



Primary Industries, Water & Environment

# Rural Servicing in Transition A Tasmanian Workshop

Hobart, November 26, 2003

## Workshop outcomes report



*Greening Australia*  
(Tasmania)



# **Rural Servicing in Transition: November 26, 2003**

## **Workshop outcomes report**

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## Overview

### ***Rural Servicing in Transition workshop: November 26, 2003***

#### **Introduction and purpose**

A workshop was held in Hobart to bring together all public and private rural service providers within Tasmania and the users of those services. The aim of the workshop was to face the realities 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.

This brief report includes an overview of the workshop and its outcomes. It also includes transcribed notes from all the interest groups that developed in the concluding session of the workshop. These groups formed to progress initiatives that were identified in the course of the workshop as being key priority areas for rural service delivery in Tasmania.

The report is intended to provide feedback on the workshop to all participants and other interested parties who were not present on the day. It is also intended to stimulate the progression of the initiatives discussed on the day.

#### **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, Tony Richardson, was employed to direct and manage dialogue, activities and ensure the objectives of the workshop were achieved. An 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 the Australasia Pacific Extension Network. 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).



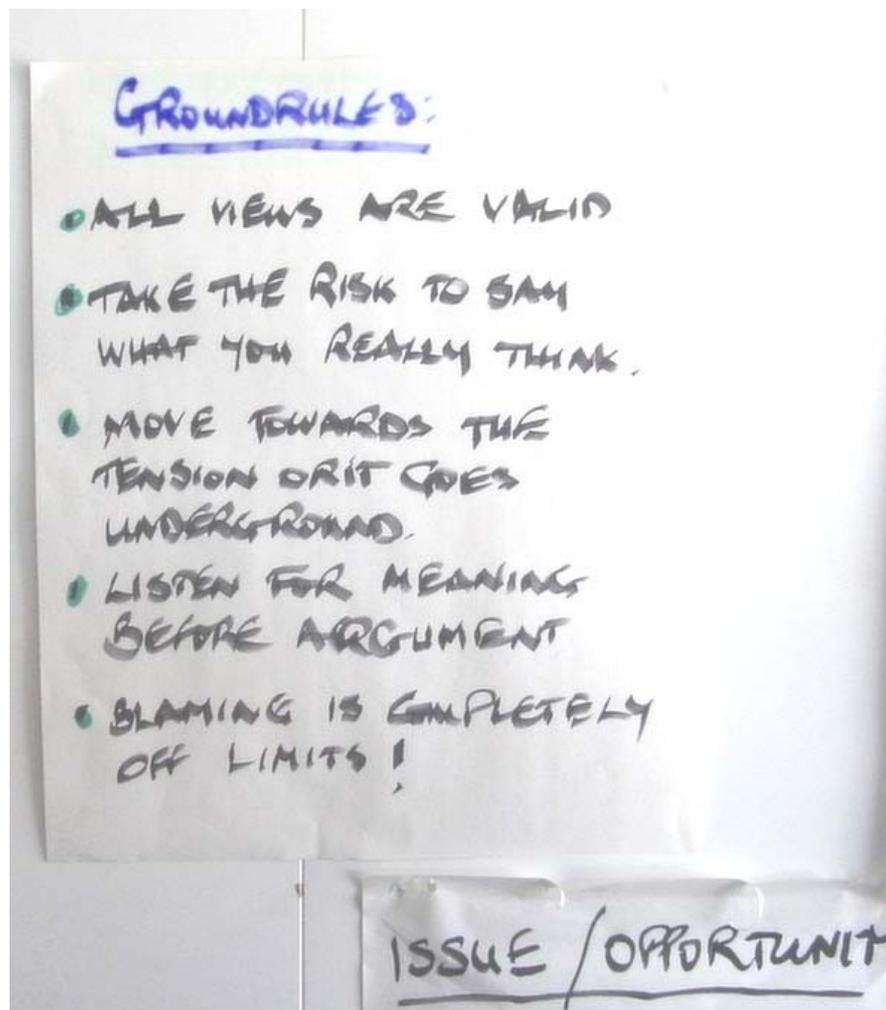
## What was achieved

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 model of 'brokers' for extension and putting farmers first
- to commercialise existing 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 that 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.



## Vote allocations

During the workshop a number of initiatives/issues were identified by the participants. These were placed on a wall and the participants were asked to vote on which ones they perceived as being the highest priority for progressing rural service delivery in Tasmania. Participants were given coloured dots depending on which sector they worked within – consultants, government, farmers, agribusiness or NGO (Non Government Organisation). This provided information on which initiatives/issues were seen as important by each sector. Each participant was able to allocate six votes.

**Table 1:** Vote allocations for initiatives/issue by industry sector

	<b>% of all votes</b>	<b>% of consultant votes</b>	<b>% of govt votes</b>	<b>% of farmer votes</b>	<b>% of agribusiness votes</b>	<b>% of NGO votes</b>
Agriculture as an enthusiastic and positive feel industry	<b>18.4</b>	1.8	27.6	15.9	31.1	6.5
Professional development in extension	<b>12.0</b>	5.3	11.0	9.1	11.1	22.1
Our culture our future	<b>2.8</b>	1.8	2.5	0.0	4.4	5.2
Innovating extension	<b>2.3</b>	1.8	2.5	4.5	4.4	0.0
Getting extension practitioners talking	<b>6.9</b>	1.8	6.1	4.5	2.2	16.9
Working with private sector on industry projects	<b>16.9</b>	36.8	11.7	20.5	24.4	7.8
Brokers – putting farmers first	<b>10.2</b>	19.3	8.6	18.2	8.9	3.9
Commercialising existing products	<b>8.4</b>	15.8	8.6	6.8	8.9	3.9
Empowering growers to embrace positive change	<b>8.4</b>	5.3	6.7	15.9	8.9	10.4
Short term resources vs long term issues	<b>7.7</b>	8.8	5.5	2.3	4.4	16.9
Role of extension government and local	<b>5.9</b>	1.8	9.2	2.3	2.2	6.5
Total number of votes per category	<b>391</b>	57.0	163.0	44.0	45.0	77.0
<b>% of total votes per category</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>41.7</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>19.7</b>

# **Have agriculture as an enthusiastic and positive feel industry**

(initially strengthening rural communities)

73 votes

## **Issue/opportunity**

Strengthening rural communities

## **Convenor**

Peter Tyson, DPIWE.

[Ph: 6421 7692 Email: [Peter.Tyson@dpiwe.tas.gov.au](mailto:Peter.Tyson@dpiwe.tas.gov.au) ]

## **Key discussions**

Skill people

Create rural wealth

- lifestyle/experiences
- money

Give agriculture a value

- economical
- mother industry
- effect on wider community

Lifting the profile

- most important industry
- change wider attitudes

Change the image of agriculture in the community

## **Possible first steps**

Capture exactly what is agriculture and put it in perspective

- audit/survey

Tell everyone

Identify the 'champions' who will promote the positive aspects of the industry

Sell the message to the masses

Change farmer attitudes to be more positive towards their industry

## **Why is it important?**

Affects the well being of the whole state

We are a big rural community

- farms are our support base

## **What's happening now?**

Social fragmentation

Image of agriculture is currently not good

No, not many people entering

Not attracting the best talent due to the way people are treated

Lack of enthusiasm and excitement

## **Ideal for 3-5 years**

Have agriculture as a job of choice

Have Tasmania as a nursery for agricultural professionals

- industry and government to deliver this

Have agricultural industry acknowledge as to what the value use – social, financial

## **First steps**

Marketing campaign

- within and outside industry

Comparative analysis between other industries

- agriculture vs tourism
- SARS or terrorist attack

Show politicians/community leaders what agriculture really is

Link in with other important large community issues

- health!!\$

## **Cooperation, coalitions needed**

Partnerships with high profile leverage

- Heart Foundation
- Health
- Sports
- Tourism

Industry other than agriculture – complementary

Government support

## **Role of APEN?**

Framework?

Identify community 'champions'

## **Who's responsible?**

Tas Together

Food Industry Council

Bryan Green

TFGA

Industry Associations

All who have a stake in primary industry

## **Professional development in extension**

22 votes

(Amalgamating three sub-groups)

### ***Sub Group 1 - Our culture our future***

11 votes

#### **Convenor**

Penny Bastock, DPIWE.

[Ph 63365263 Email: [Penny.Bastock@dpiwe.tas.gov.au](mailto:Penny.Bastock@dpiwe.tas.gov.au)]

#### **Key discussions**

Culture is important

Understanding culture helps to deliver extension

Extension can change culture

Extension culture is conservative farming culture

Culture's are diverse – regions, organisations, extension systems, need to change the culture of extension

#### **Possible first steps**

More mixed activities with farmers

Set up working group – this is a role for APEN, to work on changing extension cultures

(State govt, agribusiness, NGOs, ...)

### ***Sub group 2 Moving extension to encompass innovative technology, process and services***

#### **Convenor**

Nicole Middleton, NRM Facilitator

[Ph: 0439 404994 Email: [Nicole.Middleton@nht.tas.gov.au](mailto:Nicole.Middleton@nht.tas.gov.au)]

#### **Key issues/discussions**

Use of 'models' – individual, catchment

Issue must be an issue or appeal to them

Show direct benefit (\$)

Sharing of knowledge

Intellectual property of developing solutions to issues and sharing this information

#### **Possible first steps**

Education across users of extension services

Extension services have access to R&D

Communicate to ‘front-line’ extension people (e.g., field days, workshops) and remove the red tape between extension officers

### ***Sub group 3 - Getting extension practitioners talking in Tasmania***

27 votes

#### **Convenor**

Jane Weatherley, Rural Development Services  
[ Ph: 6231 9033 Email: [Jane.Weatherley@utas.edu.au](mailto:Jane.Weatherley@utas.edu.au)]

#### **Issues and opportunities**

Getting extension practitioners talking/learning/networking in Tasmania

#### **Key discussion points**

Lots of extension programs/officers working in isolation  
Information/resource sharing not occurring – don’t continually re-invent the wheel (learn from Tasmania – Australia – world)

#### **First steps**

Professional development (knowledge/skills)  
Networking incorporated into extension practices/projects  
Build on existing professional services e.g., APEN chapter

### ***Amalgamated group - Professional development in extension***

#### **Issue/opportunity**

Professional development, networking, promoting extension, to get cultural change

#### **Why is this important**

Increase return on R&D, sustainability, NRM  
Developing ‘our’ capacity to effect change  
Further development of the extension profession  
Foster the extension culture and best practice

#### **What happening now?**

Lack of communication between extension providers  
Competitive issue  
Isolation

## **Ideals in 3-5 years**

6-12 forums on extension

- providing quality training
- knowledge sharing
- client input

Understanding of extension

Support to attend conferences/forums etc

Extension valued enough to be included as core business not short term projects

Strong network of extension in Tasmania

## **First steps**

Development of an internet extension chat group

Obtain all of today's participants contacts, prefer email

Start state/regional extension groups (possibly APEN chapters)

## **Cooperation and coalitions needed**

Management support

Ministerial support of our value and role

## **Role of APEN**

Possibly facilitate some of the above actions e.g., chapters

## **What's taking responsibility for this to happen**

Jane Weatherley Rural Development Services [Ph: 6231 9033 Email:

[Jane.Weatherley@utas.edu.au](mailto:Jane.Weatherley@utas.edu.au)] collecting details.

You!

# Working with the private sector on industry projects

66 votes

## Convenor

Basil Doonan, DPIWE

[Ph: 6421 7611 Email: [Basil.Doonan@dpiwe.tas.gov.au](mailto:Basil.Doonan@dpiwe.tas.gov.au)]

## Issues/opportunity

At operational level need groups to help DPIWE prioritise activities

Need to develop plans to achieve growth

Driven bottom up

Include networking well together but not linked strategically to State of Growth

- expand to higher level
  - o include?

## First steps

Frontline relationships good

Higher up?

Environment changed with State of Growth

Govt not in business of competing

Identify priority projects

Govt doesn't drop low priorities

Industry strategic project development group is to plan operational part to strategic plan for agriculture

If something doesn't happen then lots of people will be shitty

## Who tells them?

Ray Hart (State of Growth)

Document thoughts to say to the Minister how we think – conservationists, farmers, service providers – can work with us to achieve State of Growth

Skills audit – yes/no

Defining projects hard

Team to deliver easy

Not necessarily industry specific

## Who does planning?

Wave flag

\$ into planning (DPIWE)

DPIWE must change view

## **Why important?**

How can government and private sector work in partnership to achieve mutual goals (operational)  
Better focus  
Better outcomes  
Synergy  
Maximise resources  
Achieve goals faster  
Professional development  
Consistent messages  
Ownership

## **What's happening now?**

Isolated examples do work but potential for lot more  
Ad hoc at the moment  
Some perception of competition – that govt competes with agribusiness  
Lack of guidelines for partnership arrangements and no formal sign off

## **Ideal for 3-5 years**

Runs on the board that the government/agribusiness partnership has resulted in adoption and increased productivity (sustainable)  
Accepted practice to work in partnership govt/private sector

## **First steps**

Industry strategic project  
Development group  
Role

- document the ideas from today's group
- seek support for industry partnership from DPIWE management
- identify industry projects that government/agribusiness can work together to promote agricultural sustainable growth e.g., water use efficiency in agriculture
- identify key people from industry

## **Cooperation/coalitions needed**

Not dealt with

## **Role of APEN?**

Not dealt with?

## **Who's taking responsibility?**

Basil Doonan, DPIWE  
[Ph: 6421 7611 Email: [Basil.Doonan@dpiwe.tas.gov.au](mailto:Basil.Doonan@dpiwe.tas.gov.au)]

## Brokers – putting farmers first

40 votes

### Convenor:

David Fulton, Rural Development Services  
[Ph 6231 9033 Email: [david.rds@bigpond.com](mailto:david.rds@bigpond.com)]

### Key issues

Regional officer

Work with individual businesses to help them achieve their vision

- social
- environmental
- financial

Broker knows who can be used when/where to help the business when it needs it

Develops long term relationship

Matches needs and resources

Focuses on specific information

How get 50 growers?

Independent

Can't consultants provide that now?

Does this create an 'independent' business =- can be done according to the needs of clients?

Similar to old system

Focuses on farmer problems

Competitors and costs?

Companion dairy farms similar to this (developing business plan)

Incorporate groups

Who funds it?

Farmers – need to see you as part of their business

Person very important

Business planning v. confronting

Very good

- goes to need
- let me help

Like having an accountant/lawyer on the farm management team

Like potato FarmBi\$ which has worked well

Brokers need good resources to call on

Must be independent of 'funding' to ensure longevity

### First steps

Get funding/people

- how access expertise when committed elsewhere?

Make a start

Is this what farmers want?

### **Why important?**

Farmers needs addressed on an individual basis – long-term  
Extension now generic and not specific to farmers' situation

### **What's happening now?**

Trust long-term specific  
Farmers not accessing best practice information and integrating it into their situation

### **Ideal in 3-5 years**

8-10 brokers in Tasmania servicing 50% of farmers

### **First steps**

Succeed with meat  
Sell to farmers  
Secure new rounds of funding

### **Cooperation and coalitions**

People who want to work with you  
Funding sources

### **Role of APEN**

Could be useful as expert group  
Selling idea broadly

### **Responsibility**

David Fulton, Rural Development Services  
[Ph 6231 9033 Email: [david.rds@bigpond.com](mailto:david.rds@bigpond.com)]

## **Commercialising existing products/services/information**

(– e.g., Wormplan, Farm Management Planning, IPM courses, grazing plans)

34 votes

### **Convenor**

Amabel Fulton, Rural Development Services  
[Ph 6231 9033 Email: [amabel@bigpond.com](mailto:amabel@bigpond.com)]

### **Issue/opportunity**

Assisting farmers to put case to banks

How fits with putting farmers first? – work out what farmers needs are?

Lots of good products but not enough time to extend them effectively

Need baseline to continue delivery and on-going development of product

Think through long-term right from the beginning

Need to share products across industries

Keeping the technology up-to-date

How much will it cost? Has to be cost effective for the client

Ownership of intellectual property?

Need links between programs to ensure follow-on is possible

Why seem to keep re-doing same research – this would provide continuity

Packages need to be very user friendly – how make it appeal?

Consider ways the government can maximise return on investment in developing products

Commercialising existing research – how maintain independence?

### **First steps**

Market research – will they pay?

What's there, what's worked?

### **Why important?**

Stuff not getting out

If all extension officers were lost tomorrow agriculture would still continue – so need to justify the job

No full-stop on projects

Client-driven demand

Prevents re-invention and more readily available to many

Better uptake and use because sold better

Work with people who want to use it

## **What's happening now?**

Programs stop when funding stops – slash and burn  
Intellectual property not well defined (packaging important)  
No commercialisation of RD&E with exception of RCS products and other training products  
Serve-Ag? Edge?  
Currently not valued or updated e.g., PasturePak, FertiliserPak, Womrplan, Grazfeed  
Not being used

## **3-5 year ideal**

Active partnering for mutual benefit  
High level delivery of services across Tasmania  
Review of commercialisation activities and content across industry, and on-going review  
Infrastructure for delivering products  
Links/feedback to research programs to keep updated  
Identified what's in the cupboard  
How overlap with client's needs?  
Percentage of farmers involved increasing each year  
Use farmers to help develop products

## **First steps**

Develop plan  
Scan what is in the cupboard (lit review)  
Talk to DPIWE mature staff, MLA across all parts of ag  
Create a list of products  
Assess customer response to products  
Develop a business plan to commercialist  
Attract investors  
Deliver

## **Cooperation/coalitions needed**

Depends on opportunities  
- State and federal work with producers and private for services to be delivered to producers by private sectors  
Identify who is in each coalition  
Role of Ag Research and Advisory Committee  
Role of producer groups?

## **What is the role of APEN?**

QA for deliverers/courses  
Provide opportunities to network to identify products/services  
ABeattie, RT, PZund, AF, JW, AMcShane and Wormplan committee (contact Emma Gill, CSIRO or her replacement)

# Empowering growers to embrace positive change

33 votes

## Convenor

Penny Domeney, DPIWE [Ph 6266 4305 Email: [Penny.Domeney@dpiwe.tas.gov.au](mailto:Penny.Domeney@dpiwe.tas.gov.au)]

## Issue

Human trait – resistance to change

Farmers change slowly – can't change quickly

Average farmers' age is getting older

Change is market focused (otherwise why change?) Everything farmers do is for markets

Rich farmers get richer, average income decreasing, leading to innovation and risk

Poor farmers getting poorer, reluctance to learn/train and reluctance to adopt learning/changing culture

Growers that do training of any sort do better (better profit)

- attitude – open to change
  - o to seek information

Are resources better spent on ge [??]

Marketing in extension to improve changes

Our responsibility to help change

Growers responsibility to actively take it up

We don't always do this well – ag sector on whole less educated

Service industry targets well-educated innovators

Should target the rest of the growers

80% need empowering; 20% already empowered

Adult learning – a first step

Groups mostly work well – require a leader or driver from within the group

Adults work better in groups

People won't change until discontentment

What's over the fence if more effective example

Competitive groups – benchmarking with each other is confronting

Trust is imperative

Encouraging travel to see other countries/industries

Commonality to bring group together (not bungee jumping)

Recognition of groups' growing and evolving

## First steps

Adult learning – better in groups

Energy and drive diminishes or used differently (retirement in view)

Apply NRM strategy incentives

Common goals

Presenting information APPROPRIATELY

## Timeframes: short term resources vs long term issues

30 votes

### Convenor

Liz Bonde, DPIWE

[Ph: 6336 5285 Email: [Liz.Bonde@dpiwe.tas.gov.au](mailto:Liz.Bonde@dpiwe.tas.gov.au)]

Sebastian Burgess, Greening Australia

[Ph: 6223 6377 Email: [sebastianb@tas.greeningaustralia.org.au](mailto:sebastianb@tas.greeningaustralia.org.au)]

### Key discussions

Short term political timeframes

A reality we are working in

Good strategies – be optimistic

- Bi-partisan – politician < community

  - Work out how to work with the system

  - Work out how to change the system

High staff turnover

- Lack of continuity of knowledge

- Problem in managing knowledge

- Inconsistency in messages

- Continual re-invention and resulting inefficiencies

Are government production growth goals consistent with long-term sustainability? How does extension support this? Production increases needs to be focussed on most sustainable sectors in primary production – needs to be strategic

### First steps

Extension and rural community to examine “State of Growth” initiative to understand it and respond and participate (Ray Hart)

Departmental approach to extension – strategy? DPIWE

Consistencies between government departments and across levels of government

Monitoring and evaluating past programs and learning from these

### Why important issues?

System problem

Losing skilled/knowledged people

Long term waste of resources

Farmer not receiving long term, professional services, therefore no trust, continuity

Changes due to political changes

Understanding how farmer thinks

Not planning for long-term sustainability

Inconsistency of message

### **Ideas for 3-5 years**

Commitment to significant long term/core \$ by government and industry  
Recognition of extension as a profession  
Development to professional development program  
Extension supporting State of Growth initiative  
Long term/sustainable industries recognise and reflected in core funding  
LIFTING THE PROFILE

### **First steps**

Extension and rural community to examine State of Growth initiative to understand it, respond, participate (lobby Ray Hart)  
Monitoring and evaluation of past programs and learn from them  
Consistencies across government departments and levels of government  
Investigate professional development for extension staff  
DPIWE having a long term extension strategy

### **Cooperation/coalitions needed**

Between all levels of government, industry, individuals

### **Role of APEN**

Provide professional development  
Take leadership (the glue to keep the coalition together)

## **Future of extension in government – state and local**

22 votes

### **Convenor**

Marcus Hardie, DPIWE [Ph: 6233 6251 Email: [Marcus.Hardie@dpiwe.tas.gov.au](mailto:Marcus.Hardie@dpiwe.tas.gov.au)]

### **Issues**

Responsibility for NRM shift to councils from DPIWE  
State government doesn't recognise its role in extension  
Identify commonality between agribusiness and DPIWE  
State and Commonwealth relations

### **Discussion**

Role of government to facilitate change but not necessarily to deliver it  
Government role – issue building and technical specialists  
Government client is increasingly agribusiness and other consultants not directly to farmers  
Regulation and extension shouldn't be mutually exclusive  
Regulation is easier than extension but often more detrimental  
Need networks to allow communication to reach regulators  
Shifts in ownership of issues and responsibilities  
Does DPIWE have a role in agricultural extension?

## Postscript

### ***Tasmanian 'Rural Service Partnerships' workshop, March 2***

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. 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. 25 people attended what was a positive and stimulating day. Outcomes included:

- The extension deliverers present saw great potential for increasing their effectiveness by working together.
- Engagement of NRM people into the extension network. 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'.
- 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 Tasmanian Chapter of APEN was revitalised with new members and a new executive elected.

## How to contact APEN Tasmania

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<b>Secretary</b>	Jane Weatherley	Rural Development Services 2/111 Warwick St West Hobart 7000 Ph 6231 9033 Fax 6231 1419 <a href="mailto:Jane.Weatherley@utas.edu.au">Jane.Weatherley@utas.edu.au</a>