

ExtensionNet

Vol. 1 NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALASIA-PACIFIC EXTENSION NETWORK No. 1

To those who didn't attend the Australian Pacific Extension Conference: you missed an excellent conference. The good news is that more than 120 extension practitioners who attended the specially arranged 'Extension Network Breakfast' were strongly in favour of forming such a network throughout Australia and surrounding regions. Bruce Frank provides a summary of their suggestions.

An interim steering committee was formed to instigate such a body. (Their addresses are at the end of this newsletter). This committee decided on the process we will use to get the Network going. It appointed a core working party with myself as Chairman, Bob Macadam and Ian Simpson as joint Secretaries and Peter Van Beek as Treasurer. Peter will also manage the establishment process, details of which are in a following article.

This newsletter is the first concrete evidence of this process. It is meant to inform you as an extension professional and to solicit your support. But most importantly, we want to ask you what you want from a network and what you think it could do for our profession.

Survey form

To start the thinking, John Lacy gives his reasons for a network from a front-line point of view, while Ian Simpson looks at changes in Extension from a managerial point of view. Peter Van Beek takes a systems perspective that includes many extension delivery agencies employing consultants, advisers, counsellors, field officers or whatever title is used.

Building a better base for extension

By
TERRY MAKIM

Chairman Interim Steering Committee, APEN.



With the newsletter is a survey form to enable you to inform us of your thoughts. We are very conscious that this idea of a network is about helping extension practitioners and it is imperative that you tell us what you think.

From my own perspective as a producer, I saw plenty of evidence at the conference that extension is changing its role and improving its knowledge base and methods. As extension is about change and the sharing of knowledge in a world where the rate of change is constantly increasing, this is what should be happening.

On the world scene, Australia is at the forefront of this change with its use of participative surveys like rapid rural

appraisals, systems thinking, participative regional programs action learning and research. However, it is equally clear that in Australia we are very fragmented and failing to capitalise on the excellent ideas and programs people are carrying out. We have no real critical mass of extension theory and training - just a few people doing bits and pieces. We have no means of sharing our knowledge and experience or of communicating what is happening.

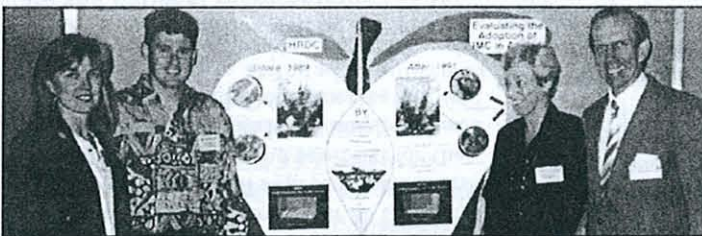
Ideas exchange

The Industry R&D Corporations and government policy makers are conscious of the need for improved ways of doing things and the adoption of new technologies. However, I am sure that many of them do not have a good understanding of extension processes. Extension and the extension profession are seen as an add-on at the end of the technology transfer process, instead of as an integral part of rural development.

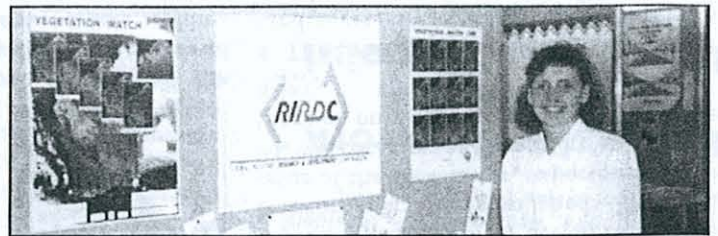
My ideas about what the proposed network could do are:

- assist extension practitioners to share their knowledge through a newsletter and journal;
- improve the practice and methodology of extension;
- raise the understanding of key policy makers about the process and profession of extension and its importance to them;
- link extension institutions and industry.

But we want to know: what do you think a network could do, and how should it work?



Poster presentation was a vital component of the Aus-Pac Extension Conference. Conference committee member Dr Bruce Frank (right) looks over one of more than 70 poster presentations with delegates during the three-day conference.



Rural Press journalist Marilyn Flynn looks over the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation's poster presentation. RIRDC assistance allowed more than 15 key primary producers to attend Aus-Pac Extension 93.

Why this Newsletter?

PLANS for a professional organisation for extension have been around for 25 years or more. Participants at the Australia-Pacific Extension Conference decided to take action and form an Australasia-Pacific Extension Network. An interim steering group was appointed.

Its instructions are to arrange the network through consultation and to start with a

newsletter as soon as possible. This is that newsletter.

In this issue you will find: ● The thoughts of the chairman ● Feedback from the Extension Network Breakfast (120 people paid \$20 each and attended breakfast at 7am to initiate this network ● Responses to the prototype journal made available at the conference ● How we will establish

the network ● A front line point of view ● A managerial point of view ● A systems point of view of why we need a network.

With the newsletter is a questionnaire. Please fill this in as soon as possible. The newsletter and questionnaire may be photocopied and distributed freely.

— PETER VAN BEEK, Acting Editor



Dr Beth Woods, director, Queensland Rural Extension Centre, welcomes NFF president Graham Blight to Aus-Pac Extension 93.

Extension Network for whom? A front-line viewpoint

By JOHN LACY

District Agronomist, NSW Agriculture, Finley.

I think the main need and purpose of an extension network is for supporting front-line extension practitioners scattered around Australia. Michael Patton, keynote speaker at the Conference referred to us as busy people who get on with the job, who link closely with our farming communities, and who do not spend enough time evaluating the fruits of our labour.

Department of Agriculture and Landcare extension officers, agribusiness representatives and consultants are the people communicating most closely with farmers. We are out in the bush carrying out extension activities every day of the week. We are the people who need an extension network so we can swap ideas on how we can improve our practice and profession.

The Aus-Pac Conference could have been further improved by having more farmer and front-line extension speakers. We value the thoughts of industry funding and extension managers and academics, but these people seem to dominate every conference. Personally I was interested to hear about commercialisation of government services in New Zealand, but why couldn't we have heard from the people whom commercialisation has affected the most - a typical farmer and typical extension officer?

However, in an ever changing world we need to constantly update these skills. We can do this by sharing our knowledge. Unfortunately there are few opportunities to allow scattered extension people to discuss extension methodology, practices or skills.

We should form an extension network through a professional association. I would like to think that the majority membership of this association would be made up of front-line practitioners. Front-line practitioners should have their needs and wants strongly represented in the association. Will there be a ground swell of active extension operators who will control their destiny or will we leave it to others? Please get off your back-sides and communicate your thoughts to the Steering Committee.

Extension Network: Breakfast feedback



By
BRUCE FRANK
Senior Lecturer in
Extension, University
of Queensland.

Initiatives which led to the formation of a extension network included a task-force from a conference at UWS-Hawkesbury in October 1992, a proposal to investigate an Australian Chapter of AIAEE at University of Queensland in November 1992, and a working party to draft a prospectus for a National Extension Network for Sustainable Development in March 1993. All initiatives were incorporated in plans for an extension breakfast at the Aust-Pac Conference. Guidelines from participants at this breakfast are given below.

Q1 What form of network would be most effective?

Delegates wanted an inter-active network with open membership, wider than agriculture, to attract people from media, Government field extension officers and administrators, R&D Corporations, industry groups, farmers and their organisations, agribusiness and service organisations, community groups and others such as health. The flat network structure would differ from usual societies to link people between and within local, regional, state, national and international arenas (especially Asia and Pacific).

Model the network on societies with a floating federal executive which holds a major conference with publishers' proceedings every 2-3 years, and holds annual meetings of loose regional affiliations (examples are ASAP, Rangelands, Grasslands and Agronomy Societies). Limit cost within \$20-\$50 to attract wide membership, with an optional newsletter, journal and E-mail subscriptions. Offer student, associate, and corporate options, with reduced rates for developing countries. Build conference registration into membership fee. AIAS affiliation was suggested by a minority, but this may limit membership range and increase costs.

Q2 Support for links with international associations including AIAEE.

The first priority is to establish the network. Then develop informal linkages initially to evaluate benefits of affiliation with relevant international bodies. Potential groups include:

- AIAEE: Mainly 400 university-based extension educators, so this may be too narrow;
- International Rural Sociology Association &/or International Sociologists;
- International Association of Agricultural Libraries and Documentalists;
- South Pacific Commission (New Caledonia) and ensure that we include Pacific nations.

Q3 Do you want a journal, regional newsletter and/or electronic mail network?

Commence with a 1, 3 or 6 monthly newsletter. Ensure relevance with case studies and exchange of views, emphasising a field perspective. Include summaries of evaluation studies, staffing and structures of extension programs. As the network develops an ability to supply and fund a journal, complement the newsletter with a 6 monthly, refereed journal. Although the Conference prototype Journal represents a more appropriate magazine for extension workers, it is unlikely to support refereed articles.

Develop an electronic network to complement the newsletter, but do not isolate non-users. Complement existing networks such as Landcarenet, Councilnet, AARnet, Internet, OPAC, and Pegasus. Exchange information on bulletin boards. List network members, with addresses, phone and fax numbers. Poll-fax. Ensure no copyright; to enable photocopying.

Responses to proto-type journal

By PETER VAN BEEK

At the Conference we presented a proto-type journal, based on the American Journal of Extension. Thank you to all those who submitted material for it. Not all material was used and we now have many submissions for a future editorial panel to consider. Thanks also to the Publishing Unit of the DPI for their great effort.

The responses from the questionnaire are still being deciphered from hand writing to disc. My initial impression is that the reactions were mixed, with a considerable difference between

reactions from academic quarters and from practitioners. The current opinion of the core working party is to get the network going first with a very simple newsletter, presented in a very basic format (this one) for which there is almost unanimous support.

We can then use the newsletter to conduct a wide ranging debate about the nature and logistics of a more sophisticated format and/or a refereed journal. There are several options, which will allow us to have the best of both. More details will be in the next newsletter.

How we will establish the Network

The Interim Steering Committee decided at its first meeting to use the following process to establish the network:

1. A draft newsletter with a questionnaire will be circulated amongst the Steering Committee. After endorsement, it will be mailed out widely in November 93 through the state and national representatives on the Committee, using the send list for the Conference newsletter as basis. Replies must be returned by mid December to me in Ipswich.
2. Copies of the replies will be sent to the state and national representatives on the Steering Committee. All replies will also be collated for discussion on December 20 by the core working group. New or alter-

By
PETER VAN BEEK

Principal Extension Specialist (Systems), DPI Queensland.



native suggestions put forward in the replies will be included in the second newsletter. Where appropriate, replies will form the basis for final proposals in a second questionnaire to go with the second newsletter, again after Steering Committee endorsement. This will only be sent to

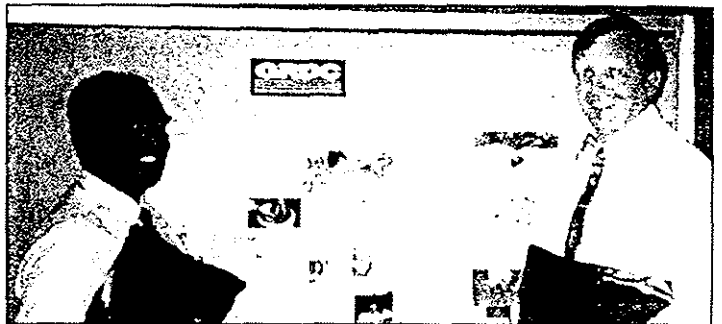
respondents to the first questionnaire. If you don't reply first up, you are out! The second newsletter is expected in February 1994.

3. The replies to the second questionnaire will form the basis for action to get the Network officially established. The third issue of the newsletter, expected in April 94, will contain a subscription form. From there-on only paid up members will have a say.

4. This process will be funded by the small (and as yet only anticipated!) surplus from the Conference. Other detailed activities will be determined after this process, although every-one is welcome to initiate local activities immediately.



Janet Hoare, LandcareNet facilitator from the University of Melbourne, explained the system to delegates during the Aus-Pac Extension Conference and Exhibition on Queensland's Gold Coast in October.



Visiting the Grains Research and Development Corporation poster are Dr Shankar Chamala, University of Queensland (left) and Geoff File, executive director, NSW Agriculture, Orange, NSW.

The following notes are excerpts of the opening keynote address of the Australia Pacific Extension Conference, held recently in Queensland. The address will be published in third volume of the Proceedings (*). They summarise points made by Michael Patton of Minnesota, USA, a world authority on strategic planning, policy analysis and communications. The title of the address was 'Future directions for extension'.

In the United States there has been tremendous change in extension in the last decade. These changes have consequences for every aspect of extension. Many of these are just emerging and still unfolding. They include:

- Transition from technology transfer to issues management.
- Shifting from service delivery and education to making a visible difference and having an impact on problems of wide public concern, in essence, becoming results-oriented.

Future directions for extension

By **IAN SIMPSON**
Science Leader (Extension), NSW Agriculture.

- From discipline-based knowledge to interdisciplinary applications.
- From individual agents in a discrete territory to teams attacking a problem/issue over a wide area.
- From doing all things for all people to

greater focus and careful targeting of problems and resources.

- From linear, reductionist analyses to holistic, systems thinking, e.g. farming, family and community systems.
- From separating research, extension and clientele to integrating them.
- From parochial to global contexts.
- From politically neutral stances to political sophistication.
- From transferring technology to using technology in Extension.
- From disciplinary specialisation to becoming knowledgeable about, and using principles of, lifelong adult learning; Extension is a knowledge base.
- From Extension acting alone to working in partnerships, networking and collaboration.

Accountability

- From constituency entrenchment to producing results as a basis for public accountability and evaluation.
- From concern about securing Extension's future to a concern about having an impact that makes Extension invaluable and indispensable.

How Extension manages these challenges and deals with these issues will determine its future.



Getting together at Aus-Pac Extension 93: Judith Intong, Philippines, Rita Mudenda, Zambia, and Tim Kepui, Papua New Guinea.

All three volumes of the Proceedings will be available from the publisher, Science Publications, PO Box 40, BRISBANE, QLD 4001 for \$75.00 plus postage and handling.

Extension-of-the-Future

There was much talk at the Aus-Pac Extension 93 about the future of extension and how it would look.

... IT IS HERE ALREADY!
By PETER VAN BEEK

The latter question was answered in the papers presented at the conference. They demonstrated a wide diversity in agencies delivering extension services.

Together these agencies probably form most of the 'Extension-of-the-future'. I believe that there are only two parts missing.

The parts that are here

When looking at complex 'untidy' situations Checkland (1984) suggests to look for parts that can be viewed as 'systems' and then describe these by six aspects: Customers, Actors, Transformations, Worldview, Owners and Environment (CATWOE). The 'extension delivery systems' I saw at the conference

were: voluntary extension, (e.g. Land Care), government extension, industry-based/funded extension, consultants, and business-based advisory services. They all attempt to take new information or knowledge from one party and influence decisions by a third party, while respecting the right of that third party not to use the information.

This sets them apart from producer-to-producer exchanges, regulatory agencies or teaching, even though they have skills and methods in common with those.

What separates the delivery agencies from each other is that they offer different benefits to their customers. The extension people often go by different names; the ways they look at the world and at what makes their form of extension worthwhile

This newsletter is produced at the request of participants of the Australia-Pacific Extension Conference held at Surfers Paradise in October 1993. It will become the official newsletter of the AUSTRALASIA-PACIFIC EXTENSION NETWORK, once this has been formed. For further information, please contact the members of the Interim Steering Committee in the relevant country or state (see this page). Undeliverable copies can be returned to: Mr P.G.H. Van Beek, acting editor, ExtensionNet PO Box 96, Ipswich, Q 4305, AUSTRALIA.

are different. They have different owners, and operate in different environments (Table 1). Each agency has its own strengths and weaknesses. I believe that all are needed to make more and faster progress in complex issues like sustainability.

The parts that are missing

In my view, missing from the Extension-of-the-future is an appreciation that rural areas (and other areas as well) need all five agents. Also missing is a structure for them to work together: the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network.

Checkland, P.B., 1984, Systems Thinking, Systems Practice, Wiley, Chichester.

Table 1. Description of five extension-delivery agents.

TYPE OF EXTENSION	VOLUNTARY	GOVERNMENT	INDUSTRY-BASED	CONSULTANTS	BUSINESS-BASED
Customers	grass-roots, and under privileged	determined by gvt programs	producers as suppliers	producers as business people	producers as buyers/sellers
Actors	field workers, info officers	extension and info officers, advisers	field officers, advisers	consulting staff	advisers, sales staff
Worldview	people action is best	society has a stake in rural industries	industry interest need looking after	profit is most important	maintain market share/profits
Owners	voluntary org's	governments	industry org's	consulting firm	companies
Environment	pursuing ideals within fundraising limits	public service, political priorities	competition on commodity markets	competition in services to clients	competition for producer dollars
Transformations	From <i>not knowing</i> certain information, to <i>knowing</i> , and <i>using it</i> , where appropriate.				

Ross Andrews

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