

# EXTENSIONNET

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALASIA-PACIFIC  
EXTENSION NETWORK (INC)

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## From the Editor

*Dale Williams*

Warm greetings to all members! This is one of the more different issues of *ExtensionNet*. It is a larger issue. It is probably the first of the new breed of quarterly issues (more on that later). Its content is, in large part, different to previous issues. This one focuses much on APEN, its functions and those who carry out those functions. We felt it could be informative to share organisational aspects, given new and changing membership.

I do apologise for not getting a November-December issue to you. I am intrigued that we did not have one article supplied on the suggested theme.

Let us transform ExtensionNet into a significant and topical **dialogue**. Claire, David and Horrie have given us an example in sharing their reflections of last December's Forum. Have courage to critique what is said by others. Disagree. Discuss. Otherwise *ExtensionNet* will be little more than information and opinion transfer. Where possible, link critique and theory to realities of personal experience. No-one has all the answers 'wrapped up'. You may rather pose thoughtful questions and dilemmas. Use a letter to the Editor or write a fuller article ... better still, organise an edition around an issue of your extension interest. Please take the initiative and discuss your plans with me. The Editorial Committee will support you. Like APEN overall, *ExtensionNet* is your publication. It grows or withers depending on the degree of member participation.

I am concerned that the perspectives of this issue are overwhelming male. There are implications in that for us all



*Garren Knell (Agriculture WA) and Adrian Kennelly (DNRE, Vic) networking in front of the poster display at the APEN "Beyond Technology Transfer" Forum December 1996*

about broadening our perspectives, our approaches to dialogue, our ways of learning and in getting in touch with the different experiences of others. Our articles also tend to regularly come from 'professional' extensionists. So I am all the more happy for Claire's contribution.

Thanks Janice Timms, ensuring articles on behalf of APEN sponsor, Qld Dept of Primary Industries. We have QDPI sponsor articles in this issue by Richard Clark & Gavin Graham and by Gerry Roberts.

The Tasmanian Chapter will provide the major contribution to the April-June issue. Editorial copy is required by 23rd May; July-September issue by 1st August; and October-December 24th October.

*Please respond to the short questionnaire on page 14 about the purpose, character and frequency of ExtensionNet.*

## From the Chair

*John Bourne*

The APEN Forum "*Beyond Technology Transfer*" was held in Melbourne on 5th and 6th December 1996. It was a very stimulating two days for me. I would first like to congratulate the Melbourne Chapter, and in particular David Beckingsale, for an excellent program and a venue that encouraged good networking for participants.

Participants represented a range of locations, organisational affiliations and age groups. Mixing with people on the first morning immediately reinforced the value of APEN as a network. It was great to meet people who had only been names before, as well as to catch up with old friends.

The balance of presentations and case studies from both an institutional and practitioners' perspectives was very effective, as was the poster session

which allowed an even wider group of attendees to share a message. Mike Stephens' hypothetical on the Thursday evening was magic. It brought out some very innovative strategies on how to approach the customer who although faced with the right information, still didn't adopt.

The discussion sessions on Friday were very competently handled by group leaders. We were left with some good directions on what extra skills were needed to go 'Beyond the Technology

Transfer' paradigm, and where to look for them.

As incoming Chair, I am looking forward to the opportunities 1997 will bring, in particular the Conference in Albury-Wodonga. I am sure that you would also like me to express appreciation on behalf of all of us to **Terry Makin**, for his leadership of APEN since its emergence at the breakfast meeting during Aust-Pacific Extension conference at Surfer's Paradise on the Gold Coast in 1993. He

has worked hard to put APEN on the map and I am sure we all agree he has achieved that goal - **many thanks Terry**. Your efforts are much appreciated. (See his President's Report to the 1996 AGM, page 11).

The new Committee of Management met during the Melbourne Forum. It expressed a commitment to look for ways to continually improve networking and communication mechanisms within APEN. I expect to report more on that in the future. ❖

**CONTENTS**

From the Editor ..... 1

From the Chair ..... 1

The Challenges in Designing Learning and Information Systems in Extension ..... 2

APEN's New Committee of Management ..... 3

Profiles of Committee of Management Members ..... 4

Reflections on the December 1996 APEN Forum "Beyond Technology Transfer" ..... 6

Having Extension Clients Know How to Learn - Some Propositional Support ..... 7

From Advisor to Facilitator .... 8

Enforcement Vs. Extension ... 10

President's Report to APEN's second AGM 5/12/96 ..... 11

APEN Chapter Round Up .... 12

Mini-Questionnaire on *ExtensionNet*..... 14

Coming Events & Conference Report ..... 15

APEN Steering Group ..... 16

**SPONSOR'S MESSAGE:**  
**The Challenges in Designing Learning and Information Systems in Extension**

*Richard Clark & Gavin Graham, Qld DPI.*

In the agricultural knowledge and information system there is a large 'stockpile' of information (and knowledge) which could be utilised to improve agricultural practices. This information and knowledge has largely been developed by primary producers. Primary producers operate in an environment where time and money are at a premium. These people, like many urban business managers, are motivated by profit and lifestyle.

Our experience working with agricultural producers in Central Queensland indicates a relatively small proportion of primary producers have well-formulated questions about opportunities to improve their production systems. Those who do have them 'know what they want to know'. They are motivated to find answers and to access information and knowledge through a variety of methods and systems. However, from our experience, the greater proportion of producers may be:

\* aware of opportunities or information, but do not know what questions to ask

\* aware of opportunities or information

or knowledge, but they perceive there is an 'overload' of information and they do not know which opportunity or information is worth following up to significantly improve their enterprise

\* unaware of opportunities or information. They do not know what they do not know

\* they may not be motivated to pursue opportunities, information or knowledge.

The challenge for extension is to develop learning and information systems that meet this range of situations. We have been considering this issue and are developing a conceptual framework for the design of learning and information systems in extension. We would appreciate any comments from you on these points.

*Richard Clark, Regional Extension Specialist*  
*Gavin Graham, Senior Extension Officer*  
*Dept Primary Industries*  
*PO Box 5545*  
*Rockhampton Mail Centre. Qld. 4702.*

**Attention: Members who joined by coming to "Beyond Technology Transfer"**

If you haven't returned the membership application form in your Conference folder, could you please send it to Rosemary at the Secretariat.

## APEN'S New Committee of Management

### John Bourne

It is important that members understand the role and activities of this committee, now that we have started a new year and have a new committee of management (CoM) in place. While much of the action of APEN happens within the Chapters through local meetings, seminars and workshops, it is the central committee who initiates activities and networking at a national level, across state boundaries, to the benefit of all of us.

### The major activities of the CoM include:

\* Teleconferences throughout the year to discuss and implement support mechanisms for the chapters, as well as monitoring finances.

A good example of this is the new **APEN Home Page** on the Web. This was discussed at several CoM meetings before finally approaching Charles Sturt University to assist us to get it up and running. This is only the start, of course, and we hope to pursue lots more electronic opportunities to improve our networking.

\* Convening of an annual Extension Forum and National AGM jointly with a sponsoring Chapter.

**18 to 21 November 1997**

### **2nd Australasia Pacific Extension Conference**

**Managing change  
- building knowledge  
and skills**

By committing ourselves to this each year we are able to provide a vehicle for extension people across Australia to meet, swap ideas and share experiences. Each year this event has brought new members into APEN and is helping us grow into a body that effectively represents the discipline of extension. This year we will have a **major conference in Albury**, instead of running a Forum. It will have an international flavour. It is five years since the initial APEN conference on the Gold Coast, so it is time to look at things again from a broader perspective.

\* Publishing of *ExtensionNet*

This is probably the most visible action of the CoM to most members and is certainly a very valuable one. Much of the work is carried out by the Editorial working group lead by Dale Williams and Elwin Turnbull from UWS-Hawkesbury, while the printing and distribution is arranged by Rosemary Currie at the APEN Secretariat. However, to be effective, *ExtensionNet* relies on input from the Chapters. If you haven't put in an article recently or offered to act as a guest editor then I would urge you contact Dale.

\* Seeking of sponsorship and other funding support for APEN.

We appreciate the support of our corporate sponsors (**Queensland Dept of Primary Industries, NSW Dept of Land & Water Conservation and Victorian Dept of Natural Resources and Environment**) and corporate members. We aim to be responsive to their needs, as well as continually aiming to put our activities and achievements before the wider public.

The CoM will continue to seek funding support from the Rural Research and Development Corporations where that is appropriate. Of course, activities such as seeking sponsorship are not just confined to the CoM. Many Chapters have already been very pro-active and successful in seeking support.

In order to be an effective committee it is critical that the members of the CoM represent extension activities across all states in both the private and public sectors. This year we have a good spread of members which will ensure that extension interests are well represented.



## Profiles of Committee of Management Members

We thought readers might find it helpful to know something of committee members entrusted with some of APEN's functions. We have not done this before:

### John Bourne

Hi, I work with the Cooperative Research Centre for Soil and Land Management at the Waite Institute, Adelaide. My commitment to extension began with a Dip Agric Extn from the Univ of Qld in 1972, under Dr Joan Tully. For me, extension is very much about facilitation. That means not doing things TO people, or even FOR people, but WITH people. We still need to develop technical skills of course, but the way we transfer technology is important, and crucial to the adoption process.

My current position is technology transfer of outcomes from our research programs. These deal primarily with soil and land degradation of farming systems, and any associated off-site effects. CRC joint venture partners are CSIRO (Soils), the Univ of Adelaide, the South Australian Minister for Primary Industries and the State of Victoria. Clients include key farmers and community groups, but more often industry, agribusiness and government agencies.

I spent the bulk of my career with QDPI as an extension agronomist. I was involved with a number of innovative extension activities in both irrigated and dryland farming systems.

My wife, three children and I live in the Adelaide Hills amongst apple and cherry orchards and an ever increasing number of vineyards. Wine production is a new local industry and so in my spare time I have attempted the odd batch of red and some apple cider. *[Will there be a sample tasting at the next Conference? Ed.]*

### Rosemary Currie

After completing a Degree in Rural Science I did a PhD on 'Sheltering Behaviour and Heat Loss from Sheep'. I worked for a while with the then Department of Science and the Environment in Canberra, examining environmental impact statements, while I completed writing up my thesis. I followed Bob to Wodonga after he took a position of Dairy Extension Officer with the Dept of Agriculture. Six months later I started work at the Rutherglen Research Institute as Livestock Research Officer working on the Larger Leaner Lamb project. We looked at all aspects of lamb production from conception to the butcher shop or meat lab, including working with consumers.

Family (four boys) and a change of job for Bob from public to private consultant in his company, AgriLogic Consultants Pty Ltd meant that we cut our ties with the Department of Agriculture. As well as Farm Management Advice, AgriLogic Consultants took on the job of running a number of secretariats for Dairy Industry groups in North East Victoria and a landcare group. APEN came along at a good time for me as I was able to spend more time at work, with the boys getting older.

Interests include supporting budding Socceros, music and live performances of all types, walking and holidays by the sea!

*[We are all indebted to Roe for her great efforts on behalf of APEN during its establishment. Ed.]*

### Sue Hinton

Hi! I'm Sue Hinton, recently elected as the Secretary, on the Committee of Management of APEN. I am also on the committee of the Tasmanian Chapter of APEN. I live in Launceston, and work as an Agronomist for McCains Foods. I have been with McCains for a little over a year. Prior to joining McCains, I worked for 8 years as a field officer with Tasmanian Alkaloids (poppies). I moved to Tasmania in 1986 to work as a consultant for McGowan International. Most of my time was spent working on pyrethrum. Prior to moving to Tasmania, I worked as an agronomist in Toowoomba for a few years, mainly working with vegetable and fruit growers.



John (SA)



Sue (Tas)



Rosemary

I have a B App Sc (Hort Tech) and a Grad Dip of Bus in Prof Mngt. I am currently enrolled in post graduate studies in Agricultural and Resource Economics at the UNE.

Other interests include gemstone fossicking, golf, fishing, camping, bushwalking and gardening.



Ian (WA)

### Ian Maling

My position is Extension coordinator, Centre for Legumes in Mediterranean Agriculture, Perth. My general interests are pastures, adult learning and barriers to adoption of new technology. Cheers.

**Horrie Poussard**

Background in agricultural science, including 2 years in South Korea as research officer on bilateral sheep project. Joined Soil Conservation Authority in 1975 with an interest in extension on conservation issues. I completed my MAgricSc. (Melb) in 1980 in Extension and Organisational Development. State Program Manager in Soil and Water Conservation(1989-91) in Dept. Conservation and Natural Resources. Two years in Fiji working with environmental organisation, the University of the South Pacific and the Australian Education Centre. Returned to Australia in 1993 to work on new catchment legislation and write a strategy for management of the Yarra River Catchment. Resigned in 1996 to start a consultancy (Environmental Land Management) in community consultation and catchment management. Based in Melbourne.

*Horrie (Vic)***Jane Wightman**

I am Senior Extension Officer, 'Smart Move' - a three-year DRDC-funded whole farm management extension project of the Northern Dairy Region (based in Rockhampton, Qld).

Most of 1982-92 was spent farming in England (mixed dairy, sheep, cropping) and New Zealand (managing dairies), although I fitted in some station work and extensive travelling in Australia).

From 1993-95 I was District Property Management Planning Extension Officer (SW Qld) and from 1995-96 I was Regional PMP Co-ordinator (Cent. Qld).

I have a Dip Agric from Berkshire (Eng) and a MAppSc from UWS Hawkesbury.

**Warren Straw**

I have substantial experience in agricultural extension - as a practitioner, a manager and, for the last 2 years, as

*Peter (NSW)*

Principal Extension Officer with Agriculture Victoria. In these capacities I have lived and worked in several rural centres, although my base is now Melbourne.

I have two titles in my present job. As well as my statewide role as Principal Extension Officer, I am also Manager of Client relations at the Victorian Institute of Animal Science, an institute of around 220 people.

One of my passions is to help extension to continue to make a real difference to rural people and Australian agriculture. That challenge has led me to become involved in extension training and development, in numerous extension programs, in improved extension methodology and in project evaluation. My current activities include work on project evaluation and a new business skills and benchmarking program for meat producers.

I am an active member of APEN and was Treasurer for two years.

**Dale Williams**

G'day! My focus of the 1970's and 1980's was largely rural development in PNG and West and East Africa. A significant recurring challenge for me was understanding and working with the complexity and ever-changing needs, aspirations and circumstances of rural people with whom I lived or worked ... particularly when 'development' contexts shifted to ones of crisis, rehabilitation or adjustment. There seemed a lot of transferrable understanding to rural hardship and development challenges in Australia when I moved back here in 1989 (hence some links with rural counselling). Although I have worked for both government and non-government organisations, since about 1980 I've seen my 'extension' involvement more in terms of facilitating rural community development ... and I see that in terms of facilitating a process of action learning.

Lecturer, School of Agriculture & Rural Development, UWS Hawkesbury 1984-85 and 1989-present. I'm somewhat a study 'bunny', but the irony is that my doctoral research is my fourth postgraduate programme!

My personal interests are similar to those of Sue and Roe, but in a family of six (all studying), some self-interests become subsumed in those of the youngest four!



**Now that is quite some diversity of background, expertise and interests ... and some questions about extension 'to boot'!** We look forward to Peter Davies' profile in a following issue.

**Please feel free to contact any of the CoM either directly (addresses etc on back page) or through the Secretariat (060 245 349)**

## Reflections on the December 1996 APEN Forum "Beyond Technology Transfer"

Thanks very much to Claire, David and Horrie for the following reflections ... some insightful critique and questions:

### **Claire Dennis, farmer and part-time facilitator, Birregurra, Vic.**

I found the first day beneficial in that it presented a range of speakers who looked at the extension picture from the national level down to the local landcare and landowner level. The disturbing point that came through was the gulf between the federal departments and the people on the ground. There seemed to be little understanding of the real plight of the farmer. The evening hypothetical made several important points which illustrated the importance of understanding all the pressures to which farmers are subject. The workshop sessions, although discussion took place, at times were dominated by only a few participants. It was disappointing to learn during these sessions of the lack of extension staff who understand their clients and their complex problems, who respond to client needs rather than their perceived needs and who are prepared to change their ways of delivering extension where necessary.

### **David Cummings, Dept of Natural Resources and Environment, Vic.**

I've been remote from the extension profession for some time and the conference was an ideal way of catching up on the current issues. Listening to practitioners did highlight the possibility of a crunch time coming. There was significant background noise asking the questions: Where are we going? Where are we trying to go? Where should we be going? While perhaps these questions were not dealt with explicitly, the forum did act as a stimulus for re-assessing directions.

The forum indicated to me that Australian society does not have a clear or common picture (dare I say vision) of what it would like rural land, rural activities and rural society to be like in say 15 years time. How can the extension profession work efficiently without this? Then the next question: what are products of extension anyway? There seemed to be considerable uncertainty amongst the professionals about this. And the final big questions:

*APEN is proud to acknowledge the support for the "Beyond Technology Transfer" Forum from:*

**Grain Research and Development Corporation**

**Melbourne University, Longerenong College**

**Meat Research Corporation**

**Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation**

**Dairy Research and Development Corporation**

**FarmSmart**

**Queensland Department of Primary Industry**

**Bonlac Foods Pty Ltd**

Who are the clients? What are their primary needs? How can these needs be met? How can we test that these needs have been met? These may seem excessively basic questions, but I do not think participants at the forum were working from similar answers.

### **Horrie Poussard, Land Management Consultant, Melbourne.**

Beyond Technology Transfer, or What? Recollections of the forum immediately brought to mind the confusion about what we were talking about. People have been trying to define what is 'extension' for many years. There are nearly as many definitions as there are extension officers. However, I feel we flounder in trying to say what we do, or

who is in the extension business, or what is the process, or what are the key elements. This is because we don't have a broad agreed framework in which to operate.

We seem to be trying to pen this animal called "extension" too tightly, with different people trying to put it into different pens. Maybe we should let it initially wander free range in a big paddock. We should strip away the values we place on it to get to the core. The boundary fence should surround what we consider as the basic aim of extension which I would suggest is:

*to change human behaviour.*

From time to time further pieces of fencing are needed to pen up our free range 'extension' by various groups to reflect their own values and programs, such as protection of the environment, viability of individual farm families, efficient use of industry funds, outcomes in line with government policies, safe and healthy lifestyles, etc. These are add-ons to the basic notion of extension and I believe have caused confusion to coming to grips with the core aim of extension. The add-ons are important, even essential, to enable us to develop and implement effective programs that address the real needs of particular groups of today's clients, whether they be farmers, distressed communities, governments or industry. But these will change with changing circumstances and values. The core aim should define the basic nature of extension in the long term.

We attract few marketing, social welfare or educational members because they are rightly put off by the overwhelmingly dominant agricultural productivity flavour of APEN. If we are to broaden APEN's appeal beyond agricultural extension, to others in the business of changing human behaviour, we need to be able to accommodate other add-on values to an agreed core aim. ❖

## **SPONSOR'S MESSAGE: Having Extension Clients Know How to Learn - Some Propositional Support**

*Gerry Roberts, DPI Longreach, Qld*

Learning how to learn is gaining increasing support as a means of working with change in our society. Support for this statement is available in the fields of formal education, agricultural education, psychology, organisational development, management and communication. Learning how to learn means consciously acquiring the skill of how to learn.

Terry Makin wrote in the July-August 1996 Issue of ExtensionNet that he would like to see some discussion about where we think extension is heading in this changing world. My thought is that we as a profession have yet to widely embrace **having our clients learning how to learn** as one of our goals. So maybe developing in clients the skill of knowing how to learn is a direction that needs to be pushed. Such a push may balance the pull of the economic rationalist planners and the pull of those of our clients who also support economic rationalism as the only basis for service delivery.

Makin earlier in his article referred to an initial APEN survey which identified **professionalism** as a focus for ourselves as extension practitioners. One aspect of professionalism for me is using already available information about how to be an extensionist and to seek guidance from both inside and outside extension. Such propositional knowledge supports my suggestion of expanding our choices to include having clients know how to learn. I have appreciated the benefit of such material in writing my current doctoral thesis.

The Macquarie Dictionary defines a proposition as "anything stated or affirmed for discussion or illustration". In that sense propositional knowledge is knowledge already accepted as accurate (affirmed) and available from sources other than our own experiences.

In relation to learning how to learn, the educationalist Carl Rogers has produced evidence that supports the notion that student-centred classrooms in formal education enable learning of a higher quality, pace and pervasiveness. His evidence comes from situations where the focus for the teacher has been to facilitate learning how to learn by students so they make the choices. James Gallagher develops a similar theme in the field of psychology. He suggests that for ill-structured problems, teachers should help students build and link knowledge (structures) across domains "instead of simply providing more and more information (assuming that the learner is merely a sponge sopping up new facts)". This he contends will shift the focus of education to emphasise the processes of thinking itself.

For agriculture, Richard Bawden writes of creating a learning environment that takes into account the complexity of contemporary agriculture. The learning environment should also provide for the development of competent agricultural technologists who know how to learn. He argues that changes in the world require attention to "mastery of ways of finding out knowledge" as well as the development of new knowledge itself. Jules Pretty and Robert Chambers have developed their support for the concept of learning how to learn from an extensive practical and theoretical consideration of agricultural situations.

Recognition of the need to provide adults with the ability to learn how to learn, has extended beyond the fields of education and psychology. Marilyn Daudelin is an organisational development consultant. She contends that providing only 'content answers' for managerial problem resolution in organisations, establishes a game of 'catch-up', while having managers knowing how to learn for themselves overcomes that difficulty. Reg Revans, of action learning fame, argues the same for management, and says that "... programmed knowledge [content answers]... is quite insufficient for keeping on top of a world like ours today". Both Daudelin and Revans say that managers can learn how to learn

using the context of the problems they come up against in their work.

I have mentioned the support of formal education, psychology, agriculture and organisational development for having our clients knowing how to learn for themselves. You may want to find other sources of knowledge about the value of learning how to learn for dealing with complex situations. Regards ... Gerry.

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*[Gerry's thoughts remind me of a quote I recently wrote down, "our task in this period of unravelling, is not to patch the old patterns, but to build the loom on which new patterns will be woven" ... the loom being rural people's explicit competency of learning to learn together through exploring their shared challenges and opportunities. Ed.]*

**HAVE YOU PAID  
YOUR 1996/97  
SUBSCRIPTION? If  
not please do so or let  
the APEN Secretariat  
know you want to cancel  
your membership!**