

EXTENSIONNET

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALASIA PACIFIC
EXTENSION NETWORK (INC)

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THE LAND WEEPS; BUT THE RIVERS FLOW NOT! AND NATURE CRIES IN THE CHAOS

Australian rivers are timeless:

In constant relationship with the land,
The land conditioning the river
And the river shaping the land.
The rains fall and the rivers flow;
Carrying the life-blood of the country:
The land dries as the rains go,
But rivers remain as refuges,
Before they, too, dry as drought extends.

Our rivers were wild in the past:

Free to flow and sustain,
To couple with their floodplains and generate new life;
Spawning billabongs to provide sustenance in
mosaics of time and space,
Partnering river red gums as husband does wife-
Dynamic systems of give-and-take
enabling survival in uncertainty.

Rivers are vital resources for Australians.

Aboriginal Australians bond to landscapes
in reverential relationships.
Sacred sites confirm and consolidate the lore of nations.
Rivers and wetlands yield food for their hungry-
Cumbungi, nardoo, waterfowl, fish, and turtle.
But periodic pulses of plenty only punctuate
a general aridity,
And life survives on bare essentials.

Recent settlers, arrogant in their dominance,
Sought to tame rivers with technology:
Harnessing them for production,
Confining them with levees,
Regulating them with dams and weirs,
Distributing them through pipes and canals,
Using them for sport and as repositories for waste.

*But the rivers know their power,
The wise are aware of their real place,
The spiritually sensitive know their relationship
to people and the environment,
.....and the nation senses its vulnerability.*

And so! What of the future?... .

Can the rivers be typically Australian again?
Likeable larrikins, stamping character on the land,
Courageously opportunistic, richly variable,
but dangerously unpredictable!
Or must they now be strangers in their own land?
Collared, tied and suited by technology
To release water in reliably metered amounts,
Working for wealth, while striving to be free!

Or can we have the best of both
And escape the worst of each?
Can we have reliable rivers
that are opportunistically variable?
Can we have rivers of life
that supply wealth to the nation?... .

CAN WE?

CAN WE?

CAN WE?

David S. Mitchell, Albury, August 1998

*Poem published with permission of the author.
It was written for the author's presentation on The
Environment at the Paul McGowan Water Colloquium,
Albury, 25th September 1998. The Colloquium allowed
an opportunity for non political discussion of the issue of
water in Australia and an acknowledgement of the
contribution Paul McGowan (now 75) has made to
Agriculture. A Proceedings is being produced.*

Notice to APEN members: National Forum & 1998 AGM "Partnerships in Extension – extending the boundaries." 2 & 3 December, University of Adelaide, Roseworthy, SA. (page 2)

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Natural Resources
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AGRICULTURE
RESOURCES
CONSERVATION
LAND MANAGEMENT



From the Chair



John Bourne

At the end of October a meeting to begin a Borders Chapter of APEN was held at Hamilton in Western Victoria. Lee-anne Mintern from Hamilton and Debbie Cesari from Mt Gambier in South Australia did a great job in organising and running the meeting. The evening was advertised as a night of laughter and learning, and we certainly had lots of both. I had the pleasure of going along and saying a few introductory things and was particularly impressed by the wide variety of people who attended, something that we need to continually strive for in APEN. (Report, page 11).

APEN is receiving more and more recognition from many different quarters. Recently we received a request from the Murray Darling Basin Commission to provide extension input through a representative on a steering committee for a new project on dryland salinity. This is a role that we can play very effectively and I would urge all of us to look for other opportunities of this nature. Tony Dawson, APEN member from the Department of Land and Water Conservation in NSW, will be representing us on this steering committee and will be reporting back to us on a regular basis.

Elwin Turnbull our regular *ExtensionNet* editor is currently working in Nepal for a short time, and yet has still found time to organise articles for this edition by e-mail. Many thanks Elwin !

The articles in this Extension Net represent nothing less than cutting edge research and experience in a number of aspects of extension. It is interesting to note that several of the articles cover work funded by Research and Development Corporations. These Corporations clearly see the need for the development of soundly researched extension methodologies to achieve the impact of their overall programs, and are prepared to pay appropriately for them. ★

APEN National Forum & 1998 AGM “Partnerships in Extension – extending the boundaries.” 2 & 3 December, University of Adelaide, Roseworthy, SA. Contact Rosemary at the APEN Secretariat up till Monday 30th November if you find you are able to come!

1998 AGM AGENDA

Present: Apologies:
Reports: President – John Bourne
Treasurer – Bob Edgar

Elections to the APEN Committee of Management: (Two year term)
President
Secretary
Committee Members (4)

General Business: nil

NOMINATIONS AND/OR NOTICE OF GENERAL BUSINESS MUST BE WITH ROSEMARY AT THE SECRETARIAT BY 27TH NOVEMBER

Farmer Centered Development - Addressing Fundamental Values

Sally Murray NRE Bendigo

'How do you define sustainability?'

My experiences demonstrate that one's definition of sustainability is dependent upon what is really important to that person. What is really important to someone can change with circumstance, thus, the definition of sustainability is contextual, or depended upon the context in which it is asked. For example, someone without food, shelter and clothing will have a very different meaning of sustainability to someone who has their survival needs satisfied. Thus, perspective will influence the meaning of sustainability.

What is important to someone is linked to what 'values' they hold. Espoused values are those values that you think are important to you, whereas values in action are those values which determine your behaviour (Senge, 1997). Values in action aren't easily seen, as they are fundamental. When

values in action (fundamental values) and espoused values miss-match, there is internal conflict or dissonance. Someone saying one thing and doing another is a classic example of a miss-match with espoused and fundamental values. Procrastinating over a decision is another.

Changing behaviour is about surfacing and questioning fundamental values. As extension officers, we are often set the task of changing the behaviour of farmers. However, the skills required enabling farmers to surface and question fundamental values are very different to the skills required to provide knowledge.

The skills required for the exploration of values include communication, adult learning, the capacity to suspend assumptions and promote thinking, empathy with many perspectives etc. These are more commonly known as

facilitation skills. If the objective is to change behaviour, then there will also be a need to be skills that enable evaluation of the behavioural change.

Farmers operate in an ever changing and increasingly complex set of circumstances. Thus, it is imperative that technology be made available in such a manner that it not only enhances their ability to cope with the dynamic environment in which they operate, but it provides for the development of the person, so that person is better able to develop their own agriculture (Korten & Claus, 1984).

When farmers are made the focal point of processes, they regain the control of their own destiny, incorporating technology and the natural resource with satisfaction of needs and values. The use of values and subjectivity as well as analytical thinking is critical to balanced decision making (Refer Figure 1) and is more likely to result in

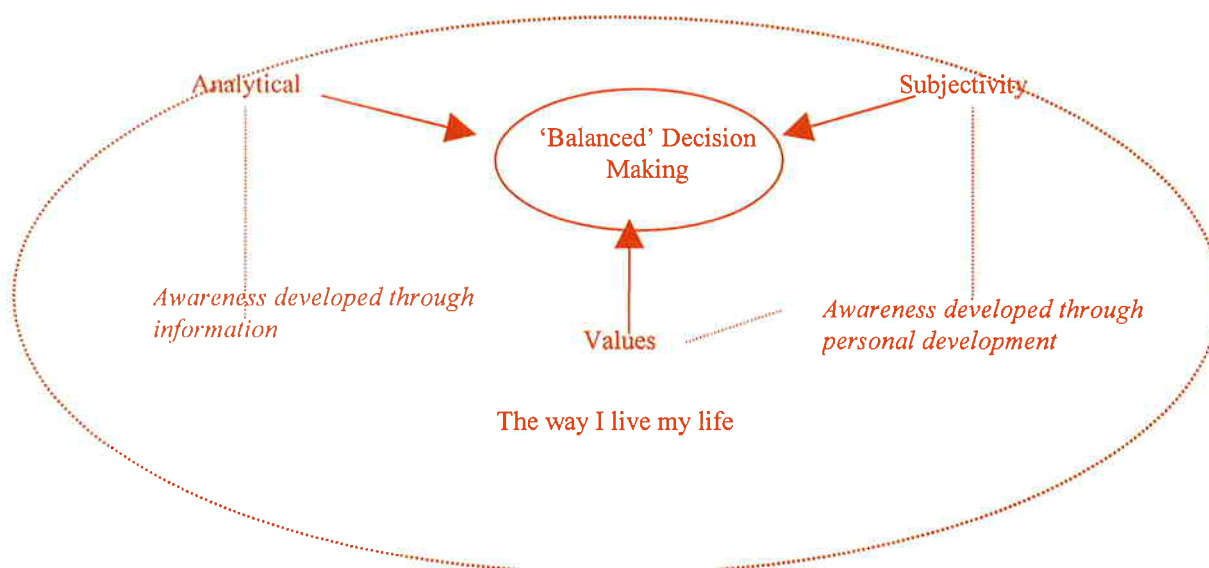


Fig. 1 The Decision making model (adapted from Korten and Klaus, 1984).

agriculture that accommodates the economic, ecological and cultural requirements of society which is necessary for long term sustainability (Rivera, 1991).

An extension officer who has the capacity to facilitate the development of the farmer, providing for the exploration of fundamental values, will enable farmers to determine what is important to them. An adult learning model, where the overriding goal is to facilitate the learning of the farmer (McKenzie, 1990) is a model that provides for the farmer being the focal point. There is fairly common acceptance that farmers should be treated as learners, as farmers will not

change unless they see it in their interest to do so (McKenzie, 1990). Each farmer's needs are different, which means that we should not assume that what we know will motivate them.

Adult learning principles promote self directed learning which inherently relates to needs and values. Thus, the farmer determines what is fundamentally important, then seeks information and technology to satisfy those needs. Extension officers have an important role to play in supporting and facilitating this process of self-directed learning (Evans & Dahl, 1984 in van den Ban & Hawkins, 1996).

A model for adult learning requires the simultaneous learning of all parties as they work together to solve problems. Problem solving will need to use a variety of ways of thinking including analytical thinking, subjectivity and value exploration (Miller, 1985). Thus, the focus is on **learning about 'the way I live my life through these changing times'** (Bawden & Macadam, 1991).

References

Sally has a list of references should you want to follow them up.



Facilitating in Cyberspace

Viv McWaters, Integra Pty Ltd, Melbourne

Predictions are made about the future every day: the weather bureau predicts the temperature, organisations meet to predict their future and call it strategic planning, scientists predict the outcomes of their research, workers everywhere predict who might win the footy and of course, politicians, predict just about everything.

Yet one prediction which sticks in my mind is from many years ago when a social commentator said that 'jobs will be different - so different in fact, that many of them haven't even been invented yet!' It's impossible (for most of us) to imagine something that doesn't exist. Yet how quickly we adapt.

I remember writing an article for a staff newsletter about the introduction of a facsimile machine. We even had a photographer on hand to take a photo of the first user of the machine! Yet just a few years later (it wasn't that long ago!) even the fax is seen as old hat.

Take the computer I'm typing on as an example. Most of you reading this will have experienced the extraordinary introduction of personal computers. Imagine life without computers now! And it's not only computers but also the way we work. My office overlooks my backyard and for most of the day I work alone, yet I am even more connected to the outside world than ever before. The work I do is different too - when I used to respond to that universal question with the answer 'journalist' there was usually mild interest and absolutely no doubt about what I did. Now when I say 'facilitator' there's often no interest and lots of doubt! This is not surprising. A decade ago I had never heard of a facilitator either.

Facilitation as a process has been going on for decades, yet it is only now being recognised as a profession. Facilitation helps people to be conscious of their thinking; their decision-making; their beliefs and assumptions; their choices; and their learning. Facilitation processes enable problem solving, planning and team development. And



for me, it's fun. I enjoy helping people struggle with new ideas and resolve problems, learn about themselves and others, and feel excited and motivated about the difference they can make.

It was only natural then that my newfound interest in facilitating would make its way into cyberspace. There was, of course, a catalyst in the form of an essay on inquiry for my course-work Masters at the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury. Suffice

to say I set up an electronic discussion group (or listserve if you're into computerspeak) to enable my fellow learners who are spread far and wide to stay in touch between half-yearly residential.

No sooner had I got that established (which is a story in itself) than I found myself setting up another for people who had undertaken leadership training with us, and then yet another for scientists involved in blue-green algae research. In addition, I participated in an on-line conference on action research and continue to subscribe (off and on) to various discussion groups about facilitation. Phew!

And so I find myself in an interesting position of leader and participant, of facilitating one day and 'lurking' the next, of being overwhelmed with responses or deafened by silence. (Excuse me a minute while I check my e-mail.)

Here are some of my observations of facilitating in cyberspace.

- It's easy to jump to conclusions /to become disillusioned/to lose interest...

Sometimes there's no, or a slow, response. It's easy to make untested assumptions. I think this is due to a mismatch between expectations, and when our expectations are not met we try and rationalise why. Cyberspace seems to me to be a good place to explore our own assumptions. Usually there's plenty of time to think about them while waiting for responses. I have yet to determine any pattern on subjects that elicit responses and those that don't. I suspect there are many more factors at play here.

- It helps to know the lingo.

Not only for posting messages but when you're the 'owner' of lists, you need to know the 'computerspeak' as well for dealing with the people behind the scenes who make it all happen. And if you're interested in language and its development, you'll be fascinated by the way language is used in cyberspace.

- There's a lot of potential and learning still to be done.

And it helps to keep this in mind. Although there are protocols - the necessary ones that make the system work and the 'social' ones that enable civilised conversation - we are all co-learners in this new way of communicating. So patience and understanding are helpful.

- It's difficult to encourage people to participate.

We all, it seems, are inhibited somewhat by appearing foolish - it's one thing to ask a question of a group of people in person, it's quite another to put that in writing and into cyberspace for all to see.

- Knowing the others helps. Not knowing the others helps.

What a contradiction! This is the area of greatest interest for me. Sometimes a group that knows each other has a rich electronic conversation; in other situations you can come to know complete strangers through regular communication. Some groups open up far more than they would in person - there's the relative anonymity of cyberspace - and the range of topics can vary enormously.

- It's a rich and rewarding way of tapping into other people's wisdom.

A good dose of scepticism helps too - just as you wouldn't believe everything you read in the newspaper, nor should you believe all that's on discussion groups. Just because it's written doesn't necessarily give it more credibility. However, asking a genuine question of a group of people and receiving a range of responses can be enormously rewarding.

- Someone has to lead

The most effective and used groups appear to be those that have either a designated, or assumed, leader. Maybe leader is the wrong word. I have in mind a picture of the umpire bouncing the ball to start, or restart, the game. Someone has to bounce the ball to start the conversation. It's also helpful for someone to summarise a discussion to help those who join in later or lose track of the threads.

A Challenge

So here's a challenge for all of you who are subscribed to discussion groups: play with them, bounce the ball, try being spontaneous, and share your thoughts, your insecurities and your learning. When it works, enjoy. When it doesn't, try again!

There's a PhD (or seven) in this (for someone else, she hastily adds!)



Orders being taken at the APEN Secretariat

1998 National Forum & AGM Proceedings: Available in early 1999. \$15.00 for members, \$17.50 for non-members. Please include name, postal address, contact telephone number, cheque made out to APEN or credit card details including number, expiry date, cardholder name, signature and date.

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The “Women in Dairy” project - A targeted approach to extension



Cathy McGowan¹ Project Consultant: Women in Dairying

The aim of “The Women in Dairy” project is to enhance the contribution of women to the Australian dairy industry, on farm, within the family, in the community and within the industry. Whilst it is targeted to women, it is an extension project about learning and skills development.

For the past three years, two consultants with expertise in rural community development, Cheryl Phillips and I have been working with women and men in the dairy to develop the “Women in Dairy” project. It is a cooperative project involving all sectors of the industry, manufacturing, research and developing, media, government and industry organisations. It is also a national project covering the six Australia states involved in dairying.

The project is funded on a yearly basis, through The Dairy Research and Development Corporation (DRDC). In the first three years it has run on an annual budget of approximately \$50,000.

There have been four major phases of the project:

1. The initial research to investigate women’s participation in the dairy industry and to understand their barriers to participation, their successes and needs;

2. The second phase involved the introduction of the consultants and the project to the various “players”;
3. This was followed by a series of live-in leadership workshops held in each dairy region
4. and finally the project will be completed with the establishment of a national women in dairy network. It is anticipated this will be in existence by the year 2000.

The Research Phase:

Initially the project began with a small-scale pilot project to test some of the assumptions behind the project: namely that women were interested in “gender specific” activities, such as all women workshops. The research team wanted to understand why women were not involved in decision making “off the farm” (When we began the project, there were five women, Australia-wide who had senior leadership positions within the dairy industry); to understand the barriers women encountered when they sought to be part of the “main stream” decision making processes. They were also interested to learn what had worked for women, what were the elements of success and how these could be duplicated.

This research stage was completed when a report “Welcome Aboard” was presented to the DRDC and approval given to take the project nationally.

The Introductory Phase:

With a greater understanding of women’s participation in decision making, the barriers they faced, their needs, wants and aspirations, the project was in an ideal position to work with women dairy farmers to address these issues. This second stage of the project involved the consultants travelling around the country meeting women in their homes, in halls, in the offices of dairy industry organisations, wherever women were, and inviting them to participate in the “Women in Dairy” project.

Using the information from the initial research as a guide, a skills based workshop was offered in one of a number of areas, such as building personal confidence, problem solving, working together, industry structure, and communication. These workshops were held in a comfortable local venue, usually with onsite childcare and between school bus times (10.30am - 2.00pm).

This was the beginning of the networking. The consultants were surprised to discover that many women in the same local area did not know each other. Isolation was often the result of heavy family and farm commitments. Whilst the women enjoyed the skills based workshops, they enjoyed even more, the opportunity to meet with each other, to share stories of their work, as mothers, wives, farmers, helpers, carers of older people, community workers and business partners.

¹ Cathy McGowan is a consultant based in the Indigo Valley, in NE Victoria. As well as the women in dairy project she has also been involved in establishing the Farm Based Child Care project, a Commonwealth and state funded program to provide onsite child care for farm families.

Leadership Workshops:

The third phase of the project has been the development of a three day live-in workshop. These workshops are offered in partnership with state based dairy industry organisations (UDV, QDO, NSW DFA etc) and DRDC sponsored "regional development planning boards."

The workshops focus on a number of elements: The essence of the first day is on building confidence and understanding difference, learning about personal styles of operating and leadership. The second day looks at organisational and community change and skills needed to participate as a change agent. The final day is devoted to participants designing and sharing the development of a personal project they will complete over the following six months.

One of the highlights of the workshops is the social side and the opportunity offered each evening to participate in a cocktail or dinner party. Guests include high profile leaders in the dairy and agricultural industry. Participants learn and practice the skills of lobbying, articulating a position, developing conversation, listening skills as well as the art of combining fun and enjoyment with business!

Approximately six months after the workshop, participants come together for a one day "reporting back" session. Here they share the outcomes of their project as well as skills they have gained.

There have been many exciting outcomes from these projects, not the least of which is the growing confidence of women to say "yes" to invitations to participate in leadership positions within their communities, on their own farms and within the industry.

National Network of Women in Dairy:

The final phase of the project will be the formation of a national women in dairy network. This process has begun. The inaugural Women in Dairy Conference was in Nowra (NSW, Australia) in May this year. Organised by the local women in dairy group and sponsored by the NSW Dairy Farmer's Association, the conference attracted over 240 delegates from each state and all areas of NSW.

At the second International Conference of Women in Agriculture, held in Washington in June this year, there were at least 20 women representing the Australian dairy, the largest delegation from any Australian industry. Many of these women were sponsored by their industry bodies to be present. On their return they reported to, and made

recommendations to their various industry organisations. These women will form the core of the National Network.

A women in dairy email discussion group has also formed following the Washington conference and unites women from each Australian State as well as New Zealand.

Finally, it is anticipated that in 2000, a national Women in Dairying Conference will culminate in the formal development of the national network.

Key Learning

The project has been going for three years and we have learnt a great deal. In summary there have been a number of factors which have contributed to the success of this project to date:

- **Strong industry support.** The Chair and executive officer of the DRDC, as well as state and national dairy leaders are personally committed to the project. This "top down" support has given the project credibility, and where there has been flack, and there has been small pockets of resistance along the lines of "why women?" these men have handled the situation with support and strength.
- **Women are interested** in participating in industry decision making and in leadership training opportunities. The key has been the personal invitation and meeting women where they are at, in their homes, on the farms and with their families and communities. Venues and times of meeting are important as is the provision of childcare and respect for the work women do, and the issues which are important to them.

Time frame:

The project has recognised that a year is a short time in the scheme of things. It has been important to allow time for the project to grow. "We are not in a hurry."

The initial research stage has given us the background information needed to develop both the introductory and workshop phases. As project consultants, we are able to go where the smiles are, knowing that with time, word of mouth and evidence of the success of the project will bring its own reward. This has been our experience. Working slowly and gently gives both women and the industry time to appreciate the changes that are taking place.



Available through the APEN Secretariat.

- **"Managing change – building knowledge and skills" 2nd Australasia Pacific Extension Conference, 18 to 21 November, 1997, Albury Convention Centre, Albury \$65 for members, \$68.50 for non-members, postage and handling included.**
- **1997 Updated version of: JOURNAL AND REFERENCE LISTS IN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT \$14.50 for members, \$16.50 for non-members (p&h incl)**

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CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

Are Agronomists really going green and soft?

Report on 9th Australian Agronomy Conference - Green Agronomy?



Professor Ted Wolfe, Charles Sturt University

In July at Wagga Wagga, over 300 delegates attended the Australian Agronomy Conference. The theme was an important one, "Agronomy - growing a green future".

To address the theme during the plenary sessions, there was a broad coverage of national issues on topics like regional development, rural sociology, rangeland/Koori landuse, extension/adoption, the environmental challenge, the quality imperative and professional responsibilities. The plenary sessions were supplemented with seven concurrent sessions at three venues for the presentation of 126 oral papers, poster displays (106) at a central location, and a covered (but cool) trade display area that attracted about 20 exhibitors.

From the start, the Conference was on the front foot. In his opening presidential address, Jim Pratley related that the organisers invited over 100 Federal and State politicians to come to the Conference and listen. There was only one acceptance (local member, Joe Schipp) and lots of apologies. Pratley noted and deplored both the disdain with which politicians treat rural Australia and the apparent lack of political clout of the Australian Society of Agronomy. A proposal to lift the profile of the

Society, through joining the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies, was subsequently defeated.

Technically, the Conference was a success. All delegates received a copy of the weighty (2.5kg) Proceedings at the Conference. The ubiquitous PowerPoint presentations worked fine in three halls, and there was a marvelous real-time visual hookup to the US for one address that was pure American corn - Denis Avery's exposition of how Agronomy will save the world sounded good even if we didn't believe it! Moreover, the entire Proceedings are available on the Internet at <http://life.csu.edu.au/agronomy/proc.htm>.

Socially, those who attended had no complaints. Overall, the major sponsors (CSU, NSW Agriculture, GRDC), gold sponsors (Pivot, Incitec, RIRDC) and other supporters appeared happy.

So, what of the content? Are agronomists really going green and soft? Well, the answers to these questions depend on whose ears you own. The 9th Australian Agronomy Conference was different in several respects from previous assemblies. There were a large number of papers that quantified water use by crops and pastures, data that were unavailable five years ago. And agronomists seem to be understanding the lingo and responding to messages about product quality (pulses, dairy produce).

Tony Dunn, CSU was heartened by the clear evidence of a systems approach in contemporary agronomy, and the attempts by modelers to link (even overlay) hard systems concepts with a soft systems approach. There were several examples of farmer involvement in research - the personal angle (what farmers were interested in and thought they could control)

was incorporated in the design, conduct and outcomes of the work. However, there is still a need to move on another step to treating and modeling agricultural systems as human driven, with complex interactions and power struggles between the players - this is an essential feature of water issues in Australia today. It is interesting to assess the congruence between what agronomists are doing and thinking at the grassroots (as seen in the papers/posters) and what the broad issues are as expressed in the plenary papers. Which is the tail and which is the dog? Are agronomists, and those institutions/corporations that fund their work, changing their direction sufficiently quickly to ensure that Australian agriculture will become a success, technically, socially, environmentally and financially?

In his final analysis, Professor Ray Ison, Open University, UK agreed with that change was occurring, in terms of professional self-criticism and in seeking new ways and people with which/whom to collaborate. He questioned if the rate of change was fast enough, particularly with a new "crop" of agronomists that are coming on. Will this new group build on the existing wisdom, such as it is, or will they either reinvent wheels and develop new, elegant variations on reductionism embracing biotechnology? Ison emphasised the need for new metaphors, criticising generally the inappropriate cultural structures of the bureaucracies in agriculture and specifically the failure of the conference organisers to attract farmers to attend and speak at the Conference. He indicated the need for a vision of the countryside that incorporated an appreciation of the merit of wildlife and the beauty of the landscape, as well as prevailing community and professional values. Above all, as was emphasised by President Pratley, one of the roles of agriculture is to sustain rural life. ★

Learning Communities, Regional Sustainability and the Learning Society

An International Symposium Launceston 17-19 June 1998

Part 1 Regional Futures

Contact Lamanda Harris,

Email:

Lamanda.Harris@utas.edu.au

The purpose of the three-day Focal Conference called Regional Futures was to identify issues and find solutions to problems and issues affecting regional and rural Australia. One speaker noted early on that to find solutions was a little ambitious, but that finding directions that might lead to solutions was a realistic endeavour.

At the start of the conference, a panel of experts identified the following key issues influencing the relationship between learning and sustainable regional development:

- recognise three ingredients to building sustainable rural communities: (1) relevant knowledge and information, (2) willingness to participate and (3) plenty of opportunities and events for the whole community

- that effects of competition and market mechanisms on the development of social capital require debate

- there is a need to re-frame the contribution to vocational education and training in rural areas of various groups, especially women and youth

- there is a need to recognise that both formal and nonformal learning contributes to vocational outcomes

- the need to understand what drives institutions such as schools, businesses and bureaucracies and how their work, withdrawal and development affect regional areas

- the need to counteract the disadvantage and catastrophic effects of policy changes to regional areas, especially where there is a time lag between de-funding one policy and initiating another

- the recognition by all panel members that language is used to recognise some initiatives, and to de-emphasise others. For example,

the work that women do on farms in regional Australia is not presently 'called' Vocational Education and Training. By using different language, this work could be recognised, valued and included, so contributing to national socio-economic targets

- education and training are noble causes, leading to community and regional development and sustainability, but they are not yet fully harnessed

- the need to understand how to meet local needs with national accreditation benefits

- issues of participation, equity, power-plays and managing diversity are factors to contend with explicitly at the community level

- in developing regions and communities, a vision is needed - but whose vision should it be?

Conference outcomes: How to identify solutions?

Some important directions to follow in search of solutions were described in around 70 presentations over the three days. All presentations had a solutions focus, and highlighted case studies of successful practice, or research, which shed light on future directions.

Instead of picking out specific models of best practice and naming them as possible solutions, the staff of the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia have analysed the presentations for themes. The following are the **key themes underlying the participants' perceptions of possible solutions:**

1. Local solutions for identified local needs
2. Working together towards common purposes
3. Building social capital
4. Integrated not reductionist solutions
5. Learning together as well as individually
6. Working and learning across sectoral boundaries
7. Fostering cooperation, not competition, in regional areas

The strand of activity which is common in all these themes is one of **"People interacting together"**. It is possible that this result shows how the tendency to work and learn in isolation runs contrary to the collective benefits of working together towards identified common goals.



Part 2 Young People, Work And The Future

Contact Mike Frost,

E-mail

vetnet@southcom.com.au

This forum, inspired by the growing concern for the employment and life chances of young people in Tasmania, brought together a wide range of teachers, vocational educators, industry training personnel, academics, social and community support agencies and parliamentary representatives.

There were many reports and research from the Tasmanian-based national Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia (University of Tasmania at Launceston) raised in the conferences which led into the Youth Forum. From these outcomes, it can be said that there are three groups of community resources, which need to be built up if the problems surrounding youth in our communities are to be addressed:

- ✦ Communities need the access to knowledge and information relevant to solving the problem at hand;

- ✦ The willingness and capacity of people to act must consciously be fostered;

- ✦ There must be plenty of relevant and purposeful events and opportunities created at which the relevant knowledge and personal willingness can come together to create a whole-community solution.

It is also essential that the knowledge, willingness and opportunities be collaboratively established by active

communication within and external to the community.

In an effort to see that the outcomes from that forum extended into a wider community debate with a fervent hope that it would lead to action, the following strategies for improving the opportunities for young people in Tasmania were identified:

✦ A concerted effort to attack the generally negative stereotypes used to describe young people, particularly expressed in the media, and to actively shape a far more positive image for youth.

✦ The active creation of learning communities based on real partnerships between young people, parents, local communities, industry, schools and government.

✦ Rapid and systematic identification of new and emerging employment opportunities in sunrise industries with an increased capacity to respond quickly and effectively to relevant training needs.

✦ Value the creation and acquisition of knowledge as a powerful community resource and use it far more effectively as an agent of social transformation and change particularly in respect of new economic activity.

✦ Eliminate the economic "basket-case" view of Tasmania and replace it with a far more optimistic outlook that transforms into a "can-do" approach to problems particularly in respect of youth.

✦ Work to eliminate communication barriers between agencies and organisations, seek to generate a climate for collaboration based on a genuine effort to gain mutual understanding amongst stakeholders in the youth market.

✦ Place a much higher value on youth as a community, social and economic resource, learn to listen better, to appreciate youth culture and provide good adult role models with which young people can identify.

✦ Empower local communities to become far more responsible for their young people by providing recognition and support for them as front-line agencies in improving social and employment opportunities for youth.

✦ Show industry and enterprise the bottom-line advantages in developing

notions of constant improvement based on the creation of a learning culture in their own organisations. Demonstrate how education and training investment can lead to performance enhancement, as well as the opportunity to create new employment opportunities.



Part 3 Community Development Workshop

Contact Lesley Harrison, E-mail: Lesley.Harrison@utas.edu.au

The Community Development Workshop spanned three full days from 14-16 June. The 43 participants came from all over Australia, and were from a bewildering diversity of fields of practice under the broad community development umbrella.

The purpose of the Workshop was to bring together, share and synthesise the various skills and knowledge which come under the banner of community development, and the Workshop provided the first opportunity for the new Australian Chapter of the Community Development Society to meet.

Outcomes

The three days of intense process work was based around case studies of best practice, and culminated in the presentation of a community development "success story" for each of the participants. The case studies and success stories will be compiled and edited into a volume of "Best Practice in Community Development", which will be available in November from the CRLRA.

The focal discussion point for the first day centred around two questions:

What is Community Development? and What are the barriers to developing communities?

From these discussion points the participants raised six issues: personal agenda, institutional concerns, equity, managing diversity, participation, and power play. From these topics the

last four were given further attention through examining these questions:

* Why is this a problem for CD practitioners?

* Why is this a problem for communities?

* What are some strategies for addressing this barrier?

* Who should be involved?

* What resources will be needed?

The solutions for the four issues centred around the community as a whole. Regional and rural isolation and a feeling of top down enforcement of ideas and resources predominated. The practitioners endorsed that the community themselves have the potential to make things happen. The capacity to do so lies with the members banding together to identify visions, needs and directions. The strength of this approach relies on the rediscovery of community values and interactions as a core for action. The diversity the community brings is a cohesive factor in working with and in communities, not merely on communities.

Each participant went from the Community Development Conference back to their community with some positive actions to employ, some new ideas with which to experiment and above all an invigorated enthusiasm that 'community' is alive and kicking.



Part 4 Managing Farming Search Conference

Contact Dr Sue Kilpatrick E-mail: Sue.Kilpatrick@utas.edu.au

Ninety people from all over Australia gathered to discuss preliminary findings from the project "Why do 'expert' and farmer perceptions of training needs differ?", being conducted by Dr Sue Kilpatrick of the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia at the University of Tasmania, and Dr Roy Murray-Prior of Muresk Institute of Agriculture, Curtin University, Western Australia. The project and the search conference were sponsored by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Those participating were government and

private educators and trainers, representatives from Federal, State and Territory government departments of primary industry, representatives from agricultural organisations and rural industries training boards, researchers, and included a number of farmers themselves.

The delegates heard visions of farming in the future from Professor Richard Bawden of the Centre for Systemic Development at the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury and Cathy McGowan, Rural Consultant and Australian Women in Agriculture representative to the National Farmers Federation.

The delegates spent time discussing issues of learning for managing farming and participated in sessions on innovative management education and training programs.

Outcomes

An important outcome of the day was a general recognition of the role which relationships play in effective farm management and in learning for managing and marketing. Groups are an effective way of learning, and the quality of the relationships within the group influences the quality of the learning. The agricultural community must be proactive in building relationships between people, businesses and communities.

The input of rural communities into the success of individual farm businesses and the input of women farmers to farm management emerged as key issues for agriculture.

Producers and local communities must be involved in planning education and training activities if they are to be effective. Finding ways of getting people and communities to recognise and act on their own learning needs is a challenge.



APEN News

"Borders Chapter" Takes Off

The first meeting of the APEN Borders Chapter was held on the evening of Thursday the 29th October. This chapter is so named due to the area it covers which takes in the Glenelg / Hopkins region of Victoria and South-east of South Australia. The chapter was formed to bridge the communication gap between extension professionals from both states and share experiences and knowledge to improve our roles as extension agents.

Twenty-eight people attended the APEN dinner seminar at the Grange Burn Motor Inn, Hamilton, Victoria. The guests included the Federal Member for Wannon, Mr David Hawker, extension officers from DNRE and PIRSA, farmers, landcare representatives, Greening Australia representatives, private consultants and contractors. The organisers of the event Lee-anne Minter (DNRE, Hamilton) and Debbie Cesari (PIRSA, Mt Gambier) were very impressed by the variety of interested people who attended and received many positive comments about the night and enquiries of when the next event will be held.

John Bourne, president of APEN was the pre dinner speaker on the night and gave the audience some very convincing arguments for the importance of being involved in an

organisation such as APEN. John also gave everyone a snapshot of group dynamics and practical extension techniques for working with groups. Richard Weatherly, a Western district farmer (Mortlake) and chairman of Watershed 2000, gave us an insight into the value of developing extended people networks and inspired us with the power of extension by drawing on examples from the Watershed 2000 project and local anecdotes. The evening was complemented by a number of interactive activities, which caused much hilarity, and allowed people to get to know each other and talk openly.

Due to the success of the evening the Borders Chapter committee are keen to see the group continuing and hopefully rise from strength to strength attracting a broad cross section of the extension community. The next activity is planned for the middle of next year.

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COMING EVENTS

• **December 1 & 2 or 3 & 4, 1998**
"Building Relationships with Your Clients. How & Why" Ormond College, University of Melbourne. Melbourne and Western Victorian APEN Chapters. Contact Cam Nicholson 03 5258 3860 or Chris Sounness 03 5362 0741

• **December 2 & 3, 1998**
"Partnerships in Extension - extending the boundaries" University of Adelaide, Roseworthy Campus. APEN National Forum and 1998 AGM. Contact Rosemary Currie 02 6024 5349

• **July 7 to 10, 1999**
The 1999 International Symposium on Society and Resource Management. University of Queensland, Brisbane. Contact Sally Brown 07 3201 2808 (see insert in *ExtensionNet*)

• **March 2 to 5, 2000**
International Landcare 2000 Conference: Changing Landscapes - Shaping Futures Melbourne. Contact Waldron Smith Convention Network 03 9690 6744 (see insert in *ExtensionNet*)



APEN MEMBERSHIP - 613

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