extending extension: beyond traditional boundaries, methods and ways of thinking

APEN National Forum 2003

Forum Outcomes Report

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Pre-Forum Theme Statement

[This statement was released in May 2003 to promote the forum]

Extending Extension:
beyond traditional boundaries, methods and ways of thinking

Extension involves the use of communication and adult education processes to help rural people and communities identify potential improvements to their practices, and then provide them with the skills and resources to effect these improvements. Historically, extension has been concerned with agriculture and natural resource management, but increasingly there is a concern with rural communities in general.

This will be an exciting and challenging event that will comprise multiple formats including specially invited keynote speakers, carefully selected other speakers, group discussions, open platforms, workshops and training sessions. There will be a balance of small group activities and large sessions. Ample time will be provided for networking, with social events peppered with the taste of Tasmania. The importance of 'locality' will be featured in the conference by providing delegates with a taste and feel of Tasmania that will extend from the selection of the venue and range of accommodation available through to the provision of food and refreshments, as well as through the optional field trips and sightseeing opportunities.

The primary intention of the conference is to facilitate our thinking about our business and to improve our practice: about what it is, the way we do it, and what works. Part of that discussion will be a reflection on the nature of our business and what other fields we are connected to and linked with. Invited speakers will be drawn largely from outside traditional extension circles thereby exposing us to other but related disciplines and thinkings: outreach, interpretation, change management, community development, public participation, adult education, environmental education, communication, evaluation, PR and marketing, health promotion, tourism promotion, organisational learning and the media. In addition, selected case studies will be presented demonstrating best practice in our business.

Through this sharing of theory, methods, practice and experience, insight and learning will be acquired that will assist us in our practice and in the way we see our business. It will also assist in the integration of theory and practice leading to greater effectiveness.

This questioning of our business is important because there is widespread confusion both within and outside the field of extension about what extension is and what it could be. Extension is redefining itself in many ways and a new balance needs to be found between the competing claims and issues of: theory/practice; old/new; top-down/bottom-up; public/private; agent/consultant; farm/business; farmer/customer/client; opinion leaders/champions; individual/group; men/women; technical/social; information dissemination/change management; technology transfer/capacity building; skill enhancement/personal development; adoption/communication; production/environmental sustainability; maximise/optimise; diffusion/facilitation; extend/empower; agriculture/community; teach/learn; and targeting/linking.

The APEN National Forum will be a professionally run event aiming to attract a wide range of stakeholders in agriculture, natural resource management and rural and regional communities. A wide range of participants are expected to attend including extension providers and funders, extension practitioners and researchers, natural resource management agency staff, policy-makers, scientists, farmers, landholders and community representatives.
Forum Outcomes Report

This report on Forum outcomes was prepared by Tim Tabart, Frank Vanclay and Amabel Fulton.

This report is augmented by a separate evaluation report.

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President’s Report

APEN National Forum 2003

We were promised that the APEN National Forum in 2003 would be an exciting and challenging event. I am sure the other 180 participants would join with me in saying that the two-fold objective was well and truly achieved.

The theme statement *Extending Extension: beyond traditional boundaries, methods and ways of thinking* created a high level of expectation, challenging the participants to almost expect the unexpected. The keynote speakers were from disciplines outside our own, which helped us move outside our comfort zone.

We were challenged to ‘reclaim extension’ by the Forum convenor, Prof Frank Vanclay, in the opening session. This rally cry was heard many times as the event unfolded. At a time when other terms such as capacity building and community engagement are becoming almost synonymous with extension, it was reinvigorating to be challenged to embrace our discipline and not to be ashamed of it. The extension word is well respected overseas, but has gone out of favour in Australia during the last decade. This may be due to the lack of critical mass of extension workers, or that the term was too strongly associated with technology transfer which itself has gone out of favour. Regardless, as the professional body for extension, APEN needs to continue to move forward on the firm foundation of the past.

A taste of Tasmania was also promised, which was especially fitting, as this was the first time an APEN national forum has been held there. This was delivered in many ways, but none more memorable than the dinner cruise on the MV Cartela.

It was upon that cruise that we took the opportunity to celebrate APEN’s 10th birthday. We have come a long way from the discussions at the Gold Coast conference that sparked our creation. In all that we’ve done, APEN has continued to provide a platform for networking, professional development and representation. This was certainly the case at the 2003 Forum.

John James
APEN President
Executive Summary

The 2003 National Forum of the Australasia Pacific Extension Network (APEN) was held in Hobart from 26-28 November 2003. With a theme of “Extending extension: beyond traditional boundaries, methods and ways of thinking”, the purpose of the APEN National Forum was to: (1) provide a venue for networking, (2) a taste and feel of Tasmania, and (3) most importantly, to provide a range of interesting and challenging speakers and activities which would push participants in terms of their boundaries, methods, and ways of thinking about what extension is, and what extension could be.

The event comprised multiple formats including specially invited keynote speakers, contributed papers, posters, group discussions, and training workshops. The program balanced small group activities and large sessions. Ample time was provided for networking. Social events, such as a reception at Government House, dinner at Meadowbank Estate, and a dinner cruise around the Derwent estuary on the MV Cartela, were peppered with the taste of Tasmania. The Forum began with optional events including a field trip, an Induction workshop for students and newcomers to extension, and a special workshop for Tasmanians to explore the current state and future direction of rural service provision in Tasmania. Another optional field trip was held following the Forum.

The Forum attracted a total of 153 paying delegates (including eight day registrations), and together with invited speakers, workshop presenters, conference organising staff, and others, led to a total participation of 180 people. They were from all states of Australia, with some 10 delegates from New Zealand.

An evaluation of the Forum found that 28 percent of participants indicated the Forum was ‘Excellent’, and a further 58 percent indicated that it was ‘Good’.

Keynote speaker David Morris spoke about Tasmania Together, a statewide project in community engagement and strategic planning, and challenged extension to engage communities in thinking about and creating their desired futures. Invited speakers provided a range of views including: using interpretation as a platform for engagement; focusing on self-efficacy as a means to improve personal health management; focusing on client needs when developing extension activities; the need for the concept of professional practice to improve the profile of extension; opportunities for coordinating extension to increase its effectiveness; and the need to strive for capacity building as an outcome of extension.

Thirty-six contributed papers covered a wide range of topics representing current thinking and practice in extension. Some of the topics covered were: principles of learning and effective communication, working with groups, collaboration, partnerships, capacity building, resilience, incorporating social research into extension, information management, marketing and supply chains. Copies of most of the Forum papers are available on the internet at the Regional Institute’s website, at http://www.regional.org.au/au/apen/2003/papers

Six training workshops provided a means for delegates to develop their skills in the following fields: community building; Environmental Management Systems; evaluation; group facilitation; media skills; and public speaking.

Discussion groups following the invited speakers’ presentations encouraged participants to reflect on the presentations and discuss the implications for their personal practice and the extension profession. In relation to personal practice, the predominant themes arising in the discussion groups were: building one’s own capacity and that of one’s clients; effectively engaging clients; effective use of language, and, incorporating learning theory and approaches into personal extension practice. There was a common feeling between the groups that extension has matured as a profession in the ten years since the first APEN National Forum, with the process becoming more professional and the research more sophisticated. There was also a strong feeling that extension was necessary, legitimate and important, however, it was recognised that the profession does not have a high standing in the community and that its legitimacy is often challenged. It was felt the profession needs to meet the challenge of understanding itself (“mapping our space”) and where it fits amongst other professions and to clearly articulate its role.
and value. The notion that the concept and term ‘extension’ itself needs to be ‘reclaimed’ was also debated amongst many of the groups.

Other areas discussed by most or all the groups were the need to: become more aligned as a profession and discipline; be clear about concepts (e.g. capacity building) and objectives; integrate theory and practice, ensuring that theory informs practice and practice informs theory; take care to use simple language, avoiding inappropriate use of jargon; and recognise commonalities and opportunities for shared learning between extension and other disciplines. Many participants discussed the shift toward greater engagement with diverse groups within communities. They saw this as a desirable shift, but one that presents a challenge for the profession to achieve engagement that genuinely empowers people, rather than simply informing/involving them.

The Forum attracted sponsorship to the value of $22,500. The major sponsor was the Grains Research and Development Corporation. Other sponsors were Land and Water Australia, Meat and Livestock Australia, Dairy Australia, the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, and the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research at the University of Tasmania. The Forum generated a modest profit as required by the APEN National Executive to allow ongoing reinvestment in the furthering of the extension profession.
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Introduction

The 2003 National Forum of the Australasia Pacific Extension Network (APEN) was held at the Hobart Function and Convention Centre on Elizabeth Street Pier in the middle of Sullivan’s Cove on the Hobart waterfront. The Forum Convenor was Prof Frank Vanclay, with conference management being provided by Rural Development Services (RDS) under the leadership of Forum Coordinator, Amabel Fulton, with support from Tim Tabart and other members of the RDS team.

The Forum was planned by a small executive group, guided by the input of a larger reference group of Tasmanian extensionists. The executive group reported to the National Executive of APEN against an agreed budget and timeline for organisation of the Forum. The APEN network and ExtensionNet were used as the main vehicles for gaining participation in the Forum. A wide range of sponsors were approached to support the Forum, with the following allocating significant resources to its running: The Grains Research and Development Corporation, Land and Water Australia, Meat and Livestock Australia, Dairy Australia, the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment and the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research at the University of Tasmania.

With a theme of “Extending extension: beyond traditional boundaries, methods and ways of thinking”, the purpose of the APEN National Forum was to: (1) provide a venue for networking, (2) a taste and feel of Tasmania, and (3) most importantly, to provide a range of interesting and challenging speakers and activities which would push participants in terms of their boundaries, methods, and ways of thinking about what extension is, and what extension could be.

Specifically, the Forum sought to:

- reclaim the word ‘extension’ and to acknowledge the existence of a discipline (a field of learning and practice) called extension
- bring people who may not connect with this discipline into the field
- push the boundaries of the field of extension
- promote a new understanding of extension that emphasises the social nature of extension
- create a realisation that extension shares concepts and methods with a range of other disciplines and that there can be shared learning to be gained by making these connections
- acknowledge a range of tensions that exist in the field of extension and develop some understanding of those tensions.

The key components of the Forum were: David Morris’ keynote address on Tasmania Together; three invited speakers from disciplines outside extension; three invited speakers from within extension, in particular the Capacity Building for Innovation in Rural Industries Cooperative Venture research program; presentations from the winners of the APEN/GRDC Excellence in Extension awards; contributed papers; a poster session; training workshops; and discussion groups. In addition, a number of activities were undertaken prior to the Forum. These were a workshop “Rural Servicing in Transition” for Tasmanian extension providers; an induction workshop for those new to extension; and a pre-conference field trip. A number of social functions were held throughout the Forum, including a reception at Government House. The Forum was followed by a two-day field trip in South East Tasmania.

This report provides an overview of each of these components describing the purpose of each activity, how it was undertaken, its key outcomes and the key learnings for extension.

An evaluation survey was completed by delegates during the Forum. An evaluation report was completed and will be available on the APEN website, or from either Rural Development Services or Frank Vanclay. Key points from the Evaluation Report are included here where relevant.
Welcome to Country: Indigenous welcome

In a ceremony memorable for its humour and warmth, Brian Mansell, from the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council, welcomed the Forum delegates to Tasmania on behalf of its Indigenous people and wished them well for a successful gathering.

The ceremony began with Brian tapping some clap sticks, calling the people together. Encouraged by the audience, he then sang a traditional song, which spoke of the land and its passing from generation to generation.

Brian acknowledged the traditional custodians of this land, the Mouheneenaa people, and spoke of the importance of land and respect for it and for elders. By participating in the welcoming ceremony the delegates also acknowledged that respect. Just as no-one would enter someone’s house without asking permission, the ceremony symbolised seeking permission to enter Mouheneenaa land and the granting of that permission by the Indigenous people.

Brian spoke of land as providing life and a spiritual base for people. Land is what we consume, and from this understanding comes respect. Without respect, without deeply caring for the land, he said we risk not only harming the land, but killing ourselves. Land is people. Brian also spoke of the importance of unity, of recognising the common bonds between those of different beliefs, creeds and colours and of making personal, human, respectful connections with people.

This simple opening, emphasising land, connections between people and the past, set a warm and personal tone for the rest of the Forum.
Minister’s speech: Bryan Green, Minister for Primary Industries, Water and Environment, Tasmania

“Primary producers must look beyond productivity and profitability to consider wider concerns,” the Minister for Primary Industries, Water and Environment Bryan Green said today. Mr Green was speaking at the Australasian Pacific Extension Network Forum, which will discuss the need for inter-related disciplines for today’s modern farmer. “Once upon a time agriculture was considered a relatively simple endeavour and the role of the extension agent was to transfer technology to improve productivity and profitability,” Mr Green said. “Time and improved knowledge have changed that view.”

“Today primary producers must look beyond their productivity and profitability to embrace inter-related concerns about food safety and quality, occupational health and safety, animal welfare, rural communities, and environmental issues on a local, regional and global scale.”

Mr Green said the old view that farmers or land managers are passive recipients of knowledge that is generated on research farms and in laboratories has also changed.

“It is now recognised that forcing change onto farmers and rural communities will not work,” he said. “Instead, research and extension providers need to work with land managers in a participatory way, listening to what they say about issues, and working collaboratively to achieve common and acceptable outcomes.”

He said the primary intention of the conference is to assist extension agents strike the right balance on these types of issues by facilitating thinking about, ‘What is extension?’ ‘How it is done?’ and ‘How can it be improved?’

“Within Tasmania, agricultural extension, development and research programs have been guided by industry plans put together by farmers and industry stakeholders working together with government,” Mr Green said.

“We now have industry plans for our dairy, red meat, wool, vegetable and horticultural industries.” Mr Green said over the next few months DPIWE staff will take the participatory approach a step further by developing Industry Action Partnerships as part of the State of Growth initiative.

These partnerships may be formed with regions, individual companies, groups of producers or key sectors. “I believe our State of Growth initiative is based on sound extension principles because it seeks to work with rural communities and industry to identify where government can best allocate its resources to achieve long-term sustainable growth,” Mr Green said.

Biosketch

Bryan Green was elected to State Parliament as a Labor Member for Braddon in 1998. Prior to being elected, Bryan was employed as a Union Official, an Electoral Officer, and for nearly 20 years as a Fitter and Machinist. Bryan was appointed as Minister for Primary Industries, Water and Environment in August, 2002 [in a reshuffle after the Forum, Bryan has now been made Minister for Infrastructure, Energy and Resources]. Bryan has been Deputy Chair Public Works Committee, and a Member of the Joint Standing Committee Environment, Resources and Development. He has been involved with many community organisations. He also says that he has a shack in the Highlands which he does not get to see that often but he likes to know that it is there.
**Keynote: David Morris: Tasmania Together: New democracy at work**

*Tasmania Together* was chosen as the keynote address for the APEN Forum to showcase a model of community engagement which has great application for extension, and which would extend delegates beyond traditional boundaries, methods and ways of thinking. As an initiator, participant and ongoing observer of *Tasmania Together*, David Morris was selected to speak about the program.

Drawing on his experience as a former diplomat who worked on Gareth Evans’ international award winning study of the post Cold War world, *Cooperating for Peace*, David reflected on the current poor state of democracy in Australia. He argued that Australians were feeling disillusioned and increasingly disempowered in the face of increasingly complex social and economic issues. His experiences in Eastern Europe and Ireland, however, drew him to believe that the information revolution and a new focus on communities provided an opportunity for a richer, more participate democracy than ever before. Out of this, the *Tasmania Together* process was born.

*Tasmania Together* is a pioneering project with the objective of ensuring the people of Tasmania have a say in their long-term social, economic and environmental future. *Tasmania Together* has set a vision for the State based on the wishes of the people. It also includes 24 goals and 212 benchmarks that were of most concern to the people during more than two-and-a-half years of community consultation. Overwhelmingly, Tasmanians want to live in safe, clean communities, with jobs and prosperity for everyone, and they want the world to be aware of our skills in areas such as the arts, education and technology. The State government aims to use this community-driven vision to work with the Tasmanian community to build the kind of future its people want and deserve, aimed at ensuring its children inherit a fairer, cleaner, safer and more prosperous Tasmania.

David described *Tasmania Together* as an experience in engaging as many as possible in a community of half a million people, to develop a community vision and goals for the next 20 years. He believed that it moved beyond conventional managerial democracy and even community engagement and attempted to be a truly empowering process that seriously grappled with the complexity of modern life. He argued that it reached beyond politics by signing up all political leaders to the process and seeking the involvement of key stakeholder groups in setting benchmarks to measure progress towards community goals. He felt that the process had survived a fair deal of political and media hype to become embedded in the strategic planning of government.

David challenged those in extension to consider the option of truly engaging with their community and creating the opportunity for a richer, more participative extension than ever before.

For more information on *Tasmanian Together* go to: [http://www.tasmaniatogether.tas.gov.au/](http://www.tasmaniatogether.tas.gov.au/)

**Biosketch**

David Morris is a former diplomat who worked on Gareth Evans’s international award winning strategic study of the post Cold War world, *Cooperating for Peace*. He has had postings in Eastern Europe during the collapse of communism and in Ireland during its economic boom. David has a BA (Hons) from the University of Sydney and an MBA from Henley Management College in the UK. He was selected by the US Government as the 2002 Australian nominee for its International Visitor Program, during which time he observed the Congressional debate on Iraq and met key policy leaders across a wide field from the United Nations to Nebraska and Oregon. David is currently the Convenor of the Australian Republican Movement in Tasmania and serves on its National Council. He returned home to Tasmania five years ago to advise on the *Tasmania Together* project and has remained since then a senior advisor to the Bacon Labor Government in the portfolios of Primary Industries, Water and Environment and, most recently, Health and Human Services.
Invited speakers – interdisciplinary

Three speakers from disciplines related to but distinct from extension were invited to speak on the opening morning of the Forum, immediately following the keynote address. These were: Dr Ruth Lane – museum outreach; Associate Professor Ian Blue – health promotion; and Dr Sue Kilpatrick – adult education. Opening the Forum with these speakers aimed to set the tone for the two days – introducing new concepts, extending the thinking of participants and expanding their idea of the boundaries of extension and its interconnections with other disciplines. Some effort was put into researching appropriate speakers and in negotiating with them over the content of their talks to ensure that they would hit the mark.

Dr Ruth Lane

Paper: Louise Douglas and Ruth Lane – Engaging communities: a report from the National Museum of Australia

Dr Ruth Lane demonstrated how the National Museum of Australia is using its displays and presentations (interpretation) as a platform for engagement with the community. She spoke about some of the more innovative approaches being developed by the National Museum of Australia as it attempts to set new benchmarks for engaging a diverse range of communities in contemporary issues. These approaches include creating forums for public debate and facilitating learning through contemporary personal stories and connecting with existing knowledge.

Biosketch

Ruth has been the Murray-Darling Project Coordinator for the National Museum of Australia. She has been a curator of environmental history, working in the Land and People section of the National Museum. She recently completed a PhD at the University of Wollongong on the social and cultural dimensions of land use change in the East Kimberley since the 1960s, with a specific focus on irrigated agriculture, tourism and Aboriginal land use. This year she started as a lecturer in environment and planning at RMIT.

A/Prof Ian Blue

Health promotion – a fresh perspective is needed

Rural health expert, A/Prof Ian Blue, defined health promotion as the process of enabling people to improve their health and to increase control over the conditions that enable health. He said health promotion included activities which strengthened the knowledge, skills and capabilities of individuals through to changing the social, environmental and economic conditions, i.e. the socio-cultural determinants of health. Ian identified the five priorities for health promotion into the 21st century as:

1. Promote social responsibility for health
2. Increase investments for health development
3. Expand partnerships for health promotion
4. Increase community capacity and empower the individual
5. Secure infrastructure for health promotion

However, Ian did not feel health promotion was being effective. He argued that more effort was needed to assist people to take more responsibility for their health through developing their ‘self-efficacy’. He defined self-efficacy as “your belief in your ability to carry out a
specific task to get a good health outcome” – in other words, self efficacy determines what you will try, how hard you will try and for how long.

Biosketch
Ian is Director of the University Department of Rural Health, at the Launceston campus of the University of Tasmania. He has had a long career as a registered nurse and midwife and clinical educator in Adelaide before starting an academic career in 1989 at Whyalla in South Australia as the Foundation Head of the School of Nursing. He has an extensive track record in rural and remote nursing, and health care practice. He has been National President of the Association for Australian Rural Nurses.

Dr Sue Kilpatrick

Paper: Sue Kilpatrick and Amabel Fulton – Developing effective learning activities: What extension can learn from the fields of adult education and learning communities

Dr Sue Kilpatrick spoke about developing effective learning programs, and in particular what extension could learn from the fields of adult education and learning communities. Sue described learning as assisting people and enterprises to make successful changes to their behaviour or practice. She described how adults learn, their attitudes to learning for work, and the characteristics of learning communities. Drawing on a recent research project, Sue identified the key characteristics of successful provision of client-focused education and training as:

1. Understanding client needs and motivations to participate in learning activities
2. Clearly defining objectives, measuring and following up on outcomes
3. Having efficient use of resources that ensures good value training for participants
4. Recognising current skills and providing clear and accessible pathways to learning activities
5. Having mechanisms for ensuring the appropriate delivery of training

Sue recommended extension providers use these criteria as a checklist; become part of a learning community; scan for opportunities to match training to client needs; value the skills and knowledge of their clients; and promote the value of learning at every opportunity.

Biosketch
Sue Kilpatrick is a Senior Lecturer in adult education at the University of Tasmania. She is also the Tasmania State Chair of the the FarmBiS state planning group. Sue is specifically interested in the link between participatory training and farm profitability.

Impact of the interdisciplinary speakers

Feedback from the discussion groups, the Forum Evaluation, and general observation at the Forum all indicated that these interdisciplinary speakers succeeded in engaging and challenging the audience to broaden their view of what extension is and where it fits within the broad field of disciplines engaged in change management and learning. In particular, Ian Blue and his concept of self efficacy were mentioned as having made an impact. It was evident from the discussion groups that most participants found useful lessons for their personal practice and for the extension profession as a whole from these speakers.
Invited speakers – best practice in extension

On the second morning of the Forum three invited speakers addressed aspects of best practice in extension. These were Dr Mark Paine – professional practice in extension; Dr Jeff Coutts – models of practice; and A/Prof Bob Macadam – capacity building. They were chosen because they are regarded as exemplars of current extension practice. Both Jeff and Bob’s papers were based on work undertaken researching extension practice under the auspices of the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building for Innovation in Rural Industries.

Dr Mark Paine
Paper: Mark Paine and Ruth Nettle – Best Practice Extension: mediating learning relationships

Mark’s presentation explored the conceptual space that the field of extension occupies. It also considered what extension actually is by looking at the roles undertaken by extension practitioners. He concluded that extension is a relationship that changes with the context. The conceptual space occupied by extension is viewed differently by different actors. The paper urged recognition of extension as a profession which needs to relate to client expectations and respond to various challenges. Mark and Ruth gave a range of suggestions that would build professionalism.

Key points from the presentation were that using a concept of professional practice could improve the profile of Extension; that learning relationships between advisors and clients provide a means to improve professional practice; and that the technical system, learning challenges and needs of the relationship need to be managed simultaneously in these relationships.

Biosketch
Dr Mark Paine is Principal Research Fellow in Innovation and Change at the Institute of Land and Food Resources, University of Melbourne. He conducts research projects on learning processes and continuous business improvement in the dairy industry. Mark also supervises a number of postgraduate research projects spanning issues in farming systems, succession management, water use efficiency and decision-making. He holds a Masters degree in Agricultural Systems from Massey University (New Zealand) and a PhD from Wageningen Agricultural University (The Netherlands).

Dr Jeff Coutts
Paper: Jeff Coutts and Kate Roberts - Models of Extension Best Practice

Jeff’s paper emerged out of a two year national review of extension and education across Australia. It developed extension theory by looking at a range of effective current extension/education projects to see 'what works and why'. Through the analysis a number of different extension models were confirmed as being used. A significant finding was the importance of the interplay and interdependency between these different extension models. It introduces the 'Capacity Building Ladder', demonstrating this interplay and the concept of C2E2S2 - or Community Capacity Extension and Education Support System. The paper also looks at individual models to highlight best-practice within models to facilitate effective outcomes.

Biosketch
Dr Jeff Coutts was the convenor of the 1993 Australasian Extension Conference at the Gold Coast. He has worked in extension in the private, government, overseas development and university sectors. He was
Director of the then Rural Extension Centre for a number of years and now has his own evaluation and extension business. Jeff has worked with Kate Roberts on a two year National Review of Extension and Education funded by the Capacity Building for Innovation in Rural Industries Cooperative Joint Venture.

A/Prof Bob Macadam

Paper: Bob Macadam, John Drinan, Neil Inall and Bruce McKenzie - Extension and capacity building are not necessarily the same.

Bob Macadam reported on work undertaken in the project “Improving Institutional Support Arrangements for Rural Capacity Building”, Project C of the Capacity Building for Innovation in Rural Industries Co-operative Venture commissioned in 2002. In their Report, Growing the Capacity of Rural Australia: the task of capacity building, the authors construed capacity building as:

"externally or internally initiated processes designed to help individuals and groups associated with rural Australia to appreciate and manage their changing circumstances, with the objective of improving the stock of human, social, financial, physical and natural capital in an ethically defensible way".

They argued that the stock of human and social capital is developed through learning - but learning is not the sole outcome of capacity building - all forms of capital may be enhanced and are interchangeable. Extension and/or education programs are commonly equated with capacity building but this is called into question. The implications for extension principles and practice are reviewed.

Key points from the talk were that effective capacity building:
- maintains a focus on outcomes as improvements in the stock of capital sought by stakeholders;
- Defines and engages the relevant communities of practice, and builds a common agenda and willingness to collaborate among their members;
- depends on political and institutional commitment to the goal of capacity building programs, and the alignment with it of strategically important organisations;
- depends on availability of skilled practitioners, on their reflective practice and on research into all its aspects.

Biosketch

Bob Macadam started out as an agronomist with the Dept of Agriculture in the 1960s. He then did a postgraduate diploma in extension at Melbourne University and later an MSc. He was the co-founder of the Hawkesbury Diploma of Rural Extension in 1970. At Hawkesbury from 1970 to 1997, he developed a mixture of undergraduate and postgraduate programs based on experiential learning and systems principles and practice, and action research. He has extensive overseas experience in rural development, program design and evaluation. From 1997 till now, he has been an Adjunct Professor at the University of Western Sydney and a member of the Rural Enablers consulting group.

Impact of best practice speakers

The best practice presentations rated highly in the Forum Evaluation. There was a view that it was very pleasing to hear public outputs from the Cooperative Venture Capacity Building project. In particular, Mark Paine and Jeff Coutts were mentioned as making a big impact.

In the few months following the Forum, MLA have adopted Jeff Coutts’ approach to ensure a range of extension models are being implemented (see Postscript).
**APEN/GRDC 2003 Awards for Excellence in Extension**

Two APEN/GRDC 2003 Awards for Excellence in Extension were presented during the Forum Dinner on the *MV Cartela*. Both winners presented papers discussing their work in a plenary session the following morning.

**Young Professional Award**

**Jess Jennings**, Agriculture and Rural Development, University of Western Sydney (Hawkesbury)

Young Professional Award winner, Jess Jennings, reflected on the Profitable Pastures Project, an Action Research extension project conducted across the NSW dairy industry from 1999 to 2003. The project sought to engage dairy farmers in developing a learning process that suited their own needs. Jess was involved in the project firstly as a researcher conducting his PhD, and later as project coordinator.

The Profitable Pastures Project initiated farmer-oriented extension based on an action research methodology that is reported to have raised the profile and role that participating farmers played within their industry. Jess highlighted the value of facilitating the learning process, encouraging farmer ownership of their own learning process, and the advantages of action research as an extension tool. His presentation explored issues with research and extension methodology.

**Biosketch**

Jess has academic qualifications to Honours level in both Economics and Econometrics from the University of New England, in Armidale NSW, where he is now also pursuing an Arts degree in his spare time. Since graduating, Jess spent over two and a half years with the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE), during which time he worked on Australian agricultural industry analysis at the state and national level that was quantitative and statistics based, including investigations into the adoption of technology in the Australian dairy industry. This work led Jess into the domain of qualitative research as a Dairy Australia PhD scholarship candidate and later co-coordinator of the NSW-wide Profitable Pastures Project. Jess is currently focused on developing contemporary extension methodology and applying relevant methods, specialising in Action Research, to the area of Natural Resource Management through his consulting practice and associations with universities, extension and farming systems organisations, research centres and industry and farmers.


**Experienced Professional Award**

**Fiona Johnson**, Manager of Practice Change, Department of Primary Industries, Victoria

Winner of the Experienced Professional Award, Fiona Johnson, presented a rationale for government and industry investment in extension – showing that in fact it is just one of the critical tools used across all parts of society to bring about change. As the Manager of Practice Change with the Department of Primary Industries in Victoria, Fiona has been examining the role of extension as part of an interdependent package of change mechanisms to bring about social, economic and environmental change.

Fiona used the water use efficiency program in the Victorian Dairy Industry as an example. This uses a combination of command and control (through the Water Act, the Local Government Act); self-regulation (through Environmental Management Systems, Transferable Water Entitlement Guidelines); economic incentives (incentives targeted at farmers eg whole farm planning, MDBC Cap and the water market); and extension (through Target 10, water policy training, private irrigation design consultants, CMA, Murray Dairy/UDV networks and decision making).

Fiona concluded that extension was a mechanism to achieve change, which had a key impact on the human and social capital of people in rural communities and extension providers. She said this impact occurred through accelerating change and innovation, managing risk or negative consequences, and building capacity of individuals and communities to cope with change. Fiona argued that this ultimately leads to environmental and economic outcomes.

**Biosketch**

After completing a Bachelor of Science degree at Melbourne University, Fiona began her career with the Department of Primary Industries in horticultural regulation and extension. After 10 years focusing on technical issues, an interest in agribusiness led her to a role in marketing where she developed market intelligence for the horticulture industry, which included overseas postings in Europe and Asia. She then moved to the Northern Irrigation Region of Victoria where she became involved in extension activities and developed an interest in increasing the adoption of natural resource management practices, particularly in irrigated agriculture. Fiona spent several years implementing natural resource programs at a sub-catchment scale further developing an applied understanding of extension concepts. When Fiona undertook the management of the Surface Water Management program in the Northern Irrigation Region, she began to apply a more strategic approach to extension and achieving change in rural communities. In 1999, Fiona moved into social research, initially examining approaches to increase the adoption of natural resource management research results. The basis of her work used a strategic approach to bring together the needs of the end-user, the policy outcomes required and the appropriate adoption pathways. This broad approach is now being used more broadly to assist the selection, design and implementation of packages of instruments to deliver NRM policy outcomes.
Contributed papers

There were three contributed paper sessions spread throughout the Forum, with a total of 36 papers presented. Presenters were given 12 minutes with no time given for questions from the floor. The presentations were designed to be short flag-waving exercises, allowing presenters time only to introduce their topic and capture the audience’s interest. The audience were encouraged to contact the speaker in the break periods and to read their full papers on the internet.

All the contributed papers are accessible on the Regional Institute’s website at: http://www.regional.org.au/au/apen/2003/papers

Broad range of papers presented

The papers covered a wide range of topics representing current thinking and practice in extension. Both practitioners and researchers presented papers exploring diverse fields that included: participative research in natural resource management, techniques to measure community resilience, learning processes, encouraging continuous improvement, incorporating social research into extension, working with groups, community forestry, rural water usage, and many others.

The following list of loosely grouped keywords gives an indication of the range of topics covered:

- extension staff, extension research, extension theory, extension model, extension skills, traditional extension, extension strategy, landholder extension roles, tools, delivery, strategic, campaign, informed extension, training, APEN
- farmer attitude, personality, locus of control, adoption of innovations, program learning, knowledge generation, KASA (Knowledge, Aspirations, Skills, Attitudes), technology development, transfer of technology, Bennett’s Hierarchy, credibility, trust, asking, listening, acting, legacies, communication, cultural, production, dissemination
- social capability, capacity building, community values, community resiliency, quality of life
- group model building, stakeholder decision-making, participatory, participation, systems, perceptions, collaboration, partnerships, consensus building, collaborative forest management, community structures
- evaluation
- research, action research, participatory action research, focus groups, phone surveys, social research, social research process, semi-structured interviews, Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge Systems, needs analysis, survey world views, normative, interpretive, dialogic, critical
- discourse analysis, poststructuralism, discourses, cultural sociology, systems thinking, soft systems theory
- information, information skills, information literacy, library services, information delivery, lifelong learning, web
- farmer groups, group design, group models, measuring group success
- marketing, supply chain, policy

The papers were based on work in the following industries and areas:

- cotton, dairy, NRM, water allocation, horticulture, integrated pest management, Brassica, GIS, conservation, environment, irrigation, sustainability, Environmental Management Systems, Landcare, mangos, viticulture, marron, aquaculture, biodiversity, bush, riparian, shelter-belts, soils, sustainable grazing systems, water management, lifestyle landowners, small farms
- Australia, Brazil, Kenya, New Zealand

Presentations of high quality

Several discussion groups commented on the high overall level of professionalism and sophistication of the papers presented, noticing an improvement on previous APEN Forums. The contributed papers were rated highly in the Forum Evaluation, however there was some concern about the lack of question time and the fact that in one room, two presentations were held at once, creating difficulties for both presenters and audience.
**Poster session**

The Forum organisers believed that posters are an under-utilised tool in extension and scheduled a real poster session with dedicated space and time, and sought to encourage the use of posters by offering a prize for the best poster. Various factors intervened and the time for the poster session was truncated by the visit to Government House (see the Evaluation Report).

Seventeen posters were presented, including one video presentation. The posters described a broad range of programs and research projects, exploring numerous approaches to extension.

The following assortment of keywords indicates the range of topics covered:

- evaluation, phone surveys, survey, statistics
- participatory learning, participation, community engagement, empowerment, community ownership, collaboration, ambassadors
- adult education, adult learning principles, learning tools, communication, sharing experiences, education, information continuity, information and communication technology, product development, adoption, extension, practice change, continuous learning
- attitudes, behaviour, policy, language, culture
- farming, styles, diversity, communities
- business principles, marketing principles
- management plans, methods
- organisational culture, team building

The posters were based on work in the following industries and areas: viticulture, revegetation, farm forestry, small farms, families, business management, animal welfare, languages other than English, biodiversity, habitat, wetland, protection, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), urban planning, horticulture, Tri-State extension, low rainfall linking project, drought, and stress.

The Best Poster award was given to Gerald Hogan and Sally Raphael for the poster “Developing rural grapegrower communities through CRCV Extension”. This poster described Viticare, a coordinated national extension program in Viticulture, and the main extension vehicle of the Cooperative Research Centre for Viticulture. Viticare utilises rural community development processes to build community capacity by providing a range of new and latest technologies and information from scientific research.

Dr Peter Lane, Head of the School of Agricultural Sciences, University of Tasmania and John James, President of APEN, judged the award. The posters were judged against the following criteria:

- **PRESENTATION**: the extent to which the poster is well presented in a technical sense. Is it well designed? Does it use space well? Is it aesthetically pleasing? Does it make appropriate use of illustrations? Is there an appropriate amount of text? Is the font size of the text appropriate?
- **INFORMATION**: the extent to which the poster conveys a message. Is there enough information in the presentation? Is there too much information? Do the visual aids convey information?
- **INTEREST**: the extent to which the poster arouses interest in the viewer. Is the story exciting? Is enthusiasm or commitment exhibited?
- **RESEARCH**: the quality of the underlying research that the poster presents. Is the methodology mentioned? Is the methodology sound? Are the results plausible? Was the research conceptually developed? Was the starting hypothesis sound?
Training workshops

Providing practical take-home skills
As part of a commitment to having a range of formats, and to ensuring the Forum provided practical take-home skills as well as ideas, it was decided to include a range of training workshops in the program. All but one of the workshops were delivered by local Tasmanian presenters. The evaluation showed that the training workshops were well received overall.

Six workshops were presented: Community building; Environmental Management Systems; Evaluation; Group facilitation; Media skills; and, Public speaking.

Workshop summaries:
Community building – Lori Rubenstein (Manager, Planning, Performance and Special Projects, Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services)

This workshop examined and discussed the latest research evidence about building strong communities and interactively applied these concepts to a case study in a small group exercise. Questions such as the following were explored:

- What is driving the interest in “community building”? What do we hope to gain?
- How can we engage people and build strong, effective communities – what does the research and on-the-ground experience tells us?
- Are there particular ways of working that help engage people, build and maintain strong communities?
- What kinds of resources and investments are needed by various players – governments at all levels, private sector, NGOs, community organisations, individuals, others?
- Are there new kinds of partnerships that would facilitate engaging and building communities?

Environmental Management Systems – Genevieve Carruthers (Environmental Systems Specialist with NSW Agriculture)

This workshop examined the management process outlined within an Environmental Management System (EMS); in particular, that detailed by the International Standard, ISO 14001. The elements required to make a ‘system’ operate within the farming context were elaborated upon in an informal workshop approach.

Farmer experiences with this management approach were highlighted, and a video, produced as part of the National EMS in Agriculture training package, was shown to highlight benefits and perceptions of EMS amongst the farming community. The workshop also discussed the likely areas of support farmers may need when developing and implementing an EMS and focussed on what the extension community could provide to meet these needs.

Evaluation – Christine Fahey and Clarissa Cook (University Department of Rural Health, Tasmania)

This interactive workshop was designed to introduce field workers, managers and program funders to evaluation and explore answers to the following questions:

- Why evaluate?
- What can be evaluated?
- How do I plan an evaluation?

The presenters addressed each of these questions and outlined some basic evaluation principles and concepts. Participants were introduced to the various steps involved in designing and conducting evaluations, regardless of the size or complexity of the program or activity being evaluated. The workshop stressed designing evaluations to ensure they are achievable within the available resources and given time-frames. It emphasised the role of evaluation as a valuable part of the learning and quality-improvement cycle.
Group facilitation – Mary Whitaker (Training Facilitator, Rural Development Services Pty Ltd, Tasmania)

This introductory level workshop provided participants with techniques and tools for effective facilitation of small groups. The essential requirements and characteristics of good facilitation were discussed and participants did some simple exercises to put these ideas into practice. Five elements of effective facilitation were covered:

- Facilitation and the facilitator’s roles
- Group dynamics
- Effective meetings
- Quality communication
- Use of facilitation tools

Media Skills – Warwick Brennan and Catherine Anderson (Corporate Marketing Unit, DPIWE, Tasmania)

Attendees were given an overview of the inner workings of the media from two journalists who now work within a government department. The workshop covered how to get the best from media opportunities, including interviewing techniques, handling contentious issues and what to expect. Some videotaped examples were shown.

Public speaking – Sara Gul (President, University of Tasmania’s Law Society)

Participants were introduced to the “C.E.S” program for speaking success, designed to encourage participants to become more comfortable and confident before an audience of their peers. The three key features of a well told story/speech are CONVERSATION, EMPATHY and STRUCTURE.

- CONVERSATION leads to CONFIDENCE
- EMPATHY leads to EXCELLENCE
- STRUCTURE improves STORYTELLING

In a stimulating and entertaining workshop, participants gave short talks implementing the “C.E.S” methods, enhancing their public speaking skills.
Discussion groups – learnings for personal practice and the extension profession

Purpose of discussion groups
The purpose of the discussion groups was multi-functional. Firstly, they were designed to give participants the opportunity to reflect on the presentations from the keynote and invited speakers and discuss the implications for their personal and professional practice. Secondly, the dialogue at these sessions provided an opportunity to generate further meaning and understanding of the presentations. Thirdly, the discussion groups gave participants an additional opportunity to engage with each other and expand their networks. And finally, the discussion group outcomes generated useful information about the Australian extension profession, and what practitioners are looking for to professionally develop their practice.

What we did
Participants were allocated to one discussion group for the duration of the Forum. The discussion groups convened after the keynote and/or invited speaker sessions on each day, with a facilitator directing and recording dialogue. The same format was used for both discussion group sessions, with the facilitator asking group members to provide points on: i) what the presentations meant for their personal practice and; ii) what the presentations meant for the extension profession. The discussions were summarised in the final discussion group session and presented to all the delegates at the closing session of the Forum.

Implications for participant’s personal practice
Several predominant themes arose in the discussion groups in relation to personal practice. These were: building one’s own capacity and that of one’s clients; effectively engaging clients; effective use of language; and, incorporating learning theory and approaches into personal extension practice.

In terms of building capacity, participants discussed the importance of determining whose capacity is built in the process of extension and where capacity building can be optimised. Defining the concept of capacity building for extension was an important area for dialogue, with enabling strategies and empowerment dominant themes. Related to the concept of capacity building was engagement of clients, where the recognition of community interests was discussed. Effective approaches to engagement were also discussed, with the development of relationships, long term timelines and bottom-up approaches being seen as critical elements which current practice, and the system within which extension is delivered, were challenged to address adequately.
Common between all the groups was a discussion about the effective use of language in their personal practice. Using appropriate language with clear and simple messages was an important part of practice, and the use of personal stories and case studies was mentioned as a tool for effectively getting messages across to clients.

All groups had discussions about learning in terms of generating life long learning, using adult learning principles and initiating collective learning processes for change. It was implied by the groups that the use of these principles in their own extension practice was critical to having long term effectiveness.

**Implications for the extension profession**

There was a common sense between the groups that extension has matured as a profession in the ten years since the first APEN National Forum, with the process becoming more professional and the research more sophisticated. People saw that the field of extension has changed and will continue to evolve. There was a strong feeling that extension was necessary, legitimate and important. However, it was recognised that the profession does not have a high standing in the community and that its legitimacy is often challenged. It was felt the profession needs to meet the challenge of understanding itself (“mapping our space”) and where it fits amongst other professions and to clearly articulate its role and value.

Other areas discussed by most or all the groups were the need to: become more aligned as a profession and discipline; be clear about concepts (e.g. capacity building) and objectives; integrate theory and practice, ensuring that theory informs practice and practice informs theory; take care to use simple language, avoiding inappropriate use of jargon; and, recognise commonalities and opportunities for shared learning between extension and other disciplines. Many participants discussed the shift toward greater engagement with diverse groups within communities, seeing it as necessary, but presenting a challenge for the profession to achieve genuine engagement that empowers people, rather than simply informing them. The notion that the concept and term of extension itself needs to be “reclaimed” was also debated amongst many of the groups.

Several opportunities for the extension profession in Australia were identified. Engaging with policy at multiple levels, from investors to community leaders to policy makers, was seen as important - several people saw an important role for APEN here. Promoting social responsibility among consumers, linking with other professions, and the development and practical use of extension theories were also seen to be important to the future of extension.
Report-back and wrap-up session

The Forum concluded with a plenary session in which short reports were presented by each of the following:

- Representatives from each of the discussion groups, summarising their discussions
- Robin Thompson – reporting on the Rural Servicing in Transition workshop
- Roger Johnson – The Regional Institute, the website hosting the Forum papers
- Tom McCue – Grains Research and Development Corporation, the Forum’s major sponsor
- John McKenzie – Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building for Innovation in Rural Industries
- John James – President of APEN
- John Pauley – General Manager for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, DPIWE, Tasmania
- Iva Quarisa – The Young Irrigation Network
- Scott Ledger – Queensland APEN Chapter
- Frank Vanclay – Forum Convenor

The essence of the first two reports are presented in the sections on the Discussion Groups and the Rural Servicing in Transition Workshop. Roger Johnson explained the philosophy of the regional institute and gave details of how to access the Forum papers on the Regional Institute’s website, at http://www.regional.org.au/au/apen/2003/papers

Speaking for the Forum’s major sponsor, Tom McCue from the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC), said that the take-home messages for Research and Development Corporations were the need for participation and engagement, developing a better learning culture, efficient use of resources, and recognition of the complexity of the farming community. Tom said that GRDC is trying to strike a balance between development, delivery and evaluation, and have moved to a more business-oriented approach – with larger scale investments, alliances and partnerships. He finished by inviting delegates to let GRDC know where they think the corporation should be investing money.

John McKenzie, Manager of the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building for Innovation in Rural Industries, said how pleasing it was to get positive feedback about the cooperative venture’s work from the Forum delegates, who are major stakeholders in the program. He said the cooperative venture is undergoing some reviews, and its future direction will be decided in February 2005. Funding will continue at least another couple of years, and its proponents are keen to lock into a longer term funding arrangement. The current projects will be built on, and there will be opportunities to apply for project funding for individual projects.

APEN President John James said he found the two days of the Forum really exciting, confirming that APEN is heading in the right direction. He stated that APEN sees three major roles for itself: networking; professional development; and representation, and that all three were being progressed. John concluded by challenging the delegates to “walk the talk” of the Forum, to be meaningful in engagement, to be a community of practice, to get involved in ongoing continuous improvement, and to become active in their local area through clusters or whatever is possible.

John Pauley, General Manager of Food Agriculture and Fisheries, DPIWE (Tas), endorsed the Forum. “We have to put extension up there in lights as the critical element,” he said. “For those research organisations that are spending $500 million on knowledge development – until it is converted into action on farm that gives improved productivity, improved social outcomes for farmer and family, and sustains our environment – that research hasn’t really delivered. It is only when the knowledge is adopted and applied that we get returns from the half a billion we spend.”

Apart from the above pre-organised reports, a number of other delegates also approached the Convenor saying they had been inspired by the Forum and expressed their desire to present a short report on activities they were initiating. Time restraints meant that only two of these were able to speak. Iva Quarisa (NSW Agriculture, Griffith) informed delegates of the Young Irrigation Network in NSW which had recently received funding from AFFA and is seeking to form a national network involving irrigation
farmers as well as young people involved in associated areas such as government departments, rural finance organisations, irrigation suppliers, research and extension, and agribusiness [see www.youngirrigation.org]. Scott Ledger from the Queensland APEN chapter said they would continue to reflect on the Forum after the workshop on their electronic list-server and would follow this up with a face to face event in February to bring some of the Forum back to their colleagues (see Postscript).

Convenor, Frank Vanclay, concluded by saying the comments made during the report-back session showed a real commitment to extension, and work that can be done to reclaim the word ‘extension’. He wrapped up the Forum saying there had been lots of talk, lots of ideas and it was now time to put the ideas into practice. Somewhat rhetorically, he asked:

“Did the Forum achieve its objectives?

- Did we reclaim the word extension?
- Did we bring new people into the fold?
- Did we push the boundaries of extension as a discipline, and did we push your personal boundaries?
- Did we promote a new understanding of extension?
- Did we create a realisation that extension shares concepts and methods with other disciplines and that extension can learn from them, and contribute to them?
- Did we acknowledge and understand a range of tensions in extension?
- Did we provide the delegates with the taste and feel of Tasmania?
- Did we respond dynamically to your feedback?

We think we did and we hope that you do also.”

The Forum Evaluation Report would suggest that this was the case.
As a special initiative to ease the introduction of new people into the Forum, an Induction Day was held prior to the Forum opening. ‘New’ in this context was intended as a broad concept, implying new to extension, new to APEN, or new to conferences. The half day workshop was primarily intended to facilitate interaction amongst the workshop group, and to introduce them to APEN, to the jargon of extension, and to the art of getting the most out of conferences. Attended by about a dozen people, the activity was superbly facilitated by Laurie Bonney with assistance from Luciano Mesiti. The workshop was sponsored by the School of Agricultural Sciences at the University of Tasmania. The participants in this special activity formed a tight bond with each other and this increased their enjoyment of the Forum as a whole. The concept is highly recommended for future conferences.
Tasmania day: Rural Servicing in Transition workshop

A special workshop was held on the opening day of the National Forum to bring together all Tasmanian public and private rural service providers and the users of those services. The aim of the workshop was to face the reality of where those services are now, where they are liable to be in the future, and to make those decisions that are going to be of the greatest benefit for the provision of services which would maximize the wealth creating opportunities of the State.

The opportunity represented by bringing public and private rural service providers and the users of those services together was to improve service provider’s capacity to anticipate and meet emerging needs in the rural sector and thus enhance the sector’s development and its contribution to Tasmania. There was also the opportunity to improve service delivery to growers and agribusiness through identification of current or emerging gaps in service provision and development of plans/partnerships to address them.

**How it was done**

Managers and practitioners from industry associations, agribusiness, private consultancies, and DPIWE, as well as the farmers for whom services are provided, were invited. Over 75 stakeholders attended. A professional facilitator was employed to direct and manage dialogue and activities, and ensure the objectives of the workshop were achieved. The open-space technology approach was employed to establish the key issues facing extension in Tasmania and to prioritise and further develop concepts into actions for the future.

The event was underwritten by the Tasmanian Chapter of APEN. Additional support was achieved through sponsorship from the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, and endorsement was provided from the Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity Group, the Tasmanian Farmer and Graziers Association, and Greening Australia (Tasmania).

**What was achieved**

The key priority areas that were identified as being necessary for progression were:

- to have agriculture as an enthusiastic and positive industry in Tasmania
- to generate professional development in extension in Tasmania
- to have the State government working with the private sector on projects
- to use a ‘brokers’ model for extension and putting farmers first
- to commercialise existing but underutilised extension products, services and information
- empower growers to embrace positive change in Tasmania
- addressing short and long term time frame issues for extension
- determine the future of extension in government

The workshop was a great success in terms of confirming that extension was a vital activity for public, semi-public (NGO) and private sector organisations alike; enthusing everybody that extension is a viable concept that can adapt to new circumstances; revealing the future of extension is likely to be about public-private partnerships; and validating that APEN has a crucial role to play, especially at the state level.
Forum field trips

The pre and post Forum field trips were designed to provide participants with an opportunity to see practical examples of extension activities in the field, to network amongst themselves in an informal setting, and to experience some of the sights and tastes of Tasmania. The field trips illustrated varying roles of extension officers in the community and showcased two regions of Tasmania and the delights they have to offer!

Pre Forum Field trip - Derwent Valley Rural Development (one day)
Wednesday, November 26

Seventeen participants attended this field trip comparing and contrasting three approaches to extension:

“Valley Vision” is a community-led regional development initiative begun in 1999 by a committed group of Derwent Valley community members who believed that if they did not do something to create a better future for themselves, no-one else would do it for them. The tour group heard from Valley Vision members and viewed the progress and outcomes of the initiative.

The “North Facing Slopes” project was a financial incentive scheme for protecting the environment, aimed at reducing soil erosion from barren north facing slopes throughout Southern Tasmania. More than 100 farmers have been involved. The tour met one of these farmers, viewed a revegetated slope, and discussed with the farmer and the extension officer how and why this project has been so successful.

The private sector ExecutiveLink™ program has provided the impetus for change for a number of producers in the Derwent Valley. The program, run by Resource Consulting Services, involves the development of unique peer group coaching and support networks. Four to six farm businesses form a “Board”, who meet regularly to discuss the strategic management of each business, complimented by an education program in both personal and technical development. The tour discussed the program with participating farmers.

Post Forum Field trip - South East Experiences (two days)
Saturday to Sunday, November 29-30

The theme of the post Forum field trip was the provision of extension activities for large and small producers in a variety of industries. A chance to relax and explore the Tasman Peninsula was also on the agenda! Although only a small group of Forum participants – four in all – took the trip, it was an experience they thoroughly enjoyed. Tour members were pleased to visit a range of enterprises in a variety of settings and to see areas “off the beaten track” as well as some tourist landmarks such as Salamanca Market and Port Arthur.

The trip commenced with a leisurely stroll through Hobart’s famous Salamanca Market, combined with interviews with two very different agricultural stallholders – an organic fruit and vegetable retailer and a stall marketing a non-alcoholic elderflower beverage – to hear about the background and challenges to their businesses. Then, at Houston’s Farm, producers of fine salad mixes, the group heard about the farm’s quality assurance program and toured the fields of colourful lettuces and herbs. At Qew Orchards, Tasmania’s largest apricot orchard, the group saw the high tech grading machinery and heard about the role of Horticulture Australia’s industry development officer in the orchard’s development. At Port Arthur they had dinner with a local peony grower, gaining new perspectives about the flower industry, before taking a “Ghost Tour” around the convict ruins.

The following day included a visit to ‘Bangor’, a magnificent property and a past Landcare Nature Conservation Award winner. A number of issues including whole farm planning were discussed during a tour of the property. The final visit was to ‘Flexmore Park’, a mixed farming enterprise growing walnuts, and a diverse range of crops, sheep and cattle. Like ‘Bangor’, this property has been a leader in implementing natural resource management strategies.
**Social program**

Two key aims of the Forum were to create a good environment for networking amongst the delegates and to give them a taste and feel of Tasmania. The extensive social program was an important component towards achieving both these objectives. The activities were spread over a range of locations giving delegates an opportunity to see more than the immediate surroundings of the Forum venue and Hobart city, where most delegates were accommodated.

The social activities began on the first evening with a formal reception at Government House hosted by Tasmania’s new Governor, Richard Butler. This was followed by the APEN AGM held at the University Farm at Cambridge and a dinner at the nearby Meadowbank Estate. The next evening, the Forum Dinner was held aboard the *MV Cartela* with a picturesque cruise around the Derwent estuary. Apart from these organised activities, every effort was also made to ensure the morning and afternoon teas and the lunch break were long enough to provide adequate time for socialising and networking. Pre-Forum publicity also encouraged delegates to extend their visit to see more of Tasmania, taking advantage of the range of package tours offered by the official Forum travel agent, Tasmania’s Temptations.

**Reception at Government House (Wednesday)**
Delegates were hosted to a one hour reception at Government House on the bank of the Derwent River, a five minute drive from the city centre. The presence of Richard Butler added to the attraction of Government House itself, a fine example of colonial architecture set amongst landscaped gardens, making the reception an event not to be missed. Those delegates who attended enjoyed it immensely. Because of security arrangements, it was necessary to supply the names of attendees well in advance of the event, with last minute additions prohibited. Very unfortunately, this meant that some people had to miss out, and also created an organisational nightmare for the conference organisers.

**APEN AGM and Dinner at Meadowbank Estate (Wednesday)**
Delegates attending the APEN AGM were welcomed to the University Farm and introduced to the work of the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR) by Dr Neville Mendham, Deputy Director of TIAR. The AGM was followed by a dinner at Meadowbank Estate, a vineyard and restaurant. Those who did not want to attend the AGM were given the option to attend a wine tasting and/or view the gallery at Meadowbank while the AGM was in progress.

Seating at the dinner was pre-allocated, with delegates assigned to tables according to groups determined by which workshop they wished to attend on Day 1 of the Forum. This was designed to encourage delegates to mix with new people and begin to build bonds which developed throughout the Forum.

**Forum Dinner aboard the *MV Cartela* (Thursday)**
The Forum Dinner was held aboard the historic ferry *MV Cartela*. The ferry took the delegates on a very enjoyable cruise around the Derwent estuary. APEN President John James lead delegates in celebrating APEN’s 10th birthday, and invited one of APEN’s founding members, Bob Macadam, to reminisce on APEN’s roots and its achievements over the last decade. The APEN/GRDC awards were also presented (see pages 9-10).
Conclusion and outcomes

Were the aims achieved?

With the theme of “Extending extension: beyond traditional boundaries, methods and ways of thinking”, the purpose of the APEN National Forum was to: (1) provide a venue for networking, (2) a taste and feel of Tasmania, and (3) most importantly, to provide a range of interesting and challenging speakers and activities which would push participants in terms of their boundaries, methods, and ways of thinking about what extension is, and what extension could be.

Overall, the Forum was very successful. The delegates rated it highly in the evaluation (see separate report), and it was judged to be successful by the APEN National Executive as well as Forum Convenor, Frank Vanclay, and Forum Coordinator, Amabel Fulton. The Forum was a stimulating and enjoyable event that renewed commitment to extension and has triggered a number of follow-on activities.

The goal of providing an environment for networking was certainly achieved, with delegates rating this aspect highly in the evaluation. Through the Indigenous welcome, the reception at Government House, dinner at Meadowbank, and the dinner cruise aboard the historic MV Cartela, participants also experienced the taste and feel of Tasmania.

The invited speakers provided a range of views and approaches which were reflected upon and explored further in the discussion groups. While some delegates preferred the more practical contributions of the Best Practice presenters or the APEN Award winners, others preferred the bigger picture presentation of the keynote speaker, David Morris. While the conference overall was successful, participants would have preferred more time for questions, better lighting and sound quality in the main presentation room, and better display of imagery.

Key messages

Key messages arising from the presentations and discussions at the Forum could be grouped into three areas – (1) extension; (2) the role of APEN; and (3) lessons for extensionists.

1. Extension
   - It is time to reclaim ‘Extension’ as a term and a discipline.
   - Extension has a critical role to play in the future of rural Australia.
   - The boundaries of extension have broadened from the narrowest perspective of technology transfer to a broader perspective encompassing communication, education and training, community engagement and capacity building, as well as traditional technology transfer. It is now understood to occur at all stages of a project, including conception, design, delivery, evaluation and beyond. A new understanding of extension has emerged as being the process of facilitating change in rural communities.
   - Expansion of our understanding of extension also expands the awareness of our impact, our role and the role of APEN.
   - The extension profession is maturing in its practices, professionalism and research.

2. The role of APEN
   - APEN should facilitate opportunities for the extension profession to explore and then articulate what extension is, and its role in the community, thereby increasing community understanding and recognition of the value of extension.
   - APEN has an important role to play in policy and professional development.
   - APEN has an important role to promote networking within the extension community.

3. Lessons for extensionists
   - It is important to integrate theory and practice. Theory should inform practice, and practice should inform theory.
   - There is much to learn from other disciplines, and from our own discipline.
   - The extension profession is striving for professionalism and a broader world view.
Effective approaches to engagement require a focus on the development of relationships, long term timelines and bottom-up approaches. Current practice, skills and the system within which extension is delivered are challenged to address these requirements adequately.

Take care to use language appropriate to the particular clients being addressed.

Next steps and recommendations for extension

- Reclaim the term extension – continue to use the term and clearly communicate its scope and outcomes. Advocate the term, the profession and its role in facilitating change in rural Australia.

- Community engagement requires long-term timelines to get sustained commitment and the skills to run it. This is currently difficult to do successfully. APEN should explore how this can be achieved.

- Continue to foster professional development and sharing within and outside the extension profession.

- Ensure that the outcomes from the Capacity Building for Innovation in Rural Industries Co-operative Venture are effectively communicated throughout the profession, as well as to funding bodies, clients and policy makers.

- Individuals and organisations should foster relationships with other disciplines and professions, continue to encourage cross-linking, and encourage an openness to learn amongst extension professionals. APEN should take a lead in fostering this cross-discipline learning.

- Establish policies as to how extension should be operating in Australia, e.g. input into the design of research, integrating extension into all programs, investment to ensure on-ground outcomes, continuity of employment for professionals, integration across disciplines, and playing a role in industry decision making.

- Create a list of Key References to extension literature (say on the APEN website). This would provide a useful entry point for new people to the field.

- It was recommended that a handbook of extension methods be developed and made available on the APEN website.
Postscript

The enthusiasm generated by the Forum has led to a number of activities and initiatives that have occurred since. The following are initiatives the Forum organisers are aware of. There may be many other activities, large and small, that are not mentioned here.

Queensland Chapter Event, February 2004

Thirty-four people attended an event entitled ‘Extending extension – insights from the Tassie National Forum’ organised by the Queensland chapter of APEN on February 17, 2004 in Caloundra. The one day event was organised for people who could not attend the Hobart Forum but wanted an opportunity to gain some insights into what was presented and discussed there.

The day began with an overview of the National Forum by Darren Schmidt along with photo images from Hobart. Twelve people who attended the National Forum then shared their reflections on the event and what it means for our profession in an open discussion. A selection of papers from the Forum was also presented. The day concluded with a reflection session which produced very positive feedback and identified topics for future chapter events.

Prior to this event, the Queensland chapter also organised an on-line survey to help people from Queensland and Northern NSW reflect and share ideas on the National Forum. Twelve of the 27 people on the list responded. Overall, the reflections highlighted: the diversity in extension; the value of networking; defining extension and reclaiming the word; questioning the jargon and principles; and being challenged.

Meat and Livestock Australia – investing in extension, incorporating Jeff Coutts’ models, and reclaiming extension

Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) are increasing their investment into extension activities within their RD&E portfolios. They have also incorporated Jeff Coutts and Kate Roberts’ models of extension into their planning. MLA have realised that their extension activities to date have been narrowly focussed, and they now aim to have activities spanning the range of typologies identified by Jeff and Kate. They are also reframing the terminology they use so that ‘extension’ is being reclaimed as a broad term encompassing the range of activities that were previously segregated into the fields of marketing, training and communication.

Tasmanian ‘Rural Service Partnerships’ workshop, March 2004

On March 2, 2004, the Tasmania Chapter of APEN held a statewide workshop to discuss the opportunities for developing public-private partnerships in agriculture and natural resource management (NRM) in Tasmania. The workshop, titled ‘Rural Service Partnerships’, was a follow-up activity to the ‘Rural Servicing in Transition’ workshop held on the opening day of the National Forum, which aimed to reinvigorate the Tasmanian Chapter. The February workshop was held in conjunction with the Chapter’s AGM.

Invited guest speakers (producers, NRM managers, agribusiness, Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and local government representatives) were asked to discuss partnerships they are involved with, their pros and cons, and opportunities they see for new partnerships.
The day was very successful, with 25 people attending, all of whom became APEN members. Outcomes included:

- Extension was being used as the term for facilitating change in both agriculture and NRM – previously NRM people did not see themselves as involved in ‘extension’.
- Engagement of NRM people into the extension network.
- The State Government said it now has an increased emphasis on achieving implementation, as distinct from focusing mainly on research and development. The Government sees that its extension objectives will be delivered through partnerships, rather than doing it themselves.
- The extension deliverers present saw great potential for increasing their effectiveness by working together.
- The Tasmanian Chapter was revitalised with new members and a new executive was elected.
Appendices

1. Acknowledgements

The Forum Convenor (Prof Frank Vanclay) and the Forum Coordinator (Amabel Fulton) sincerely thank all those who were involved in making the 2003 APEN National Forum the success that it was. Specifically, we would like to thank the following people who have made a special contribution to the Forum.

Reference Group: Penny Bastock, Liz Bond, Simon Burgess, Rob Clark, David deLittle, Basil Doonan, Peter Hardman, Michael Hart, Alan Johnston, David O'Donnell, Ruth Paterson, Angela Sparrow, Judy Terry, Robin Thompson, Jane Weatherley, David Wright

APEN National Executive: John James (President)
Rosemary Currie (Executive Secretary)
Jane Weatherley (Tasmanian representative on the National Executive)
Darren Schmidt (ExtensionNet editor)

RDS Staff: Amabel Fulton (Principal)
David Fulton (Principal)
Tim Tabart (Project Manager)
Naomi McGrath Kerr (Administration)
Suzanne Betts (Tour Coordinator)
Sam Smee (Graphic design and facilitation)
Chris Chapman (IT support)
Tessie Kendell (Accounts)
Mary Whitaker (Facilitation, workshop presentation)
Jane Weatherley (Sponsor liaison and facilitation)
Shane Broad (Technical assistance and facilitation)
Stuart Betts (Logistical support)

Volunteers: Mukund Singh, Jason Grainger

Sponsors: Grains Research and Development Corporation
- Jan Mahoney
Land and Water Australia
- Jennifer Bruce
Meat and Livestock Australia
- Neale Price
Diary Australia
- Rob Morton
Department of Primary Industries Water and Environment Tasmania
- John Pauley, Rod Gobbey
Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research
- Rob Clark, Neville Mendham
School of Agricultural Science University of Tasmania
- Peter Lane

Workshop presenters: Lori Rubenstein, Genevieve Carruthers, Christine Fahey and Clarissa Cook, Mary Whitaker, Warwick Brennan and Catherine Anderson, and Sara Gul

Equipment loans: Department of Primary Industries Water and Environment Tasmania
- Rod Gobbey, Maria Hawkesley, Basil Doonan
Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research
- Bill Peterson
Referees of papers: Peter Ball, Lawrence Bonney, Jeff Coutts, Amabel Fulton, Sue Kilpatrick, Robert Macadam, Greg Pinkard, Tim Tabart, Robin Thompson, Frank Vanclay, Jane Weatherley

Indigenous Welcome: Brian Mansell – Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council

Website hosting papers: The Regional Institute – Roger Johnson and Claire Braund

Poster Judging: John James and Peter Lane

Photography: Darren Schmidt
Luciano Mesiti

Venues: Liz McLeod and staff at the Hobart Function and Convention Centre
Kay Robertson – Government House
Sarah Henty – Meadowbank Estate
Captain and staff aboard the MV Cartela

Forum Travel Agent: Kylie Bevan – Tasmania’s Temptations

Others: Allison McCann – Tasmanian Convention Bureau
Evonne Lovric – Horticulture Australia
Roslyn Prinsley – Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation

Field Trips:

Coordinators: Suzanne Betts and Tim Tabart

Derwent Valley Rural Development:
Tour guides: Suzanne Betts Lindsay Richley
Tony Nicholson – Historian
Gerald and Sue Ellis – Meadowbank
Ian Brown – Valley Vision
Cheryll Goodluck – Bus driver

South-East Experiences:
Tour guide: Suzanne Betts
Marianne and Wilhem Bekkhama – The All-Organic Stall
Annie Ashbolt – Annie’s Elderflower
Heather Chong – Qew Orchards
Colin Houston – Houston’s Farm
Tom Dunbabin – ‘Bangor’
Rob Morey – ‘Flexmore Park’
Felicity Langley – ‘43° South’
2. List of speakers and papers

Invited Speakers:

Indigenous Welcome: Brain Mansell, Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council

Minister’s speech: Hon. Bryan Green Minister for Primary Industries Water and Environment, Tasmania

Keynote speaker: David Morris

Related disciplines: Ruth Lane
Ian Blue
Sue Kilpatrick

Best practice: Mark Paine
Jeff Coutts
Bob Macadam

APEN/GRDC 2003

Awards for Excellence in Extension Winners: Jess Jennings

Workshop presenters:

Media skills Warwick Brennan and Catherine Anderson

Environmental Management Systems Genevieve Carruthers

Evaluation Christine Fahey and Clarissa Cook

Public speaking Sara Gul

Community building Lori Rubenstein

Group facilitation Mary Whitaker

Papers Presented: (Presenter in bold where more than one author).

Keynote:

David Morris Tasmania Together: New democracy at work

Related disciplines:

Louise Douglas and Ruth Lane Engaging communities: a report from the National Museum of Australia

Ian Blue Health promotion – a fresh perspective is needed

Sue Kilpatrick and Amabel Fulton Developing effective learning activities: what extension can learn from the fields of adult education and learning communities
Best Practice:

Mark Paine  
Best practice extension: mediating learning relationships

Jeff Coutts and Kate Roberts  
Models and extension best practice

Bob Macadam, John Drinan, Neil Inall and Bruce McKenzie  
Extension and capacity building are not necessarily the same

APEN/GRDC Award winners:

Jess Jennings  
Coordinating action research and extension practice with NSW dairy farmers

Fiona Johnson  
Why do we do extension?

Contributed papers:  (In alphabetical order. Presenter in bold where more than one author).

Refereed papers:

Sally Anderson  
Information and library services for extension officers in NSW Ag

Jane Elix and Judy Lambert  
Reshaping rural extension: New players – new roles

Sue Heisswolf, Stewart Lindsay, John Bagshaw and Noel Vock  
New experiences in working with horticultural farmers to improve NRM practices in Queensland

Carole Hollier, Julie Francis and Michael Reid  
Shrinking Extension to Fit a Growing Small Farm Sector

Vanessa Hood, Paul Blackshaw, Rosie Hannah, Megan Hill, Sally Dickinson, Angie Grills and John Whiting  
How do you know you're having an impact? Evaluation of the Grapecheque program.

Geoff Kaine, Jean Sandall and Denise Bewsell  
Personality and innovation in agriculture

Sue Kilpatrick, Liz Bond, Rowena Bell, Jacqui Knee and Greg Pinkard  
Effective farmer groups for defining best practices for sustainable agriculture

Greg Leach  
Negotiation - The hallmark of extension

Greg Leach and Jessica Wallwork  
Enabling effective participation, negotiation, conflict resolution and advocacy in participatory research – tools and approaches for extension professionals

B. Maheshwari, M. Plunkett and P. Singh  
Farmers’ perceptions about irrigation scheduling in the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment

Malcolm Martin, Ross Warren and Greg Stanley  
Rural water use, a systems approach to three years of challenges with triumphs, a queensland dairy perspective

Amanda May, Heather Shaw and Yvonne Orlando  
Extension - Finding solutions or co-creating pathways for change

Helen Murdock, Allison Long, One extension approach does not fit all: what can help decide which Chris Linehan and Lucy Finger to use?

Ruth Nettle  
Groups or one to one? Rethinking extension delivery: learnings from the dairy industry
Len Palmer

Discourses of sustainability: a Foucauldian approach

**Terry Parminter** and Tim Nelson

Dairy farmers' evaluation of environmental practices in SW Victoria

**Terry Parminter** and Bruce Small

Appreciating the influence of our own and others' world views upon extension strategies

**John Petheram**, Peter Stephen and Fleur Maidment

From engaging the public - to supporting citizens in collaborative partnerships. Insights for extension

**Michael Reid**, Carole Hollier, Julie Francis and Brian Furze

Linking Geographical Information Systems and Social Research: Investigating the Small Farm Sector

**Darren Schmidt**, Peter Holden and Tonia Grundy

Online opportunities: the case for re-configuring extension in a web environment

**Sergio Rustichelli Teixeira**, Helen Ross and Tom Cowan

Challenges after the research is "ready"

**Munyasi J.Wanjala**, David Lloyd and Doland Nichols

Information sources and dispersal channels in the extension of pasture weed management technologies

Unrefereed papers:

**Michael Boyd**

Extension agents too focussed on their 'tools'.

**Mike Bramley**, Neels Botha and Ian Tarbotton

Integrating extension science and delivery

**Greg Brown**

Measuring rural community resiliency

**Ingrid Christiansen**, Dallas Gibb, Bruce Pyke and Geoff McIntyre

Ever improving: building skills and culture to evaluate cotton extension outcomes

**Coltman A.C.**, Speight S.J. and Turner S.

Extension in line with an industry productivity target

**Kristin den Exter** and Alison Specht

Assisting stakeholder decision making using system dynamics group model-building

**Tony Dunn**, Michael Friend and Shane Hildebrand

Action research with NSW dairy farmers

Rowland Holmes

Turning information into knowledge

Dijana Jevremov

Approaches to facilitating the national adoption of integrated pest management by Brassica growers a

**Irene Kernot**, Scott Ledger, Terrence Campbell and Rowland Holmes

Theory into practice; working with mango supply chains to improve knowledge and practice

**Daniel Machin** Mandy Dearden and Peter Lacey

Marron Aquaculture Strategic Extension Campaign - an interim report

Helen Reynolds and Lyndall Ash

Success and Structure: Options for group design to match community needs

**Ian Tarbotton**, **Mike Bramley** and Hans Andersen

An approach to designing extension, a case study of bull management.

Carla Wilson

Involving communities in conservation
### Posters:  
(In alphabetical order)

#### Best poster winner:  
Gerard Hogan and Sally Raphael  
Developing rural grapegrower communities through CRCV extension

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>Paul Blackshaw, Vanessa Hood, Rosie Hannah, Megan Hill, Sally Dickinson, Angie Grills and John Whiting</td>
<td>Grapecheque: Having an impact in Victorian grapegrowers</td>
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<td>Prue Borschmann</td>
<td>Tree growing in rural landscapes</td>
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<td>Lucy Breen</td>
<td>Invigorating innovative communication strategies to reach hobby farmers and lifestyle landholders</td>
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<td>Jessica Connor, Margaret Hay and Grahame Coleman</td>
<td>Biodiversity extension: using community engagement</td>
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<td>Greg Day</td>
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<td>Gerard Hogan and Sally Raphael</td>
<td>The uptake of integrated pest management by apple growers</td>
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<td>Geoff Kaine, Denise Bewsell, David Williams and Jo Vigliaturo</td>
<td>Investigating innovative communication strategies to reach hobby farmers and lifestyle landholders</td>
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<td>Amanda Lewis</td>
<td>New approaches to enhancing participation in natural resource management</td>
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<td>Damian Lucas, Joanna Wills, Frank Vanclay and Ruth Lane</td>
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<td>Luciano Mesiti and Frank Vanclay</td>
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<td>Iva Quarisa</td>
<td>BiSLink: A project promoting farm business management training for horticulturalists from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds</td>
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<td>Gillian Stewart</td>
<td>Border and boundaries</td>
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<td>Gillian Stewart, Sam Doudle, Neil Cordon and Catherine Evans</td>
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<td>John Wilson</td>
<td>Making quantitative information useful</td>
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The Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN) is a professional organisation for extension professionals - people involved in community and rural development, adult education, communication and other related fields.

The network represents about 500 extension professionals across Australia, Asia and New Zealand. It has active chapters in every state of Australia with new chapters being added.

Our VISION for APEN is:

"APEN is the peak body for professionals working with people to manage change in agriculture and natural resource communities"

Our ROLE in contributing to that Vision is:

"To provide a platform for networking, professional development and representation of members.”

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