penman

In 1977, Robert Scott wrote about agriculture and language in Papua New Guinea. According to Scott prior to large scale intervention by other nationals, Papua New Guinea farmers had developed a system of agriculture admirably suited to their ecological and social environment. Their land tenure system had developed around agricultural potential of the land, their concept of ownership, their need for defence, and certain other socio-religious influences.

Their gardening methods were influenced by practical and ecological needs. For example, crops were mixed to reduce the incidence of pest and diseases, and were not planted in rows, thus reducing erosion. In all, Scott's description of their agricultural system sounds remarkably like a sustainable one envisaged for today. But, something happened. The *didiman* - the expatriate agricultural officer - came.

Scott, who was one of the early *didiman*, explains that these agricultural officers failed to recognise the ecological balance of the indigenous agricultural activities and failed to acquire a language in which to do so. Instead, the *didiman* relied on Pidgin, and only to the minimal extent needed to give concrete instructions.



Scott believes that the consequence of this was to divorce the Papua New Guinea farmers from all involvement and decision making in agriculture. Agriculture instead, became a technical area of activity divorced from the villagers' broader practical world and rational deliberation. The *didiman* told the farmers what to do in concrete and simplistic terms, and the farmers did it - as labour, not as personal involvement. In doing this the *didiman* only used the existing Pidgin language (and not the local indigenous one) to describe new things and introduced little to the language except some simple naming: for example *bulmakan* for cow and *kopi* for coffee.

By the 1970's the advent of indigenous agricultural officers heralded some change. But, in Scott's assessment, "while the Pidgin of the past will be adequate to the task of concrete and action orientated things...it will need a massive infusion of simple and uncluttered English and adapted English terminology to meet the needs of our farmers. Without such growth and development [of an agriculturally adequate language] the farmers of this country will find they are limited in their ability to participate (p 731)".

Scott's analysis is very insightful. He directly points to the relationship between communication and agricultural practice. More specifically he shows how a language inadequate to the users' needs and one not sufficiently

undifferentiated) can inhibit agricultural practice.

The *didiman* in Australia - today!

I have written at length about Scott's article because I want to argue that a parallel situation exists in Australia today. We too have our own *didiman* - the agricultural extension officers - who, in **speaking the language of science, fail to speak a language that meets the needs of farmers.**

From our work on communication practices in the rural sector (funded by Lands and Water Resources, Grain and Rural Industry Research and Development Corporations) we have identified substantial problems arising from scientists focusing on the provision of technical information to farmers, without any consideration of what the farmers wanted to know and how they needed to know it. Scott identified this same problem when he described the *didiman* in Papua New Guinea providing concrete, technical information only, without any consideration of the broader social-ecological context or the information needs of the farmers.

The particular problems of **linguistic inadequacy and inappropriate communication practices** are exemplified with the concept of

In a recent study by Holsinger (1994), natural resource managers were asked what the term 'sustainable land use' meant to them. These managers had varied views on the term, including 'preserving resources', 'ecologically sound land use' and 'economically viable and minimal land degradation'.

Conversely, in another exploratory study into consequences of employing sustainable practices, farmers complained of the **'high input treadmill' associated with sustainability (Gray, 1994)**. It seems that to farmers in that study, the more sustainable you are, the more inputs into the land are necessary. In a different study, by Ison & Humphreys (1993), producers were asked to define 'sustainable land management'. Again, the views were varied and, in this study, the authors found they had to remove the term 'sustainability' from all discussions with producers because it created too much confusion. An earlier study by Tisdall (1990) points to one reason why there are problems with the term 'sustainable': **while many people favour 'sustainability' they want to sustain something different!**

Appropriate language - reverential adequacy & social adequacy

The appropriateness of a language can be assessed on the basis of a number of criteria. Two are particularly relevant here: reverential adequacy and social adequacy. The question here is how well does talk of sustainability measure up against these criteria?

For a language to have **reverential adequacy**, it must have sufficient lexical (word) resources to discuss a given topic in sufficient detail. Sufficient lexical resources require a language with sufficient distinctions for objects and actions, that has terms assigned to the right semantic category, and does not have non-functional synonyms. On the basis of the studies cited above, it would seem that the

concept of 'sustainability' does not meet these criteria and fails on the grounds of reverential adequacy. It is semantically vague and semantically undifferentiated, meaning many different things to many different people.

Social adequacy requires that language is acceptable to a maximum number of speakers in the target community, promote social unity and communication and cater for present as well as future social needs. The documented inability of producer and natural resource managers as specific rural groups to agree on what sustainability means suggests the concept is not one held, with the same reverential meaning, amongst speakers in the same community. Indeed, as the studies described above indicate, different farming groups can hold opposed meanings of the term. And the data from Ison & Humphreys (1993) would suggest that the concepts do more to divide and confuse the community than promote a unity; discussions proceed better without the term than with it.

I can't but wonder here as to the reason. Within rural communities, practices implicated by the concept of 'sustainability' have been used for centuries. Farmers may not have used the word 'sustainable' but many have engaged in farming practices that reflect what at least I think is the underlying philosophy of the word. Despite the 'bad press' of overgrazing and tree-felling (the latter once forced by government decree and grants), many farming families know they must keep the land in the same or better state for future generations (Holsinger, 1994). So why do they find the word 'sustainable' confusing?

People often find words and concepts confusing when they are not words or concepts that they have generated out of their own context to serve their own needs. This would strongly suggest that the concept of sustainability is confusing because it came from outside the rural community. Sustainability is a

term imposed by others, our very own *didiman*.

...we need a more appropriate and adequate way of talking; a way of talking that meets the information needs and practical contexts of our clients...

As with the experiences described in Papua New Guinea, inadequate and inappropriate talk about agricultural practices means the implementation of inadequate and limited practices. To foster truly sustainable agriculture we need a more appropriate and adequate way of talking; a way of talking that meets the information needs and practical contexts of our farmers.

References

- Gray, I. (1994). Barriers and constraints to the adoption of sustainable farming. In: *Annual Report on adoption of technologies for the sustainable management of grazing and cropping industries to LWRRDC*.
- Holsinger, C. (1994). *Draft Landcare report*. Spring Hill, Brisbane.
- Ison, R. & Humphreys, C. (1993). Evaluation of 'sustainable beef production systems in Central Queensland' project. Department of Crop Sciences, University of Sydney (unpublished).
- Scott, R. P. (1977). New Guinea Pidgin teaching: Agricultural problems and Pidgin. In Wurm, S. (ed) *Language, Culture, Society and the Modern World*. Canberra, ANU.
- Tisdall, C. (1990). The nature of sustainability and sustainable development. In: *Discussion papers in economics*. University of Queensland Press, Brisbane.

Article used with the permission of the author, **Robyn Penman**. First published in "Communication News" 8(1) January 1995.

Communication News is a publication of the Communication Research Institute of Australia
PO Box 8, Hackett ACT 2602

Attitude/Behaviour Study Changes Extension Approach

Mary-Anne Young

Farmers in the northern agricultural districts of South Australia have been tackling water erosion for over fifty years, primarily through the installation of contour banks. Contour banking has become a widely adopted practice on sloping cropping land, and has been complemented more recently by a swing to stubble retention and reduced tillage.

However, there are still some individual properties and areas that suffer water erosion and lag in the adoption of control measures. A study was conducted to gain a better understanding of the possible reasons for this lack of adoption.

Members of three neighbourhood groups were interviewed and it was

found that while all three groups expressed very positive attitudes towards soil conservation and tended to recognise soil erosion as a problem on their properties, the adoption of soil conserving practices by one group differed significantly from the other two. This particular group differed in its beliefs about the causes of water erosion and about financial constraints. Members tended to blame water erosion on the weather rather than on farming practices, and felt they could not make a living and completely control water erosion on their properties.

Since the completion of the study, the demand for the surveying of contour banks in the area this particular group inhabits, has increased. This could be due to "conscience-pricking" resulting from the study or the establishment of contact with the soils officer who conducted it, prompting farmers to act on their water erosion problems. The interviews have significantly increased the officer's understanding of the group

members' concerns about controlling water erosion. Emphasis on the relatively low cost of contour banking (approximately \$8.00/ha) and the visual evidence of success in controlling erosion where banks have been recently built on particular problem areas have served to address some of *these* concerns.

The study highlighted that awareness of water erosion, knowledge of control measures and expression of positive attitudes towards soil conservation are not enough to achieve adoption. An understanding of all the factors in the adoption process is required to achieve behavioural change.

Mary-Anne Young is Senior Soils Officer, Jamestown District Office, Primary Industries SA



Property Management Planning - Western Downs Style

Jim Kirchner

The Western Downs Property Management Planning project is funded by the National Landcare Program, directed by a voluntary group of local landholders and administered by the QDPI. The project involves forming small groups of landholders for the purpose of property management planning and delivering information they identify as being important to prepare their property plans. The Landcare appointed Coordinator, Jim Kirchner, networks with a range of DPI personnel from a number of DPI centres, to ensure the most accurate and appropriate information is delivered to the property management planning participants.

Given the nature of the project and the manner in which it is presented to the groups, much of the extension work needs to be developed in a brief period of time. Giving the PMP participants the opportunity to request any information they feel is necessary, requires the team to work closely together to ensure the land holders expectations are met so their interest in seeking additional information is fostered.

Achievements so far

In the first 12 months, a Landcare Centre was established in the first 3 months and 13 new PMP groups were formed, with 9 of those groups attending 1 or more workshops, involving

84 families or production groups which accounts for 142 people. In addition to this, 6 field days were organised, with a total of over 300 people attending those days.

The range of workshops topics that have been delivered are wide and varied and include:

- Silage production
- Water harvesting and catchment yield estimation
- Pasture establishment
- Rainfall simulator
- Woody weed control
- Strip cropping
- Deep ripping trials
- Computers in agriculture
- Melon hole levelling
- Alternative enterprises
- Farm Management options
- Manual financial record keeping
- Summer crop options
- Fodder shrubs

Continued - Page 5

Jim Kirchner is the Western Downs Property Management Planning Coordinator

How the project operates

As no groups were already in existence, the process must begin from "scratch".

A list of potential candidates in one particular area is compiled with the assistance of a local landholder interested in the PMP process.

The landholder is encouraged to **spread the word** before the Coordinator **phones the people** on the list. Generally there is an acceptance over the phone, and an aerial map mosaic is ordered. Once completed, **the Coordinator personally delivers the aerial map mosaic to the landholder**. During this visit the coordinator and landholder/s (the Coordinator encourages all members of the management team to be present during this visit) discuss the natural resources that appear on the map at length and travel into the paddock and do a number of field soil tests at depth using 1 metre soil coring tube. Soil characteristics and production issues are discussed while in the paddock. The landholder/s are presented with a brief information package about PMP, and taken through a card selection system to **identify the issues** they feel are currently most important to their farming enterprise. This provides the participants with a far better understanding of PMP and a focus for the first workshop.

The first workshop provides a non threatening environment that encourages focussed discussion to identify the needs and issues as seen by the landholders and builds on the information gathered from the property visit. The day begins with a video, "The Power of Paradigms". This is shown to broaden the emphasis of the day and try to draw their attention away from what was happening on the property the morning before the workshop. Each participant introduces themselves with the aid of their aerial map mosaic, giving a brief explanation of their current operation and future plans for the property. Using a workshop process, participants are encouraged to list what they see as the most limiting factors in their business. This list is then prioritised into those issues they have control over or influence on and those they do not. This session is followed by a soils classification, uses and problems workshop, which generally draws out some agronomic questions which are tackled by the agronomist present.

Following a brief field trip which highlights an activity or approach being used by the landholder where the workshop is being held, participants are asked to map their soil types. Once this session is completed, we return to the "limiting factors" list and formulate an action plan for the group to follow in the future. Participants are also asked to provide feedback on the day in regard to expectations. Before closing, the benefits of PMP and the process are reiterated using a short video and brief discussion.



Field trip on property where the workshop is held

As a **result of the first workshop**, DPI extension staff and the Landcare Coordinator has a firm idea on the topics or issues the group wish to see addressed.

Delivery of this follow-up information requires tremendous team effort between a range of DPI staff and Landcare Coordinators, to ensure information is delivered in a manner that is acceptable to the target audience and in a suitable time frame.

The process is having the effect of bringing many more people into contact with DPI who had not previously done so. The result is an improved impression of and attitude towards DPI and Landcare, plus a willingness to seek more information to make more informed management and planning decisions. The process also facilitates the transfer of information between landholders and in some cases alleviates some misunderstandings between adjoining landholders.

The most visual results of the project so far is the desire of PMP participants to seek more information about a range of production and planning issues. Given the early stages of the project and difficult climatic conditions experienced on the Western Downs for the past 4 to 5 years, no major indications are demonstrated in "on-ground" works. However there is definite increased awareness in business management, possibly the only area participants have had the opportunity to alter their operations in such a short time.

By taking the approach of having one member of the team, (Landcare Coordinator), spending much of the time contacting and encouraging participants in the PMP process, allows other members of the team time to formulate and develop the content and delivery of the extension work identified during the workshops. This results in a very efficient, effective and targeted approach to extension work.



APEN International Conference "Delivering Outcomes in Extension"

APEN is planning to run an International Conference in September, October, November or December 1997. A possible theme is: "Delivering Outcomes in Extension"

The Conference Committee met in Albury on 30th April and came up with the following ideas:

The Audience:

landcare members, environmentalists, private consultants, extension providers (public/private), students, primary producers, small property owners, education providers, policy planners (govt/industry), researchers, non government organisations, local government, community groups - bush fire brigades etc, overseas delegates - international, Aboriginal landcare groups, women, university of the third age, overseas institutes, World Development Bank, WHO, AusAid - *anyone who has a message to get across*

Possible Themes:

The themes need to lead to "Outcomes" for sustainability, community, industry, the profession (skills/networks) - local, regional, national, worldwide

Evaluation

Accountability/ monitoring/
continuous improvement

Partnerships

Defining roles (Providers)
public/private/communities
co-learning
providers/clients/stakeholders

Lessons from other disciplines

marketing/communication/IT
(Telstra)/ philosophy/ anthropology/
sociology/ psychology/ adult education

What's New?

extension theory and practice

Extension approaches to complex problems

how to/what works/are you being
inclusive?/learning from failures

Managing Change

changed roles-industry/ social/
economic
changed roles for-practitioners/
communities/ individuals/
environment

Possible Speakers:

RIRDC - Roslyn Prinsley (Review), Andrew Campbell/Jim Woodhill/Brian Sarsbrick/Anna Carr/Alan Curtis (Landcare), Terry Makin, Bob Macadam/Richard Bawden/Beth Woods/Barrie Bardsley/Max Coster (Education), Ian Crook/Ian Gibb/Kondinin Group (Peter Cook)/Bob Currie/Nigel McGuckian/Mike Stephens (Private), Jerome Winston (evaluation), Don Burnside (WA), Don Blackmore (MDBC), TAC speaker (Melb Chapter Seminar), Hugh McKay (Sydney), Telecom - Info Tech speakers from Ballarat VFF, Alistair Crombie (Adult education)

Structure:

Model as per Dairy Horizons?, Cater for 4 learning styles - Pragmatists, Activists, Theorists, Reflectors, - Delivery - forums, plenary sessions, small interactive workshops, open space, tours (participants, non-participants), 3 DAYS/2 NIGHTS

Venue:

Albury, Canberra or Melbourne. Department of Land and Water Conservation NSW are potential major sponsors and they may prefer Albury. A possible venue in Albury is The Scots School during October 1997.

The Conference Committee (Jo Millar, Terry Makin, Peter Davies, Warren Straw, Tony Dunn and Rosemary Currie) are looking for:

- ① people wanting to submit papers or run workshops,
- ② feedback on any of the information above,
- ③ people for the steering committee,
- ④ ideas for possible speakers,
- ⑤ possible sponsors,
- ⑥ ideas, ideas

Please ✉, fax, ☎, or Email
Rosemary at the
Secretariat with your
ideas.

By June 28th please
See cutout sheet on next page



APEN Members

Have Your Say

We need your ideas for the
1996 AGM

It needs to be held about
November 1996

Do you know of any speakers,
visiting gurus, a subject we could
build a Forum around, a possible
venue?

Let Rosemary at the Secretariat
know by July 3rd please. The
Committee of Management needs
to start planning at our next
teleconference - 3rd July

See page 8 for cutout
sheet



APEN Proudly
Sponsored by

Agriculture Victoria

Queensland Department
of Primary Industry

APEN International Conference
"Delivering Outcomes in Extension"
IDEAS SHEET

I would like to submit a paper/ poster/ run a workshop on the
following topic:

Feedback on/ suggestions for:
title: _____

date: (any clashes with other conferences/events?) _____

audience: _____

themes: _____

speakers: _____

structure: _____

venue: (preferred and any other comments) _____

I would / not like to be on the steering committee: (name, telephone) _____

suggestions for sponsors: _____

ideas, ideas: (see space over page) _____

Your telephone, fax, Email: _____

Please fill out and the form over the page and send to the Secretariat

APEN 1996 AGM IDEAS SHEET

Suggestions for 1996 AGM:

speakers/visiting gurus etc: _____

a subject we could build a Forum around: _____

venue: _____

date: _____

any more ideas (about AGM, Conference, ExtensionNet, anything

APEN etc.) _____

Your name and address (optional): _____

Please send to Rosemary at the Secretariat

✉ PO Box 1239, Wodonga 3689

Fax 060 561 967

Email agriclogic@albury.net.au

Return form by
Friday 28th June
please!

ExtensionNet

From the Editors

Dale Williams and Elwin Turnbull

The planned themes for ExtensionNet over the next couple of years will carefully explore being more inclusive of a broader membership (see From the Chair), given our connectedness and all we have to offer each other's learning.

The Riverina Chapter are putting together a regional perspective for Vol. 4 No. 1 on the theme of "The Role of Group Learning in Extension" with a variety of case studies.

Vol. 4 No.2 will concentrate on "Intellectual Frameworks for Extension".

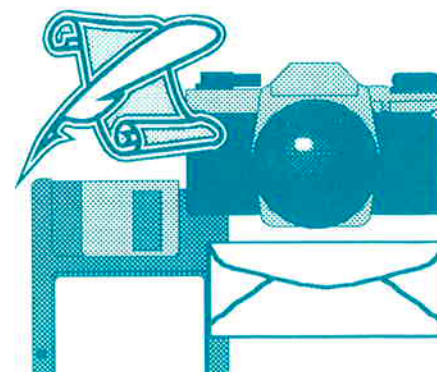
"Power, Participation and Extension" will be Vol. 4 No. 3's theme and will explore extension issues related to gender, ethnicity, culture, etc.

We invite submissions for these important ExtensionNet issues.

The dates for final submission of copy (Articles/letters and Chapter Roundup information - with photos / illustrations please!) to the Editor are:

14th July	Vol 4 No 1
14th Sept	Vol 4 No 2
14th November	Vol 4 No 3

Please see editorial matters as ones for dialogue. The Editorial Committee values your feedback and suggestions, we also need you to be providing articles.



Landcare: communities shaping the land and the future

Book Review by Horrie Poussard

Government Federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, Senator Bob Collins, as the most exciting and successful community based program (urban or rural) that Australia has ever seen. In its short five year history at the national level, Landcare has spawned more than 2 000 local groups which are tackling a broad array of issues such as land degradation, habitat protection, community education and land assessment.

Landcare has changed the way farmers and other land managers think and act; it has changed the way Government and industry advisory services operate; it has changed the basis of how Federal Government financial assistance packages (and even the tax incentives) are applied; it has changed the way farmers and environmentalists talk to each other; and it has even changed the basis on which research programs are developed and implemented. Andrew Campbell explores all of these issues in "*Landcare: communities shaping the land and the future*", a very readable and well organised book of 350 pages. The detailed text is supported with excellent photos and includes a comprehensive bibliography and comprehensive index.

As the first National Landcare facilitator, Andrew Campbell helped chart the first tentative steps in gaining the confidence of land holder groups across the country and then initiating successful on-group actions. His version of the Landcare story is supported by a number of case studies of groups and individuals by Greg Siepen, former State Landcare Co-ordinator (NSW). The diversity of problems, approaches, actions and measures of success between the groups epitomises the "deregulated" nature of the Landcare

program. Underlying these differences, however, are the principles of group action and the empowerment of the community.

The success of Landcare has inevitably meant that its name and credibility are being hijacked to some extent. Increasingly, "Landcare" is being used to describe what we previously called good (individual) farm management. In these cases, we are losing the basic concept of group action to address problems, such as salinity, that cannot be solved by an individual manager, no matter how good they are.

Andrew Campbell also covers a number of other Landcare issues, including women in Landcare, support for Landcare groups, community education and the notion of participation. The future of Landcare is also dealt with on a number of fronts.

The author notes a shift in the focus for action for many Landcare groups, possibly as a sign of their maturity. Where most groups initially concentrate on dealing with the symptoms of the problem, such as massive gully erosion, wind erosion of cropping land, denuded landscapes and salty streams, he believes that more attention is starting to be directed to the causes via improved pasture and cropping management practices and enhancement of remnant vegetation.

He also sees Landcare groups developing more sustainable systems of land use, encompassing economic and social issues and exploring preferred futures for rural communities. In addition, he sees them as

"key agents in environmental monitoring (licensed and paid by the government) and in land use planning at farm, catchment and regional scales".

Horrie Poussard is Project Manager for the YarraCare program and was previously involved in the development of Landcare in Victoria.

Despite its wide coverage of Landcare issues, the book misses out on one

increasingly important area of land management, that of public land. Duncare, a highly successful program in New South Wales to protect the coastline, gets a mention primarily as an example of community education through action by local Government and volunteers.

However, the notion of a legitimate role for local communities in the planning, implementation and monitoring of group projects on public land received scant attention. And yet it may be through such action that the politically important urban communities will continue to support the need for Landcare in rural areas. There must be further consideration given to ways to enfold urban, non-farm rural and public land management issues into Landcare - or a broader program that encompasses Landcare.

"Landcare: communities shaping the land and the future" is published by Allen and Unwin and has a recommended retail price of \$19.95, which includes a \$2 donation to the Landcare Foundation.

A report of the Forum "*Monitoring and Evaluation of Extension in Australia*" edited by Peter Van Beek is available from Rosemary at the Secretariat, \$12.50 a copy for members, \$15 for non-members. Five copies for \$50, ten for \$90. All prices include postage and handling. Send a cheque made payable to APEN Inc. with your order (including your address) to: Rosemary Currie, APEN Secretariat, PO Box 1239, WODONGA VIC 3689.

The Environmental Imperative Eco-Social Concerns For Australian Agriculture

Book Review by Harold Mattner

The Environmental Imperative Eco-Social Concerns For Australian Agriculture by Frank Vanclay and Geoffrey Lawrence, Rockhampton: Central Queensland University Press 1995, 204pp.



The preface delineates a clear direction which the book takes. That is, using a critical sociology to address the issues that agriculture is currently facing in regard to environmental degradation. Topic areas range from political economy, biotechnology, and the application of critical sociology to public agricultural extension and farmer decision making. These are applied in various ways to the three levels of analysis i.e. International - world markets, National - policy and extension, and Local - farmers role.

A good summary of the main forms of land degradation, particularly of salinity, acidity and erosion, are provided in the introduction. It is clearly pointed out that farming practices are not sustainable. The concept of sustainability is taken up again in Chapter 3, but I feel was not sufficiently addressed considering what implications it would have on appropriate action.

Chapter one presents an excellent overview of the current restructuring of agriculture in Australia and the global context in which it takes place. The globalisation of the food industry, the rise in contract farming, the tendency for value adding to be undertaken closer to the market end rather than the production end of the chain, are all adding to greater pressure on the traditional Australian farmer producing undifferentiated products such as wheat, wool, and meat.

Chapter two expands this line of thinking to explicate the idea of *environmental imperialism*. That is where the "metropolis" (e.g. Europe & USA), as they become more environmentally conscious, exploit the resources of weaker "semi-periphery" and "periphery" countries. This becomes part of a pattern in the Pacific Rim where USA and Japan provide capital and technology; Australia, New Zealand and Canada deindustrialise and concentrate on producing cheap foodstuffs, fibre and energy; while the newly emerging industrial powers such as Taiwan,

Singapore and South Korea produce manufactured goods with cheap labour. Pressed for export dollars the government is reluctant to protect the environment via legislation which is likely to increase the cost of production and send agricultural investment elsewhere. The Murray-Darling Basin is used as an example of new strategies where cotton production and feedlots have expanded at a dramatic rate, increasing the pressure on the environment.

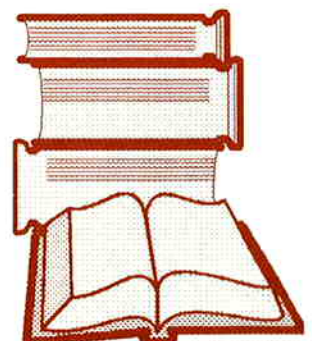
Bio-technologies and their ability to reduce environmental degradation is the topic for chapters three and four. While the scientists are confident that the application of biotechnologies can reduce environmental degradation, farmers are not so sure. The authors suggest that being largely controlled by transnational corporations, farmers are unlikely to receive a substantial share of any benefits. In addition, rather than having a land releasing effect, farmers will likely farm more intensively in an effort to raise incomes with even more marginal land being exploited. Thus it is difficult to see that biotechnologies will make any inroads in improving environmental degradation under current conditions.

Chapter five begins by looking at what contribution agricultural extension can make to sustainability. The importance of the "social" is raised as it is suggested that technologies do exist for improving and preventing land degradation, and yet they are not being taken up. Surveys are used to show that farmers do have a good attitude to the land, however their perception is that land degradation did not really affect them. This view is reinforced by the media's use of images of severe land degradation (the book cover does not do this), which farmers do not see evident on their farms. Thus, trying to change farmers attitudes is not seen as being an effective line of action. Other reasons such as the often remote cause of erosion, sometimes previously poor extension advice, problems associated with community involvement, and that

biotechnological solutions in their current context are unlikely to result in any improvement to the environment. It is suggested that perhaps farmers could become conservation officers paid by the state. The authors do acknowledge that they have concentrated on making improvements now and at the group level, rather than looking at structural changes. This becomes a bit of a bind because unless one can make changes to the system which generated the problem, how can the problem be improved? The current global economic environment and government structures are taken as a "given". However, it is people which create them and give them meaning, and people that can change them. How? Well that is not explained in the book. Perhaps the next one?

In summary, this book makes an excellent contribution to furthering the debate about the current environmental crisis. It highlights that the current trends in globalism are if anything likely to make the situation worse. That, new biotechnologies in their current context are also unlikely to ease the pressure on the land. It suggests there be better communication between the stakeholders, that agricultural extension can play a pivotal role (especially if better socially informed), and that the government play a greater strategic role rather than using the current group extension approach to wind down its overall contribution to agricultural extension.

Harold Mattner is at the School of Agriculture and Rural Development, University of Western Sydney -Hawkesbury



CHAPTER ROUNDUP

Tasmania, Amabel Fulton

The committee members of the Tasmanian Chapter have been flat out! In November last year we tried our hand at our first State newsletter. This included an update on the committee's activities, profiles of all our committee members, a financial report, a report on our Working with the Media Workshop, promos for upcoming events (including the national evaluation forum), names and addresses of all our members so people could contact each other and a survey of members needs. The newsletter was pretty basic - just a compilation of typed pages, but we got it out!

For our second newsletter we decided we would try and spiv it up a bit and develop a layout and a masthead which we could use for all future editions (plus or minus minor modifications). We came up with the Network News after much to-ing and fro-ing and a simple layout which we can use as the basis for future issues. We expanded our content as well, to include an article on extension in the pome fruit industry, the results of our member survey, how to make networks work, member profiles, book reviews and recommendations, forthcoming Adult Education classes of relevance to members, and other forthcoming events. We hope to put out four or five editions a year but at the moment we are just trying to fit them in when we can - between organising other APEN functions.

The training survey was quite successful, especially after committee members took 8 members each to pursue until they filled in their survey forms! Members were asked when they would like to attend training sessions and in which topics they were interested. The committee is going to use the survey as the basis for developing its members. Managing and evaluation extension projects, marketing, conflict resolution and mediation were identified as the key areas of demand for training by Tasmanian extension members.

In terms of functions, we've had a small intensive presentation skills workshop over one and a half days. Feedback from this

people expressing interest in the workshop in their survey forms. The chapter made a slight loss on this but this was more than made up for by some seminars on how to avoid litigation in agriculture. More than 90 people attended these seminars where Law Society Members provided a one hour discussion on what can be done to prevent being sued when you are giving advice. Most of the participants were from agribusiness (stock agents, chemical resellers, fertiliser representatives etc) and some were from government. There was certainly a lot of interest in the topic at each of the three venues at which it was held. We also had an informal dinner meeting with Mike Murray, a Californian extension officer, where members were able to ask about the nitty gritty of the American system and compare it to our own.

Next on the agenda is a communications workshop, concentrating on conflict resolution, negotiation and interpersonal skills. The aim is to give our members some hands on experience in dealing with difficult people and difficult situations so they can take their skills into the workforce and feel more confident in dealing with people. We have this planned for July, and it will probably be a two day affair, with our annual general meeting held during the evening between the two days. So we've got lots of work ahead. We'll try and keep you posted as to our progress.

Western Victoria, Matt McCarthy

Improving skills and contemplating the future of extension work were the main themes of a training seminar hosted by the newly formed Western Victoria Chapter of APEN. Over fifty extension professionals attended the seminar in Bendigo including a mini-bus load from the Horsham area.

The seminar started at 3.30pm with a presentation from John McKinlay on the principles and practices of effective networking. John was able to share some tips from his many years experience of maintaining a large network of contacts including using the Internet.

The next session thrashed out how we best approach the facilitation of discussion groups. Adrian Kennelly (DNRE, Bendigo) facilitated a brief workshop which teased out the different stages that

After dinner Terry Makin (APEN President) gave an overview of where APEN has come from and where it is going as a support network for extension workers.

The final part of the evening focussed on the future of extension with short presentations from three speakers. Neil Clark, a consultant, spoke about the challenges facing extension workers from the population movement and agriculture readjustment that certain areas of Victoria are experiencing and will experience in the future.

Warrick McClelland, a farmer and VFF stalwart from Birchip spoke about the complexity of the system the farmer is managing and the need for increased farmer involvement in setting the agenda for onground research and extension.

Cam Nicholson, an extension worker from Colac, presented an honest and down to earth reflection on what makes up good and bad extension. Cam said that extension workers are very enthusiastic and work hard at the how? and where? but we are notorious for overlooking the why.

Take home messages:

- * We are knowledgeable workers in often ambiguous and uncertain jobs. A professional network provides many opportunities for supporting one's work, self and future.
- * Groups go through distinct phases. The role of an extension worker involves being a team builder, a strategist and a facilitator. One of these roles will dominate depending on the phase of development of the group. All of these skills may be required in a single group session.
- * The future careers in extension will be different to the traditional concept of an extension career. Rural readjustment is a factor that must be taken into account in extension planning.
- * Farmer and community based extension is the future way. Good extension from the farmers' perspective does not depend on the information we provide but on how we relate socially.

Next gathering - Thursday 17th October in Horsham.

From the Secretariat

Welcome

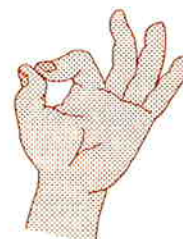
Rosemary Currie

Welcome to all the new members who have joined APEN over the last twelve months and congratulations to all the "old" members. APEN now has 420 on the database - 398 Ordinary members, 13 Student members, 7 Corporate members and 2 Sponsor members. 345 of these members have paid 95/96 membership subscriptions.



The next financial year is upon us and I will be sending out 1996/97 membership renewals very soon. Please pay them promptly.

To keep the database up to date and to ensure that you receive ExtensionNet, please inform me of any address, telephone, Email changes and any changes of jobs etc by returning the coversheet with the relevant details.



See pages 6,7 and 8 for chances to *have your say* about the APEN matters

We value your input.

STEERING GROUP

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

Terry Makin (Inaugural President)
36 Eamon Drive
VIEW BANK 3084
Phone/Fax:(03) 9459 4063

Peter Davies (Vice President)
Dept. Land & Water Conservation
PO Box 205, DENILIQUIN 2710
Ph:(058) 812 122 Fax:(058) 815 102

Jane Fisher (Secretary)
Dept. Primary Ind. & Fisheries
PO Box 46,
KINGS MEADOWS TAS 7249
Ph:(003) 365 201 Fax:(003) 365 365

Warren Straw (Treasurer)
Agriculture Victoria, VIAS,
475 Mickleham Road,
ATTWOOD 3049
Ph:(03) 9217 4360
Fax:(03) 9217 4299

Dale Williams (Editor)
Uni Western Sydney-Hawkesbury
Bourke Street, RICHMOND 2753
Ph:(045) 701 392 Fax:(045) 885 538

John Bourne (Committee)
CRC for Soil and Land Management
PMB 2, GLEN OSMOND 5064
Ph:(08) 303 8675 Fax:(08) 303 8699

Jo Millar (Committee)
Charles Sturt University
PO Box 789, ALBURY 2640
Ph:(060) 519 893 Fax:(060) 519 897

CONTACTS FOR CHAPTERS
SE QUEENSLAND CHAPTER
Larissa Wilson, CRC for Tropical Pest
M'tment, University of Queensland,
ST LUCIA 4072
Ph:(07) 3365 1860
Fax:(07) 3365 1855

CENTRAL/WESTERN NSW
Geoff Warr, NSW Agriculture,
PO Box 865, DUBBO 2830
Ph:(068) 811 263 Fax:(068) 811 368

NORTHERN NSW CHAPTER
Anne Currey, Wollongbar Agricultural
Institute, Bruxner Highway,
WOLLONGBAR 2477
Ph:(066) 261 352 Fax:(066) 281 744

MURRAY RIVERINA CHAPTER
John Lacy, NSW Agriculture
PO Box 108, FINLEY 2713
Ph:(058) 831 644 Fax:(058) 831 570

WESTERN VICTORIA CHAPTER
John McKinlay, Bendigo Agricultural
Centre, PO Box 2500,
BENDIGO 3554,
Ph:(054) 304 444 Fax:(054) 484 982

MELBOURNE CHAPTER
David Beckingsale, Agriculture
Victoria, PO Box 500,
EAST MELBOURNE 3072
Ph:(03) 9651 7033
Fax:(03) 9651 7216

GIPPSLAND CHAPTER
Maria Rose
Agriculture Victoria
117 Johnson Street, MAFFRA 3860
Ph:(051) 471 533 Fax:(051) 473 078

NORTHERN TERRITORY CHAPTER
Debbie Van Rangelrooy
Dept Primary Industry & Fisheries
GPO Box 990, DARWIN 0801
Ph:(089) 892 211 Fax:(089) 892 049

SOUTH AUSTRALIA CHAPTER
John Bourne
CRC Soil and Land Management
PMB 2, GLEN OSMOND 5064
Ph:(08) 303 8675 Fax:(08) 303 8699

TASMANIA CHAPTER
Jane Fisher
Dept of Primary Ind. and Fisheries,
PO Box 46,
KINGS MEADOWS 7249
Ph:(003) 365 201 Fax:(003) 365 365

WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Peter Nash
Dryland Research Institute
PO Box 432, MERREDIN 6415
Ph:(090) 411 555 Fax:(090) 411 138

ACT CHAPTER
Ross Andrews
Grains Res & Development Corp., PO
Box E6, QUEEN VICTORIA TCE
2600 Ph:(06) 272 5525 Fax:(06) 271
6430

NEW ZEALAND CHAPTER
Alan McRae and Dick Kuyper
Farm Management Department
Massey University
PALMERSTON NORTH
NEW ZEALAND
Ph: 64 6 356 9099
Fax: 64 6 350 5680

PAPUA NEW GUINEA CHAPTER
Tim Kepui
Dept of Agriculture and Livestock
PO Box 417, KONE DOBU NCD
PAPUA NEW GUINEA 0120
Ph: (675) 212 271
Fax: (675) 211 387

SOLOMON ISLANDS CHAPTER
David Palapu
Solomon Islands Broadcasting
Corporation
PO Box 654, HONIARA SOLOMON
ISLANDS
Solomon Islands 23159

SECRETARIAT
Rosemary Currie
PO Box 1239,
WODONGA 3689
Ph:(060) 245 349 Fax:(060) 561 967

Opinions expressed in ExtensionNet are not necessarily those of the Australasia Pacific Extension Network (Inc) unless otherwise stated.

EDITOR: Dale Williams & Elwin Turnbull, UWS - Hawkesbury, Richmond NSW 2753

LAYOUT: Rosemary Currie, APEN Secretariat, PO Box 1239, Wodonga VIC 3689

PRINTING: Robyn & Greg Barlow, Snap Printing, 97A Hume Street, Wodonga VIC 3690