



CELEBRATING *thirty years*

Learning from the past, appreciating the present, growing a dynamic future in a vibrant extension community



Forward

Cathy McGowan AO
Chairperson | AgriFutures
Australia

“If we stand tall, it’s because we are standing on the shoulders of giants”.



Surely this quote applies to those who have built the profession of extension. Giants indeed!

In this important work as we celebrate 30 Years of APEN, Pat Hamilton provides an introduction to the people, events and practices that have shaped modern day extension in Australia and the Pacific region.

It is important that we acknowledge, honour and thank these pioneers and their contribution to our community, our food and fibre, export, and the growth and development of agriculture as a significant national growth industry.

From my earliest memories, the role of ‘the extension officer’ has been central to my life: Beginning with the regular visits of “The Herd Tester,”

growing up on a dairy farm in the 1950s their visits were keenly anticipated; mostly women, they would join the family meal, help out in the dairy and pay special attention to us 'little kids' as they helped us learn how to teach the poddy calves to drink from buckets.

Studying Agriculture and Regional Development at the University of Western Sydney in Hawkesbury in the mid 1990s, I was first introduced to APEN and became a keen supporter, regularly attending conferences, networking with extension professionals and building businesses as agricultural extension officers. It was a career highlight in 2001 to be presented with the APEN award for excellence in extension – together with Cheryl Phillips, in establishing, with support from the Dairy Research and Development Corporation, the WOMEN IN DAIRY project. The plaque sits proudly on my desk to this day.

As Chair of the Research and Development Corporation – Agri-Futures – extension remains a critically important part of our work.

In honouring and acknowledging the leaders of APEN and those who continue to teach, network, share information and act as role models to young farmers, this history is a worthy tribute. Knowing that the work is not yet completed, I am proud that APEN continues to nurture and support a new generation of extension offers.

Thank you, Pat, for your work, and to all those who have contributed to this history.

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01 The beginning of extension and its meaning in APEN'S world

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“All successful people are big dreamers. They imagine what their future could be, ideal in every respect, and then they work every day toward their distant vision, that goal or purpose.”

Brian Tracy 2021

Refreshing memories

Some details about our history.

Where do we begin as we enjoy those people, those moments, those events in our lives that made and continue to make a difference?

Memory is subjective. It is often informed and coloured by our “situation” at the time and the impact of other’s reactions. Distance from the ‘event’ can change our recollections. Sometimes, I wonder, if reading about happenings and the ways in which other people’s recollections tell the story, have clouded my memory as I grow older.

However, it has been my intention to capture 30 years of people’s recollections and the influence APEN has had on their journey through the fields of extension. Who have been the inspirers, the motivators, the influencers? Thirty years is a long time to find the people. Fortunately, many have ridden the distance and were willing to share their stories with us.

However, once you start a history, it is difficult to know when to stop!

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“APEN is the repository of a lot of hard-earned knowledge and wisdom about effective ways to collaborate and to build capacity”.

Bob Macadam, 2004



It starts with a conversation

which broadened to many conversations over the years as our Members continued to inspire and grow existing and emerging extension professionals.

Why an organisation?

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[The APEN] organisation is a rich tapestry woven by the story of its people [who are] weaving together many strands of information, insight, knowledge, and wisdom. Over time, people will come and go; they will have roles to play; they will contribute to the current chapters of change, creating their organisation’s story and legacy. Every interaction with someone internally or externally, is adding to the ‘bigger picture’ story.

Toni Courtney

Who is APEN? The Australasia-Pacific Extension Network

01 Professional Organisation

APEN Ltd is a leading professional organisation for extension professionals working with people to enable innovation and change in primary industries, natural resource management and rural communities.

02 Members

With over 500 members across Australia, New Zealand and beyond, the organisation is leading the resurgence in the profession of extension and facilitating change.



03 Diversity of impact

APEN Members are involved in government and industry agencies, agribusiness, agricultural consulting, community and rural development, adult education, communication, rural health, and educational institutions.

Why is APEN important?

Like the seed planted to grow into a thriving tree, APEN's 'seed planting' began with a conversation around a breakfast table in Brisbane, October 1993.

If APEN were a tree:

Its roots would be its origin and foundation.

The trunk would be the Governing Body – the various groups who have led the network along its growth.

Its branches would be the various committees who action the strategies.

The nests on the branches would be the regional members who come together to enable the adoption of new ideas.

Each nest would be a family of birds that belong together in the APEN network.

Dr Jeff Coutts, APEN Life Member, remembers the 'crucible' for APEN's existence.

"APEN emerged in the early 1990s after a decade of questioning about governments role in continuing public extension."

At that time, reviews and extension strategies were being discussed by Primary Industry Departments and Universities across Australia for a more proactive public extension role and a complementarity between public and private extension.

"Developing the profession of extension and providing extensionists with the support and skills they needed to take a more proactive role also became a priority", said Jeff.

1993

An inaugural Extension Conference was held in Brisbane, Queensland. Jeff was the Convenor.

The roots took shape and formed the trunk.

Terry Makin, the inaugural APEN President, remembers,

"What we see today, evolved out of the notes on the breakfast table mats of more than 100 extension practitioners at the working breakfast on October 13, 1993. The name, Australasia-Pacific Extension Network was first suggested at this conference."

Drawcard for Asia-Pacific region



● Queensland's Minister for Primary Industries, Ed Casey (centre) discusses the Australia-Pacific Extension Conference with conference convenor Jeff Coutts (left) and Director-General Jim Miller. The three-day conference and trade exhibition is drawing delegates from all over Australia and Pacific Rim countries.

Extension News March 1993

World focus on future for rural extension



“The first international rural extension and communication conference ever held in the Asia Pacific region will be staged on Queensland’s Gold Coast from October 12-14.

The Australia-Pacific Extension Conference and Trade Exhibition has been sponsored by Australia’s influential Standing Committee on Agriculture which comprises Directors General Agriculture in each state.

Delegates to Aus-Pacific Extension 93 will represent government and educational organisations and institutions, agribusiness, private consultants, and rural sector groups from Pacific rim countries.

They will be a diverse group but will have an interest in communicating rural issues and technology to the many communities they serve”, conference convenor Jeff Coutts said.

”

An empowered organisation is one in which individuals have the knowledge, skill, desire and opportunity to personally succeed in a way that leads to collective organisational success

Stephen Covey

1994

The trunk starts to grow

The Interim Steering Group (called the Acting Management Committee), was led by a Chairman, joint Secretaries, and Treasurer and a core working group, consisting of people from New South Wales, New Zealand, Northern Territory, Papua New Guinea, Queensland, Solomon Islands, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia, Australian Capital Territory, supported by a Secretariat and, of course, an Editor of ExtensionNet, the Newsletter.

Planting the APEN’s ‘seed’

- The constitution was drafted, endorsed, and lodged.
- APEN became incorporated.

1994–1996

The 'seed's' First growth involved:

a reason for the establishment of the network

- to increase awareness of new issues and trends
- to develop and use new skills and methodologies
- to foster wider discussions and debates about rural issues; and
- to contribute to a growing common understanding of the purpose and value of extension.
- being 'seen' as a broad organisation that was concerned with change and learning, not just production agriculture. The network should not just be agriculture related. It could include people in health and family community service areas.



branding with a name and logo and potential of the extension network.

- “The colours of APEN’s new logo, deep aqua and terracotta, are designed to communicate that the basis for all extension work is the prime elements of land and water.
- Curving the word “extension” around the world suggests the all-encompassing nature of extension work, while the eclipse containing the work “network” indicates the liveliness, energy, movement and direction of extension and its people.
- The basic rectangular shape of the rest of the logo suggests tradition and convention out of which move random geometric shapes to illustrate that extension work, while steeped in the basics, cannot and should not be contained or constrained by the past or tradition.” (Vol 2 (3) ExtensionNet)

A newsletter, designed to share extension practices, projects, and programs to be representative of all parts of the Australian-Pacific area.

“Why this Newsletter?”, asks Peter Van Beek in the first issue. “Plans for a professional organisation for extension have been around for 25 years or more... a draft newsletter with a questionnaire was mailed out widely through state and national representatives using the Conference newsletter as a basis.”

An initial survey of potential members, including agribusiness, consultants, state government, tertiary institutions, and farmers saw a need to raise the profile of extension and the professionalism of its practitioners. APEN’s ability to build a strong organisation that fulfils its members’ needs, was dependent on its members’ input into APEN - in whatever way they were able.

The returned questionnaires “strongly suggest that the Newsletter needs to have a strong emphasis on practical articles and be representative of all parts of the Australian-Pacific area”.

appointing a secretariat.

The office of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science (AIAS) was appointed as the Secretariat. It is interesting to note that in APEN's 30 years, there has been only 3 Secretariats: AIAS, (1994), Creative Management Services, Dr Roe Currie, (1995 – 2021), and The Association Specialists, TAS, (2022 -).

Jeff Coutts noted at the time, that

”

“as well as having the purpose (of APEN) to assist practitioners to share their knowledge and improve the practice and methodology of extension, a further outcome of the network was about raising the understanding of key policy makers about the process and profession of extension and its importance to them”.

Jeff Coutts

1997

The branches grew into groups of people who formed interim regional chapters.

March 1997 - APEN'S New Committee of Management (CoM) formed. While much of the action of APEN happened within the Regional Chapters through local meetings, seminars, and workshops, it was the CoM who initiated activities and networking at a national level, across state boundaries, to the benefit of every member.

Twigs started to appear

as members become involved and shared their expertise concerning the role of extension.

What is Extension?

I am a lover of words.

Aristotle, Greek philosopher, taught me that ‘agreed language’ matters. Aristotle argued that to be effective, words must appeal to an audience on multiple levels. Language is not just semantics. Language has political power and is the lifeline that can transform the way we think and act – especially the intent of how words are delivered. Aristotle’s three levels include: Logos - logic and reason, Pathos - emotion and empathy and Ethos - credibility and character.

And so, let’s explore the diversity of meanings over thirty years.

Throughout APEN’s history, the meaning of the word ‘extension’ has been raised, and defined, on numerous occasions.

In 1996, in Melbourne, at the APEN Forum: Beyond Technology Transfer, or What? Horrie Poussard, CoM member, suggested that there was confusion about the term, extension.

Horrie’s thoughts are shared:

“We seem to be trying to pen this animal called “extension” too tightly, with different people trying to put it into different pens. Maybe we should let it initially wander free range in a big paddock. We should strip away the values we place on it to get to the core.

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

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

Over the last 30 years, the definitions of “extension” and what extensionists do continues...

However, two definitions reoccur – Extension is about ‘knowledge and learning’.

1997

Amabel Fulton – APEN Management Committee

suggested,” Information is an important component of extension – whether you are delivering it, accessing it, using it or helping others to use it. A reminder of the complexity of farming systems, of rural communities, of extension.”

1998

John Bourne – APEN President

“Extension is very much about facilitation. That means not doing things TO people, or even FOR people, but WITH people’.

1994

Peter Van Beek– Editor of ExtensionNet

encouraged us to see extension in its broadest context: “as facilitators of change”. “Extensionists help to locate/ create/collate/re-format; inform/share insights/be innovative; start where they (and the farmer) are and where they are needed/wanted – so that extensionists encourage understanding and adaption.”

1995

Lawrie Kirk – Program Manager Salinity NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation

“I would like someone to do a study into the use and understanding of the word extension. If we are serious about identifying barriers to adoption and extending our message let’s have a look at our own language first.”

1997

Dale Williams – Editor, ExtensionNet,

“Extension is especially about facilitating collaborative learning and networking.”

2000

Sally Marsh - Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Sydney

In creating a climate for change, “We need to be more questioning and more challenging, and, above all, more constructive while working with people from a range of background/life experiences. You are a change agent.”

2001

Bruce McKenzie – Managing Director of Systemic Development Associates Pty Ltd (SDA)

“The primary role for extension is to equip people to utilise the knowledge they have and to identify what they don’t have. Then to find sources where their needs can be met. Self-reliance is what I see as the goal of extension.”

2002

Noel Ainsworth

“Extension, as a discipline, doesn’t need an image change or defined purpose. It just needs people to be creative and to have the drive to go and utilise those invaluable skills ... Extension is best served by demonstrating how people are creatively engaging their skills through case studies to showcase the diversity that is possible across industries. Seed ideas...”

2006

State Extension Leaders Network (SELN)

“The definition of extension that was agreed upon by all the Australian State and Territory governments back in 2006 was “Extension is the process of enabling change in individuals, communities and industries involved with primary industries and natural resource management.”

2000

John Stantiall, Massey University

“Extension agents provide expertise in facilitating change through others to help meet their funder’s goals.”

2001

Jeff Coutts, Manager, Coutts j&r

“Extension concerns working with people in a community to facilitate change in an environment that has social, economic, and technical complexity...Extension provides the cogs that make things happen., it is about interaction between people – information, sharing, dialogue, learning and action”

2003

Bob Macadam

“APEN is a network of people who share two broad interests. The first is their involvement in extension. The second is their knowledge of and commitment to improving the situation of rural people and places.”

2011

Vanclay & Leach, (Shaping Change p.6)

“Extension is the process of enabling change in individuals, communities and industries involved in the primary industry sector and with natural resource management”.

2011

Professor David De Kretser AC,
Governor of Victoria

in the foreword to APEN's Shaping Change: "Natural Resource Management, Agriculture and the Role of Extension" book, offered the following: "The term Extension officially made its way into the English language in the early 1800s at Cambridge University and since that time has been used to describe the process by which scientific knowledge is transmitted to industry to inform those practising in the field of endeavour. Extension has been the means by which the adoption of new knowledge has changed processes within Western agricultural industries and the rising Natural Resource Management sector. Thus, extension has been responsible for providing tangible benefits to individuals and society at large from scientific discovery."

2013

Wegscheidl, Coutts & West - Re the Great Barrier Reef pilot project

"A variety of extension methods are needed to support producers at different stages of adoption. Although resource intensive, one-on-one extension is effective in leading practice change. Extension needs to be targeted at sub-catchments and demographics with the greatest potential for enabling practice change that will achieve the desired outcomes (such as water quality improvement). Extension should focus on practices that improve business performance as well as environmental outcomes as financial costs and benefits are key factors influencing adoption"

2018

Angela Williams, Manager,
CANEGROWERS Isis

"Extension practice is the way and how the relationship between extension staff and a farmer is built in order to achieve a result or an outcome i.e. a practice change"

2012

Warren Hunt, Colin Birch, Jeff Coutts and Frank Vanclay

The many turnings of agricultural extension in Australia by—Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension Vol.18 No.1, 9-26, February 2012 provides an insightful account of extension.On pg15 of the article, the authors quoted, "extension's role in society is 'the oil that makes things happen' (Coutts, 2000). If government or industry leadership wish to enact change in agriculture or rural communities, they need to be in the extensions business"

2018

APEN website:

"Extension is about working with people in a community to facilitate change in an environment that has social, economic, and technical complexity. This is achieved by helping people gain the knowledge and confidence, so that they want to change, and by providing support to ensure it is implemented effectively."

2019

Dr John James -Enablers of Change, APEN Life Member

"Extension is the process of enabling change in individuals, communities and industries involved with agriculture and natural resource management".

2022

Danielle England – Director
Aginnovate

Extension and adoption are often used interchangeably in our industries. However, there is a difference. Extension is a process – a pre-planned process that takes years of inter-related activities that build knowledge, change/alter attitudes, develop skills and provide aspirations in our target audiences.

2023

Jeff Coutts, Manager, Coutts j&r,
APEN Life Member

I have used and seen many definitions of extension over the decades. The one that seems to work best for me now is: [Agricultural] Extension is the process of facilitating engagement around ideas, technologies, and practices to progress innovation and assist learning to help people make informed decisions about improving farming, environmental and life outcomes.

2023

Dr Ruth Nettle Professor Rural
Innovation Research Group,
University of Melbourne, APEN
Life Member

I have come to define agricultural extension as being about the facilitation of change and as an enabler of the innovation process.

Such is the collective wisdom of so many throughout APEN's 30-year history

– so much knowledge, so much experience, so much advice – all willing to share with practising extension professionals.

Although agricultural extension practices have changed significantly over the past three decades, extension plays a critical role in promoting agricultural productivity, increasing food security, improving rural livelihoods, and promoting primary production as the engine room for economic growth. A key part of any extension program is the message it seeks to deliver to the audience.

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Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn

Benjamin Franklin

APEN continues

to encourage our members to grow by:

The list is never ending and always changing to meet the needs of the uptake of new technologies and practices.

- sharing networks, our knowledge, our experiences through telling our stories.
- articulating and pursuing their goals.
- undertaking research to determine cultural, situational, socialised, and structural baseline data to help measure change.
- fostering participation in programs and awards that recognise their contribution and potential.
- offering a variety of extension training to support producers at different stages of adoption to improve business performance as well as environmental outcomes.
- encouraging a monitoring and evaluation program at the start of an extension project to ensure that project activities and evaluation tools can be planned and tailored so that the impact and benefits of the project can be measured and reported.
- ensuring knowledge transfer as an important element for creating resilience and building adaptive capacity.

To summarise, the APEN tree continues its growth.



The roots have formed a strong foundation. Each governing body, the trunk, has guided its growth. The branches have adapted to different social, economic, and environmental environments. The nests of regional members have thrived under the guidance of the Regional Coordinators.

You do not need to come from a farming background, live in a rural community or marry into a farming enterprise to become an APEN member. The rewards are many.

APEN is a family of different birds that have formed relationships to continue the force of APEN in the extension world.

APEN's Leaders 1993–2023

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The purpose of life is to be useful, to be honourable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.

Ralph
Waldo Emerson

It starts with a conversation

to keep the energy flowing

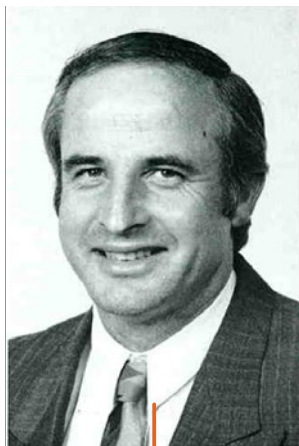
The following APEN leaders had robust conversations with their committees and their members to shape the role of extension. These conversations involved:

- sharing ideas and opinions, based on theory and practice,
- linking and connecting farmers and rural communities with agricultural industries, universities, government departments,
- reflecting on progress – often spontaneous, sometimes with difficulty and hopefully, with a decision and action to achieve movement and change.

Between 1993 and 2023 the APEN leadership of Terry Makin, John Bourne, Jane Fisher, John James, Neale Price, Tracey Gianatti, Austin McLennan, Jeanette Long, Graham Harris, Anthony Kachenko, and Noel Ainsworth, through volunteer management committees, have brought together talented groups of people who have generously offered their time, experience, and efforts for professional extensionists across Australia and the Pacific, to lead APEN to make a difference.

Terry Makin

1993-1996



Terry was the Interim Chairman of the APEN Steering Committee, the core working party, to establish the Network – an office he drove for 4 years. Since 1993, Terry has remained an active member of APEN and has been generous with his time, support, and willingness to share his experiences.

One of the key insights from the first planning meeting was that the extension profession lacked focus as there was no body of theory that had been integrated to support extension practice; there was no organisation that looked after its professional development or promoted its interests; nor was there no ‘body’ with whom they could communicate important policy

During the first planning meeting in 1996, Terry said, “APEN has been shaped by its history of people in agricultural extension, tertiary education and Landcare who provided much of the early impetus behind APEN’s inception. Yet, its future can be shaped to capture the early vision of a more diverse membership around the facilitation of social change”.

In 2018, the APEN Board decided to introduce a Life Membership award which will run parallel to the APEN Awards for Excellence in Extension. Terry was inducted as an APEN Life Member for his contribution to APEN’s development.

John Bourne

1996-1999



John Bourne (1996-1999), from South Australia, summarised a few of his highlights.

During the year, APEN achieved the milestone of 500 members. Other highlights included setting up a web page, which included the APEN Forum, a vehicle by which members could access the views of others in a discussion format, and the initiation of an annual Extension Award for Excellence. Many professional societies recognised excellence in their fields. There was no similar mechanism of the recognition of extension.

John noted, “that strength of APEN was its networking across state borders which strove to complement the activities of state agencies and the private extension and nationally based Research and development sector. “Members can share in a sense of pride in developing an organisation that supports the discipline of extension.”

During John’s leadership, Dr Rosemary Currie, Creative Management Services, was appointed as the new Secretariat – position Roe retained for twenty-seven years!

Jane Fisher

1999-2001



Jane, from Victoria, said “The time has come to grasp the nettle of policy. By listening to and participating in discussion with people about approaches to extension, and how or if research is planned with extension in mind, we developed clear understanding of where the profession is heading.” Jane acknowledged that “the organisation has gained a great deal of recognition and momentum since its inception at the APEN conference on the Gold Coast in 1993.

“Our major event for the year, the APEN 2001 International Conference, is being ably organised by John James and his conference organising committee. The refereeing process introduced for the conference has begun a culture of peer review within APEN, giving our members, as authors and reviewers alike, experience in the art of writing for publication. I am proud to have initiated the process of peer review at the 2001 Conference.”

“I am pleased to share with you the good news that Horticulture Australia Limited has agreed to sponsor ExtensionNet for \$7000 per year over the next two years, and DRDC \$4000 per year.”

Dr. John James

2001-2004



John James a Queenslander, was the Training Coordinator and acting Director at the REC in Queensland

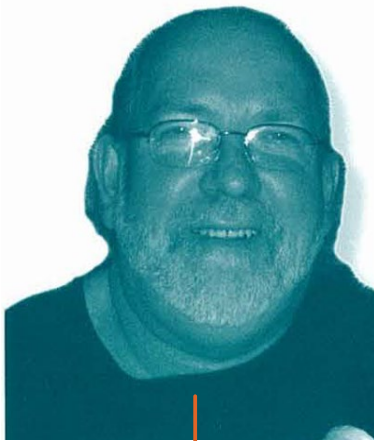
“The challenge for us as an organisation of change management and communication specialists is to “walk the talk” ourselves.” The APEN Management Committee (MC) continued its efforts in better communicating and engaging with its members by sending out regular eBulletins, using an informal communication style to highlight items of importance to members. This and the online surveys helped us better engage with members about the proposed changes.” John noted that, “as with most change, there may be sacrifices involved to achieve our outcomes.”

The APEN Management Committee (MC) continued its efforts in better communicating and engaging with its members by sending out regular eBulletins, using an informal communication style to highlight items of importance to members. This and the online surveys helped us better engage with members about the proposed changes.”

For John, creating the APEN Mentoring Scheme enabled seasoned extension professionals to share their enthusiasm and knowledge about extension with those seeking to improve their own extension practice. John enjoyed applying his knowledge and experience to help people improve their capacity. He relished the opportunity to lead the APEN Network into uncharted waters

John was inducted as an inaugural APEN Life Member at the APEN International Conference in 2018.

Neale Price 2005-2007

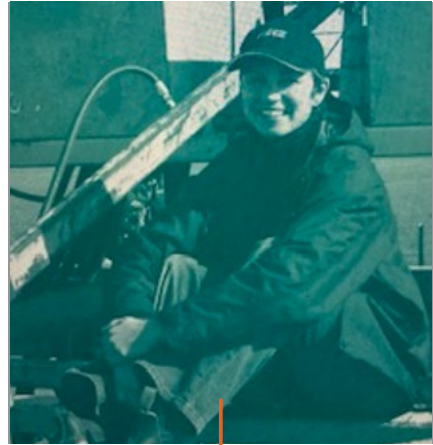


Neale Price, a Queenslander, had been involved in APEN as a Committee member. He brought extension experience in Communications and Adoption programs while working with MLA and the Sugar RDC. Neale believed “that a key productivity stimulus for any industry is education, since it ultimately drives innovation.”

APEN worked collaboratively with the Australian Farm Business Management Network to produce an Extension Farming Systems journal. He thanked Neels Botha and Roy Murray-Prior for their continuing efforts in making this happen.

At the International Conference in 2006, Neale was presented the award for the category of Experienced Professional, because of a very significant contribution to extension theory and impact – especially in overseeing the roll-out of an extensive and rigorous training model for rural and regional Australia.

Tracey Gianatti 2008-2010



In her acceptance address as the newly elected President from Western Australia, Tracey said, “I am passionate about contributing to APEN’s goal of being the peak body representing members and their professional interests. I also believe that APEN’s other goals of creating a vibrant and effective network, fostering professional development opportunities and being a well-managed, highly effective organisation are essential to support extension professionals across Australia.”

Tracey encouraged members to attend the 5th International Conference in Busselton, Western Australia – “we all know there are many brilliant stories of practice change out there at the coal face – this is our chance to capture our learnings and share them with others who can benefit. Remember, APEN exists to provide you, our members, with networking, professional development, and representation opportunities – so let us know what you need!”

Austin McLennan

2010-2013

Jeanette Long

2014-2016



Austin, from the Northern Territory, said, “For me, it has always been these three signposts – Networking, Professional Development and Representation – that have provided the focus in what APEN should be doing and the direction it should be heading – to deliver the maximum benefits to our members and the broader extension and advisor community and, by extension, to the industries and communities with which we work ... “I hope it will be clear that APEN is realising its plan to be “The (leading) organisation for extension professionals” (APEN Corporate Statement) ... and that, importantly, we have been achieving this by providing a “Platform for Professional Development, Networking and Representation” (taken from the APEN Mission Statement) ... APEN has a lot of work to do to increase the recognition and esteem of the term extension”. So, I would say, APEN is not stuck in an agricultural and NRM rut, rather we are barely in it. And secondly, if you are one of those people who see a rut, I invite you instead to see it as a swimming pool of opportunity, and it’s time for APEN to jump in, and stop worrying about the big wide ocean outside.”

Jeanette, from South Australia, believes leadership is about leading a team to go somewhere to make a positive difference. “It has been challenging as we progressed to become a company. I’m very proud of the success of the conference in Adelaide that I convened while in my first year as President of APEN. I was also thrilled with the amount of “on-ground” activity including roadshows, the mentoring scheme, webinars, and local events that occurred. In my final year as President hosting the GFRAS (Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services) annual meeting in Ingham and APEN’s 2017 International Conference in Townsville were highlights and a credit to all involved. I am proud that under my leadership, APEN continues to have wonderful networks and a culture of support. Jeanette’s advice, “Recognise the power of an effective mentor to assist in developing your skills and to follow your passion”.

In 2023 the APEN Excellence Award was presented to Jeanette for the design, planning and facilitation of a myriad extension programs to broaden the theory, role, and practice of extension by using both on-line and face-to-face methods to actively engage APEN members and the wider community.

The transition of APEN Inc. to APEN Ltd

a company limited by guarantee

During 2017, APEN Members, at a Special General Meeting, passed a resolution to transition from an Incorporated Association status as APEN Inc. into a Company Limited by Guarantee, APEN Ltd. The existing constitution was modified to adapt to the new company structure.

The Board Management structure consists of the following bodies and offices:

- A skills-based Board of 5–9 Directors responsible for the overall management of the company, elected directly by the membership
- A Company Secretary
- A Committee of elected Regional Coordinators (one per region) who will assist the Board in implementing strategy and regional activities and events
- Under the APEN Constitution, the APEN Board has the ability to use sub-committees to bring members' expertise, talent and energy to assist with various activities and initiatives

Graham Harris

2017–2020



→ Graham, from Queensland, is the inaugural President of APEN Ltd. Graham is inspired by people seeking to make a real difference. He “intends to continue interacting with the diverse group of extension professionals from the private and public sectors, and across industries and geographically.” Graham’s aim was to bring together a montage of well-educated, multi-faceted team of young and old extension professionals working together to bring everyone on a productive journey in the field of extension.

Graham was inducted as an APEN Life Member at the 2023 APEN International Conference in Launceston Tasmania. Graham was recognised for his dedication and consistent contribution to APEN since its inception in 1993.

Dr Anthony Kachenko 2020-2023



Anthony led from New South Wales, and the Tasmania during his presidency, Anthony shared being inspired by the leadership traits, behaviour and charisma demonstrated by Winston Churchill and endeavoured to put them into practice as leader of APEN. Anthony looked forward to the ongoing change APEN will experience in the years ahead as Members further progress and advocate the extension profession.

During 2022, the APEN Board has overseen the transition of APEN's Secretariat function to an organisation called The Association Specialists or "TAS". This change has been a significant undertaking to minimise the disruption to member services. The APEN Board recently engaged the expertise of an Engagement and Communications Coordinator, Alice Long, to bolster our offering to members. Alice has been working closely with the Board's Stakeholder Committee and TAS on social media and supporting several upcoming APEN events."

Anthony has appreciated the skills and knowledge of the diverse group of extension professionals, whose shared experiences continually grow. "I have enjoyed seeing APEN grow and challenge itself during my term as President, including co-convening with Dr Ruth Nettle APEN's first Hybrid Conference – an outstanding success. As Henry Ford quoted, "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got", and that rings true for what lies ahead for APEN.

Noel Ainsworth 2023-



Noel, from Queensland, is Principal Supply Chain Horticulturist in the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Noel's career has involved a number of management, extension, research, and consulting roles in non-government and government entities.

At the 2022-2023 AGM, Noel was endorsed as President. "I am fortunate to be working with a dynamic Board and appreciate the role of the Regional Coordinators who volunteer their time to network with members in the regions across Australia and New Zealand.

Armed with guidance from the Members' Survey undertaken in mid-2023, the enthusiasm and networks refreshed at the conference in Launceston, the support of the Secretariat, The Association Specialists (TAS), the Board is looking forward to a very busy and productive 2024.

A summary of the leaders needs to include “the glue that kept APEN together”

behind 10 APEN leaders. Meet Dr Roe Currie, the public face of APEN for 27 years as the Secretariat (July 1995 – May 2022).



This is Roe’s story:

Bob and I first heard about the Australasian-Pacific Extension Network when Bob, who was a consultant and Secretary for Dairy Farmers United (NE Vic), was approached to put in a tender for the APEN Secretariat in May/June 1995. At that time, I had recently accepted a redundancy after extended maternity leave from a Livestock Research Officer position at the Agriculture Victoria Rutherglen Research Institute. We put in a tender for the APEN Secretariat through Bob’s business AgriLogic Consultants and officially started on July 25th, 1995.

The Secretariat was my responsibility (and later came under my business, Creative Management Services). APEN’s information from its inception in 1993 and incorporation in August 1994 was passed on from the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science who had been operating the Secretariat.

The Interim Committee of Management, Terry Makin, Ian Simpson, Bob Macadam, Peter Van Beek, were keen to hold an event for the first APEN Incorporated Annual General Meeting. Committee of Management (CoM) meetings were through a teleconferencing service. The agenda, minutes, finance, and membership details had to be sent by fax prior to the meeting and participants dialled in at the appropriate time on the day.

An APEN bank account was established at the Wodonga branch of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia with deposit books and cheques books. Bank accounts had also been set up by the com-

mittees that were in place in the APEN Chapters in Australian and New Zealand. The plan was to share a portion of the membership income with them to use on local events and for them to share any income from the events with APEN. There was a Chapter in each of WA, SA, Tasmania, Northern Territory, New Zealand (and including PNG and Pacific Islands) and there were several in each of Queensland, NSW, and Victoria – loosely based on population and membership. (Later the Chapters were disbanded, and funds returned to the central account because of lack of activity and the difficulty in filling volunteer committee roles.)

Events were advertised in ExtensionNet or by direct mailing of registration forms to members and other known people who may be interested. About 100 people attended APEN's first national Forum and AGM: Monitoring and Evaluation in Extension, Albury, New South Wales, 30 November – 1 December 1995 with two international speakers. Earlier in the year there had been a number of events held in the Chapters. APEN was off and running (see APEN Website/Archives for information).

It was a busy time working with the CoM to organise the event and dealing with registrations etc but how wonderful to meet the CoM and other members and participants in person! That was the highlight for me – putting faces to names and there were over 2,500 members who had joined by the time I retired. I met many at the 14 Conferences I helped with and attended in the different states and NZ and through zoom in the latter years.

It was great to work with and get to know the CoM members and Regional Coordinators, especially the Presidents and Treasurers over the years and from 2016, with our change in Governance structure, the Directors as well. The internet made a world of difference with our communications with each other and members – the website, the monthly eBulletin, Facebook, LinkedIn, Extension Chat/Conversations etc and being able to have online payments.

There is a wealth of information on the APEN website including its history, people, and events. It was kindly said that I was “the glue that kept APEN together” and the keeper of the corporate knowledge but I did let the various management committees find their own way and provided support in the background.

I wish APEN and its Members a wonderful, engaging future.
Kind regards, Roe

Our leaders make APEN a dynamic, collaborative organisation, which reaches and engages rural, remote, and regional women and men to connect, to learn, to link and to strengthen their rural communities.

The leaders have been passionate about working in the rural and remote space and brought a diverse range of skills and expertise to overcome the geographical, social, and intellectual isolation of engagement through leadership and advocacy programs.

They provided a stimulating and supportive environment to explore ideas, grow capacities and capabilities and develop strategies to link groups into a network for connecting, advancing leadership, and sharing resources.

We are grateful for the generosity of their time and for sharing their visions.

03 APEN's Trailblazers

For 30 years, APEN's trailblazers have lit the path forward, transforming challenges into opportunities and laying the foundation for a thriving extension community.

The Trailblazers and changemakers

APEN has many change-makers during its thirty-year history. These active members are builders, networkers, communicators, researchers, and practical people who have influenced the growth of APEN over the three decades. They have shared their knowledge and expertise through the committees, delivered programs, wrote heaps of papers and articles for ExtensionNet and the REIS Journal, presented at conferences.

Although there are too many Members to acknowledge in this chapter, we recognise and acknowledge their tremendous input into the growth of our network.

The eight Life Members and nine Members have been highlighted for their consistent and continuous input into the network as they encouraged or facilitated interaction and collaboration between and among our Members and the wider extension profession.

First, the APEN Life Members



In 2018, at the 25-year celebration in Brisbane, the APEN Board decided to introduce a Life Membership Award” to honour Members who have displayed exceptional, loyal, outstanding service, and contribution by providing a measurable benefit to the organisation over an extended period of time. “

- 2018** Dr Jeff Coutts, Terry Makin, and Dr John James were the first recipients of the life membership award in Brisbane.
- 2019** Dr Ruth Nettle at the APEN Conference in Darwin.
- 2022** Dr Pat Hamilton, Dr Roy Murray-Prior and Dr Terry Parminter, were honoured during APEN’s first ‘virtual’, Online Conference.
- 2022** Dr Roe Currie was awarded an Honorary Life Membership in 2022 for her service as APEN’s Secretariat from 1995 - 2022.
- 2023** Graham Harris received his award in Launceston, Tasmania at APEN’s Conference.

We asked each Life Member to share their ‘stories’ with us.

Their inspirational stories can be powerful motivators to empower, inspire, and enlighten other Members to drive us to action.



Dr Jeff Coutts

QLD

APEN emerged during the early 1990s after a decade of questioning about government's role in continuing public extension.

Extension's historical contribution to increased agricultural productivity is not in question: its current contribution is. (Feller 1987)

"I found myself at the centre of this debate in Queensland when tasked with developing the then Queensland Department of Primary Industries (QDPI) Extension Strategy following an extensive review of extension, trends, and needs. My credentials for this were that, as well as having been an extension officer (poultry) for a number of years, I had completed a Masters in Agricultural Knowledge

Systems at the then Wageningen Agricultural University in The Netherlands. My course work thesis had been on the introduction of user-pays in the United Kingdom (which was a growing international trend for government extension in the 1980s).

I used this opportunity to research and write my PhD which explored the changes in thinking and policies about extension at the time.

In 1993, a conference was initiated by the Extension Development Group (a group of staff who had undertaken post-graduate studies in extension) in the then QDPI with a desire to expose those in extension to the wider national and international developments.

I was the Convenor for the conference – and I think that it was this experience that had a major influence on my thinking about extension going forward. It also provided the germ for APEN which was initiated at the conference.

I noted at the time, that as well as having the purpose [of APEN] to assist practitioners to share their knowledge and improve the practice and methodology of extension, a further outcome of the network was about raising the understanding of key policy makers about the process and profession of extension and its importance to them.

What came out of the review and strategy statement (and other similar reviews across Australia) was an argument for a more proactive public extension role and a complementarity between public and private extension. Developing the profession of extension and providing extensionists with the support and skills they needed to take a more proactive role also became a priority – and the Rural Extension Centre at Gatton was established for this purpose. Other universities were also developing extension and systems courses.

I am most proud that APEN commenced at a time of both awakening and pressure on extension across Australia in the early 1990s to support those of us in

extension and develop the extension profession. This was an incredible feat of bringing the different states and extension interests together – and more than that, it has persisted and grown as an organisation that is recognised across the agricultural and natural resource management sectors as the ‘go-to’ place for extension.

Now, 30 years later, APEN is a stand-alone organisation which has run many national and international conferences as well as training workshops and opportunities for extension professionals from across public, private and industry spheres – and has had an incredible impact on our national understanding of the importance and roles of extension in rural development.

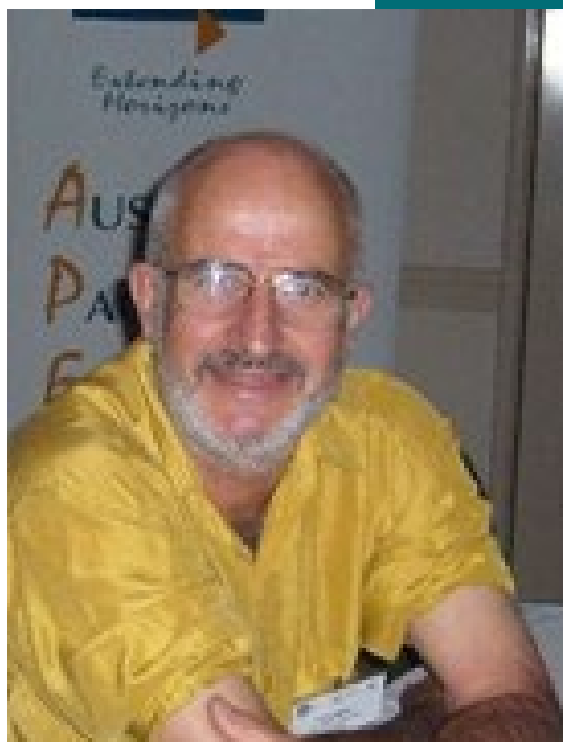
What has been fascinating is to see new cohorts of extensionists come and discover that extension is not only about ‘giving farmers advice’ but also about working with people in a range of modalities to bring out the best from an agricultural innovation ecosystem. I remember at one APEN conference a relatively young presenter describing the excitement about using ‘new’ participative processes with farmer clients and how much more powerful it was than ‘just’ providing advice or information!

APEN has provided me with a terrific network of individuals across Australia and beyond who are committed to the best extension possible. To be part of the conversation at conferences and at a distance has been very beneficial personally and professionally.”

Terry Makin

VIC

“After completing a Diploma of Agriculture at Dookie Agricultural College, I started dairy farming on my family’s irrigation dairy farm in northern Victoria from 1964 and continued until 1996. When I commenced dairying most of our information was coming from New Zealand, but we were supported by a group of well-resourced dairy extension officers, including a Kiwi extension officer in my area. In 1986, I was appointed as a farmer Director to the Australian Dairy Research and Development Corporation (DRDC). In this role, I became aware of the bias towards traditional quantitative research with much less focus on Extension and human qualitative research. Any return on investment of farmers’ levy and taxpayer funding depended on research being taken up by farmers. The emphasis at that time was on increasing productivity in Agriculture.



As a DRDC Director, I came into direct contact with researchers, and the focus of their projects. There seemed to be very little research or education focussed on agricultural extension at this time in Victoria, although Hawkesbury Agricultural College (NSW) had been offering a post-graduate Diploma of Agricultural Extension since 1971. This program grew into a Masters degree and a PhD program. I enrolled in the first intake in 1991. I wanted to strengthen my capacity to advocate for research into extension as I believed this was the best way to create change in our industry.

Awareness of the need to improve and strengthen the theory and practice of extension

in Australia led to the 1993 National Extension Conference (funded by Agriculture departments and industry R & D corporations). Over breakfast, the concept of APEN was conceived, and the core group consisting of Associate Professor Bob Macadam (UWS), Ian Simpson (NSW Ag Dept) and Peter Van Beek (Qld Ag Department) and I worked to bring this to reality.

To see how APEN has developed in the last thirty years brings me much pleasure. It has provided a necessary forum and connections for extension practitioners around Australia and links with New Zealand and the Pacific. The Bi-Annual Conferences provide a critical vehicle for building essential networks, sharing knowledge, building capacity in the APEN organisation and regional communities.

I value the relationships I had with people in this community. Any achievements of my time as President were team efforts. I want to acknowledge Dr Rosemary Currie as a key team member almost from APEN's inception. My ten years as a Director of DRDC and my time leading APEN have been two of the most significant times in my working life."



Dr John James

TAS

Dr John James is passionate about enabling change and innovation and helping others to learn and build their capability in this area. Amongst other roles, he was APEN President for five years and he also established the APEN Mentoring Scheme. John was the convenor for the APEN International Conference held in Tasmania in November 2023.

John enjoys using online collaboration tools to complement face-to-face communication. He pioneered the use of webinars in agriculture to connect with a geographically distributed audience. One of John's career highlights was launching the Enabling change and innovation webinar series back in 2012.

He provides consulting services around designing extension projects for impact, facilitating high impact events, and monitoring and evaluation of extension projects.

As President, John James saw three major roles for APEN: networking, professional development, and representation. "APEN needs to challenge its members to 'walk the talk', 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.

"My extension journey has been enriched by the wonderful people I've had the privilege to work alongside. Extension practitioners are the heart and soul of our profession, and our collective commitment to helping people and driving innovation binds us together as a closely-knit community. Secondly, the diversity of activities that make up what we call extension, means that we rarely get bored! It encompasses

event design, group facilitation, community engagement, project management, and evaluation, to name just a few! Of course, communication is one of our main activities, and can include social media, public speaking, creating newsletters, designing flyers, facilitating webinars, and delivering workshops. How can you ever get bored as an extension practitioner?!

I thoroughly enjoy engaging with APEN members at various events, whether it be online or in person. Even as an introvert, I look forward to the various discussions I'll have at these events. APEN has also helped broaden my perspective and deepened my understanding of our world and how we interact. I love hearing about other ways of doing things and am always keen to hear what's working in other regions or industries. That's one of the reasons I haven't missed an APEN conference since the one I attended in 1998 at Roseworthy in South Australia. Those events have also helped widen my network. There are lots of super-helpful people across Australia, New Zealand and beyond that I can reach out to when I want to bounce some ideas around or need help with something."

"APEN is my tribe".

Professor Ruth Nettle

VIC

"I started in an extension role in 1989. I responded to an advert for a dairy advisor with the Department of Primary industries in Tasmania which stated: 'new graduates encouraged to apply'. I didn't know much about dairy, but Australia was in another rural crisis and there weren't many jobs going, so I relocated to Tasmania from NSW, starting at the Deloraine office. This was the era of government investment in local extension services, where advisors were allocated to districts and where there was a remit to be known and trusted, and to support farmers 'where they were at' with an overall goal to improve productivity. I facilitated discussion groups, developed short courses to package information and support to new practices and connected farmers with researchers or other needed expertise. Email, the internet and mobile phones were coming, but not a thing back then. To contact farmers, you rang or faxed them, sent them letters, or visited them. To communicate, you went on radio, put information in newspapers and farming magazines, or ran field days.



At that time, the extension role was about developing understanding of the farmers' situation and their needs and being a resource to connect them to the people and information that could help them. In those first years, I was mentored by dairy scientists as well as 'crusty' extension officers with decades of experience who told me to 'keep my eyes and ears open and my mouth shut for the first six months'. I went about meeting as many farmers as I could in the district, I set up one of the first focus farms, I was the coordinator for about 6 discussion groups, and I was supported and helped by leading local farming families in the area. After all, I was only the 3rd woman to be employed in an extension role in Tasmania and I was 22

years old – I needed all the help I could get!

It is only in hindsight that I now see those years (1989-1999) as a period of rapid change in Extension. It was an era marked by the beginning of privatisation as well as the rise of Landcare. I spent 3 months in New Zealand as a Dairy Board consulting officer on a job exchange, supporting 19 discussion groups. This was the period when the NZ government privatised their Ministry of Primary industries extension services and overnight, consulting services emerged.

On my return to Tasmania, we began charging for some services like soil tests and feed budgeting and cash flow planning. I started hearing commentary that ‘government should get out of the way’ and ‘farmers should pay’ for the support they receive. The rural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) were beginning to provide funding to government extension front-line staff, but only in priority areas for industry, such as toward growth. Evaluating and reviewing the impact of extension was becoming more of a focus, as if somehow extension was solely responsible for change and disconnected from everything else in the system like research or policy. Then, as people retired from government extension roles, they were not replaced. The Deloraine office where I worked was shut, and we were moved into Launceston. I was getting a sense that extension as a professional field was in decline, losing respect and losing its way. I felt isolated. Then APEN was established.

At the time APEN began, I started a master’s degree in applied science (Rural Development) at the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury, which provided a depth of insight to the politics and sociology of extension and the ‘system’ perspective, whereby I was able to position my practice and that of extension in the context of ‘the agricultural system’. I was inspired by the ‘farmer first’ perspectives of Robert Chambers and believed this was what I was trying to practice as an extension officer. It was not my experience that science was trying to tell farmers what they should think and do, or that science had to be ‘adopted’. I saw science and scientists as contributing to the innovation process overall, just as I was. During my study, the importance of different ways of knowing and holism was emphasised. Engaging with APEN and completing this study set me on a new career path in social science and social research, to generate knowledge about the farm context and positioning the role of extension and extension practice in the landscape of agricultural, environment and community challenges. I have come to define agricultural extension as being about the facilitation of change and as an enabler of the innovation process. The best thing about being part of APEN (and convening the 2023 conference) is the exposure to ways of thinking and practising extension and the different faces and roles for extension in the public, private, industry and NGO sectors.

Now, as a lifetime member of APEN and a University researcher and teacher of extension and rural innovation, I see a big role for extension in the next decade. It is why I have focused on integrating extension capacities within the curriculum at the University of Melbourne in both the Bachelor and Master of Agriculture, including a specialisation and micro-credentials in extension and innovation. The people that hold extension roles and the processes of extension is what provides the spaces for learning and interaction needed to work through the contested and complex challenges facing agriculture and the environment.

To me, the role of advocate and leader for extension is one for us all and is needed to secure a valued future for extension.”

Dr Pat Hamilton

SA

I 'entered' agriculture from a teaching background. My husband and I set up a small sheep hobby farm in the 70s. By the mid 80s, we were serious about farming, and we expanded the acres to accommodate a small sheep stud. I retired from teaching, went back to university, studied a double Honours degree and in 2003 I was offered a PhD scholarship from the Grains and Research Corporation to explore leadership and decision-making for women.

In 2003, at the APEN Conference in Hobart, I was a participant in an induction workshop "New to extension?" 'New', in this context, was intended as a broad concept, implying new to extension, new to APEN, or new to conferences. I fitted the bill on all three as I was introduced to the jargon of extension, interacted with others who were in a similar position, and was amazed by what an agricultural conference could generate. I was hooked! Although I joined APEN in 2003, I was not a very active Member. For many years, I "lurked". I followed the progress of APEN activities as I studied for my PhD. I read all the eBulletins, the ExtensionNet and the Journals. This led me to a wealth of opportunities.

There are some great thinkers in our network whose research and extension practices encourage me to think outside the square (or the round hole whichever you prefer). I became engrossed in my passion of being an advocate for rural women and girls for the next ten years. As President of the Australian Women in Agriculture and then President of the National Rural Women's Coalition, I was invited to be the official civil society delegate to represent the Australian Government on the official Government's delegation to the 2018 United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62) in New York. My 16 days in New York were packed with meetings, discussions and connecting with people from the UN 193 Member States to adopt a document known as the Agreed Conclusions, which set forth commitments for States to address gender justice and human rights issues to implement the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. All these experiences, including an inaugural Director of Country to Canberra, broadened my knowledge of networking and adapting change in agricultural industries. Over many decades, I have built on the achievements of many women through observation, listening, learning, and then acting. This process has been applied to my work with APEN.

At the end of 2016, I was approached by the APEN President, Jeanette Long, to be the Editor of ExtensionNet (and I am still leading the Editorial Team). I am privileged to follow a line of very impressive editors of ExtensionNet over a period of 24 years. I thank the Board of Management for giving me this opportunity to interact with so many amazing extension agents.

During the last eight years, I have been deeply involved in APEN activities and worked alongside so many awesome people who have been willing to share their stories. It has been a fabulous and most rewarding experience. I appreciate the generosity of their time and to share their journey. When APEN became a Compa-



ny Limited by Guarantee, I became a Director and was given the privilege of Chairing the Regional Activities Committee. It has been an honour and a pleasure to work with Regional Coordinators – they have kept me alert to the needs of our members.

My family continually reminds me that a human being is not a machine, which can run continuously for long periods on a single source of power. We need to not only re-energise our multi-dimensional physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs but also our multi-dimensional capacities of collaboration, empathy, compassion, reflection, and growth. [Really, I do try! – with the help of the APEN network.]



Dr Roy Murray-Prior

QLD

Pat asked me for my reflections on 30 years of APEN, but it made me reflect that I am coming up 50 years of involvement with extension in one way and another and I am reminded that my initial Rural Science degree didn't even mention the word. When I went for my first interview for a professional job as an extension officer, I didn't really know what the word meant. In a nutshell, that probably sums it up – most decision makers, who influence what is funded and undertaken in agricultural research and development, don't understand it. We go through cycles in which understanding, and processes improve (with the Landcare movement), but then we go backwards again.

Many powers that be still think in terms of Roger's theory – Everett (Rogers 1962)¹, not Carl (Rogers 1951)² - unfortunately. I am forever grateful that I had an opportunity to undertake a Diploma in Agricultural Extension at Melbourne University in 1978, funded by a Commonwealth Extension Services Grant, with a group of experienced extension professionals, where I learnt about both Rogers. As a woman (there was only one) and men, we rejected the former and accepted the principles of the latter, for which I have to thank Peter Salmon, who also introduced us to my Australian Idol, Joan Tully (Tully 1964)³. I doubt you will find Joan online – perhaps we should include a copy on the APEN web site – but we did write about her in ExtensionNet 14(2) – which is available to members.

Carl's theory was aimed at counsellors and his person-centred approach was based on the principle that people had a strong drive to mature and grow and that they change in relationship with others who help them with their problems in a supportive, non-judgemental relationship, without a directive intervention. I don't remember Joan ever mentioning Carl, but in principle her approach was similar, although she favoured using groups because she recognised that farmers live in communities that socialise their values, beliefs, and attitudes. She also fostered supportive, non-judgemental relationships and processes (in groups) that focused on an educational process that began by starting with what the farmers – as a group – thought were their

1 Rogers EM 1962, Diffusion of innovations, Free Press of Glencoe, New York.

2 Rogers CR 1951, Client-centered therapy: Its current practice, implications, and theory, Constable, London, UK.

3 Tully J 1964, 'Operational research in agricultural extension in Queensland', Agricultural Progress, vol. XXXIX, pp. 7-11.

issues and then facilitated a discussion about those problems. Only once consensus on this was achieved was information introduced, not necessarily from scientists, but from other farmers and scientists depending on what was requested.

Some of the people who did postgrad studies at the University of Melbourne and Hawksbury Agricultural College during that period were directly and indirectly involved with the design and implementation of the Landcare movement and with the Victorian and Federal governments began the 'Decade of Landcare' program. It focussed on working with community groups to develop Landcare programs. This process developed human capital, intellectual capital, and social capital in rural communities. This sort of provides a definition of a core objective of extension – even a definition – it's about facilitating growth for rural people, communities and their value chains that develops their human, intellectual and social capital so that they can overcome the constraints to improving their personal, social, and economic well-being. This may improve the adoption of some practices, but improving adoption should never be the goal of extension, as unfortunately it often is. You can see why this view fits with Carl but not Everett.

Landcare was put onto the backburner with the establishment of the NRM regions funded by the first privatisation of Telstra in the mid 90s. However, some of the successful groups expanded their agendas beyond Landcare to undertake their own research, development, and extension programs. The Mingenew-Irwin group in WA is a classic case of this. It formed in 1994 as the combination of the Mingenew Land Conservation District Committee and the Irwin Land Conservation District Committee. It and other farmer groups associated with the Grower Group Alliance in WA develop research and development priorities, design the research, develop practical solutions based on the research findings and promote them to other farmers.

I just read something I wrote nearly 20 years ago for a Pacific extension conference in Tonga and realised that while my emphasis has changed slightly, the lessons I outlined then are still relevant:

- We need to consider the broader picture and recognise that extension to farmers is only a small part of the picture.
- We need to take a whole of system approach and encourage the development of relationships and partnerships along the supply chain.
- We have to involve agribusiness and have a pull from the top as well as push from the bottom. A combined approach is also likely to have a greater impact on government policies and their necessary investments in physical, human, and social capital.
- Investments in human and social capital are necessary at a number of levels if farmers are to be able to be effective partners or participants in RD&E activities.

To that I would add something I learnt from two excellent PhD theses by Barbara King (King 2011)⁴ and Nurul Hilmiati (Hilmiati 2012⁵), who, in different ways, concluded a dedicated facilitation process is required for effective RD&E. This process requires engagement of stakeholders throughout the process if the findings are to be scaled out and lead to improvements in rural peoples' and communities' personal, social, and economic well-being. Barbara noted the important role for collaboration

4 King BJ 2011, Sharing expertise: Creating collaborative knowledge networks to strengthen RD&E outcomes, PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Vic.

5 Hilmiati N 2012, Making research count for farmers: an analysis of participation and communication in agricultural research for development in Eastern Indonesia, PhD thesis, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld.

facilitators as project leaders of research projects, rather than researchers. For me this requires someone with an innovation systems perspective and collaboration facilitator skills to lead RD&E projects and they require a range of skills that are at the core of skills that good extension professionals should have.

I know Pat will be saying, where is APEN in all this? I have been in many professional organisations over the years, but APEN is the only organisation in Australia and New Zealand that actively discusses, promotes, provides training and advocates for these ideas. My challenge to you and my vision for APEN and its members, is to have a much greater say in the RD&E agenda so that it becomes the ERDE agenda. Extension should not be seen as coming after the D, which is what Everett Roger's model implies. Good innovation systems processes start with farmers and their value chains and ends with them. People with good innovation systems and facilitation knowledge and skills should be at the core of this and APEN is where we help each other to develop them.



Dr Terry Parminter NZ

“I am one of the last people still working that was employed as a Farm Advisory Officer in the NZ Government's extension service provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), which was privatised in 1986. At that point, I became an extension scientist/farm management scientist/social scientist with Research Division later AgResearch until 2009. Since then, I have established my own private company providing agricultural research and consultancy services (including extension) for farmers, rural communities, industry-good organisations, and regional and central government. I am now starting to wind down my business towards my retirement.

I attended the first Australasian extension conference in Queensland in 1993, and all the APEN conferences there-after, generally publishing papers at each one. My last conference was in 2022.

I suggest that agricultural extension is both a ‘cross-discipline-based’ and a ‘skill-based’ profession. By that I mean that the professional uniqueness of agricultural extension is that it builds on social sciences such as social psychology, rural sociology, and behavioural economics and applies these disciplines to rural and agricultural contexts.

If the profession is to keep evolving and strengthening its own capability to intervene in the lives of people, communities, and the society around us, I suggest that we need university degrees and on-going professional development in agricultural extension that is grounded in these sciences. That means that in our profession we should have people that are academically qualified in agricultural extension degrees or allied cross-disciplinary degrees that include papers in agricultural extension. Agricultural extension is also skill-based. By that, I mean that people can be taught how to facilitate groups, organise learning and educational events, design and

analyse surveys and interviews, and provide counselling advice. People with a mix of these skills can also be considered extensionists, with or without any academic background in extension disciplines.

APEN brings people together that might have a background in either of these two approaches to professional development, and I consider that to be one of its main strengths. It has provided my main sources of learning in agricultural extension. This nexus of academic and skill-based development requires members to publish papers and/or stories about what they are learning and experiencing. It also requires a willingness by us all to embrace positivist, interpretivist, and critical theory approaches to understanding agricultural extension learning and experience as we read these and consider their learning in our own lives.”

Graham Harris

QLD

Graham has been an APEN member since 1993.

“Working in extension over the past 42 years has provided me the opportunity to work with landholders and rural communities to address significant change in agricultural industries. Over this time, I have worked with them in response to the challenges of drought, floods, economic downturns and, also, the good times. The resilience of individuals and communities continue to inspire me and their willingness to adopt and adapt new technologies to address the challenges they face. For me, the best thing about extension has been the relationships forged not only with landholders and rural communities, but also with the RDE and agribusiness professionals (public and private) servicing them.



Membership of APEN has provided me with the opportunity to expand my network with extension professionals throughout Australia and Internationally. It has challenged my approach to extension and provided the opportunity to continually develop my skills and support others in their development in extension.

Looking back on my time as APEN President there are a number of things that I am proud of. In particular, the enthusiasm and willingness of the APEN Board to encourage professional development opportunities for our membership.

The above APEN Life Members are those who have been recognised for their ability to involve the use of communication and adult education processes to help people and communities identify potential improvements to their practices, and then provide them with the skills and resources to affect these improvements.

However, There have been a host of Members who are also change-makers – too numerous to capture in this brief history. We are privileged to be able to share the following stories of some of them.



Amabel Fulton

TAS

Born: 15 October 1964

Died: 15 August 2009

Dr Amabel Fulton's contribution to extension was worldwide, "as part of a movement in Australian agriculture circles that has advocated a new way of understanding farms and farming, and the way farms might be encouraged to innovate." (Professor Frank Vanclay at the ceremony to confer a PhD to Amabel Fulton, 2009)

Amabel's contribution to APEN was extensive since its inception. She was an important player in steering APEN's development through her dedication and commitment as a member of the Management Committee, Secretary of APEN Inc. 1998, 1999, 2000, 2006, 2007, taking a lead role in organising the 2nd International Extension Conference in 1997, co-convening the 2003 APEN Forum in Hobart and provided, through APEN, convening and facilitating the series of leadership workshops of APEN's National Forum "Leading the future," Melbourne, Victoria, 2005.

In August, 2009, it was with great sadness to all who knew her, that Amabel lost her three-and-a-half-year battle with breast cancer.

"Amabel Fulton was born in Hobart on 15 October 1964. She attended Hobart Matriculation College and excelled in her studies, graduated from the University of Tasmania with an Agricultural Science degree in 1987, with a major in animal production, and was awarded First Class Honours for her thesis on the genetics of footrot in sheep.

Amabel became a rural journalist with *Tasmanian Country* before working for the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment.

In 1999, Amabel and her husband David started the successful consultancy company Rural Development Services (RDS). RDS provided research development and education services to the agriculture and seafood industries, with a focus on supporting rural industries to be sustainable and internationally competitive.

In recognition of her work, Amabel was awarded the Telstra Tasmanian Businesswomen's Award in the innovation category in 2008 and was the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (now AgriFutures) Tasmanian Rural Women's Award runner up in 2008.

Amabel continued her studies over a long period while raising her three children, Tom, Ben and Sarah. Her studies focussed on issues related to helping farming communities manage change, especially farming families. Amabel believed that instead of seeing the farm as a singular entity under the management of a male farmer, farms should be appreciated for what they usually are - family farming businesses.

Amabel was a champion of women's role in agriculture and a member of the Australian Government's Regional Women's Advisory Council. Amabel was awarded her PhD in rural social research in 2009. (Tasmanian Women's Honour Roll)

Partner of David, both personally and professionally, devoted mother of Tom, Ben and Sarah and dedicated member of APEN, Amabel was taken too soon when she lost a long battle with breast cancer.

APEN recognised this amazing trail blazer through the APEN Amabel Fulton Award for Excellence in Extension by a Young Professional.

Cynthia Mahoney

VIC

“My father was an extension officer in the Dept of Agriculture back in the days of one-to-one extension. Over the years, I saw the profession change from one-to-one to group extension. When Dad became the manager of the Benalla office, he helped assemble a dynamic team of intelligent, passionate, creative, and fun changemakers that I had the fortune of getting to know as I grew up.

My training in extension led me to 17 stimulating years working in various roles in the Victorian Department of Agriculture including as a leadership facilitator in the wine industry, a strategic planning facilitator in the Dairy Business Focus and Farm\$mart Programs, as a Business Improvement Facilitator on staff and organisational culture change, leading a practice change research and adoption project in biosecurity, a value chain project manager in agribusiness and as statewide Rural Women's Network coordinator.

I was so fortunate to have the late, great Pete Botta as my mentor. He was one of the most authentic, kindest, funny, down-to-earth, call a spade a f:&*ing shovel person you could ever meet. He was also a brilliant facilitator and showed me that being yourself as a facilitator, finding your own voice and your own way of doing things and not trying to be anyone else was the best approach to connect with people. Because of his constructive feedback and encouragement, I was soon loving every minute of working with groups of farm families and I've never looked back. I had found my thing in life.

I became aware of APEN as a valuable community of like-minded people who all



wanted to create positive change in the world. It was a network that brought together people from research and practice to share knowledge and ideas. It also tried to professionalise the discipline of extension. Too often back in the 1990's extension was dismissed by some in our organisations as being soft and fluffy and there was a feeling that anyone could run a workshop, it wasn't that hard. So, we would see people in research including elements of practice change in their projects that they would implement. Yet an extension person would never dream of telling a researcher that we could do their job.

APEN has worked hard at advocating for the profession and having input into policy as well as educating extension professionals. I was lucky enough to have a stint as the Regional Coordinator for Victoria, being a member of the national management committee (prior to it being the APEN board) and being on the organising committee of the 2006 APEN International Conference in Beechworth.

My background in extension and love for facilitation and human growth and change led me to start my own leadership practice in 2012. I now support leaders and teams to thrive by doing performance differently. I am now an author (my first book, *Cultivate: how neuroscience and well-being support rural leaders to thrive*, was released in 2021), a speaker, coach, mentor and facilitator and work predominately with people and organisations based in rural areas. I do work I love with people I like every day and I have creative freedom in how I choose to work – I could not have done this without my training in extension and facilitation.”



Denise Bewsell

NZ

After completing a degree in Agricultural Science, Denise took up a role as an extension officer working on irrigation management. She worked in this area for several years before getting involved in extension research and understanding adoption of new practices. This led to a Masters degree focusing on how people respond to information using biosecurity as an example. She has worked extensively with the red meat sector, supporting facilitators, and helping spread ideas on effective ways of enabling change, as part of the Red Meat Profit Partnership. She now works at Scarlatti as a Senior research manager, leading the extension programme design area.

“When I left uni, I got a job with the Department of Agriculture, Victoria, in Whole Farm Planning. I really had no idea what I was doing but I didn't want to work in agricultural research, so this seemed like a good idea

I was lucky enough to have Bruce Cumming as my first boss. Bruce thought deeply about extension, and I learnt a lot from him. He was also super encouraging which helped me build my confidence. I was also fortunate to be able to take part in the facilitation and extension training the Department offered. These skills were fundamental to all the roles I've had since.

I worked in Shepparton and Swan Hill in Whole Farm Planning, in Tatura on soil and water management, in different parts of Australia on understanding adoption of good practices on farm, in New Zealand on understanding adoption of good practices on farm, co-innovation, extension design, implementation, evaluation, as well as small group-based extension and facilitation training. The work I did with Red Meat Profit Partnership here in New Zealand was recognised with an APEN Award for Excellence in Extension.

I feel like I've seen the best of what extension offers because of the people I've worked with and the range of work I've been involved in. The commitment people working in this field have to see farmers and landowners flourish and be able to succeed is at the heart of it. This is absolutely the best part of being in extension! Plus, I also really enjoy food and eating, and so I'm right behind making sure farmers and growers can produce food well!"

Denise has been very involved in APEN. She was the NZ representative for six years and now is an associate editor for the APEN journal – the Rural Extension and Innovation Systems journal.

[Denise loves chocolate! She wishes she worked as a taste tester for Whittaker's Chocolates but instead spends her days helping support facilitators. Ed.]

Austin McLennan

QLD

Austin, Owner & Principal Consultant AJM, a consultancy which includes organisational governance and event management and Senior Scientist (Entomology, Department of Agriculture & Fisheries, QLD), has a long history in the world of extension.

However, it is with his leadership in APEN from being on the Management Committee a Past President of APEN (2011-2014) and leading the redraft of the APEN Constitution of APEN's transition from being Incorporated to a Company limited by guarantee status that we recognise his value as a trailblazer.

"I believe in the members continuously building APEN's organisational capacity. It is important to share our aspirations, for they are relevant. However, we need to report our actual results based on having the right structure, funding, supportive staff, and volunteers, and, of course, our 'right' focus. I know that most APEN members are very curious about innovation and extension-like processes that happen in other industry and community sectors outside agriculture and natural resource management and want APEN to help connect them to what is going on in these fields. I absolutely agree with this, and that APEN can and should do this... But if we think that APEN or extension can be all things to all people, all industries, and all communities, I think we are mistaken.

Several key achievements under my tenure as President were:



- organisational reforms including the development of several key subcommittees to progress the APEN strategic plan.
- improved management committee performance through investment in annual face to face planning meetings and other measures.
- improved national profile of APEN via representation at key national events and forums.
- APEN's first international conference outside Australia (Christchurch New Zealand, 2013).
- launch of APEN social media presence.
- transition away from our current representative-based management committee to what is commonly called a 'skills-based board'. A move to a 'skills-based board' does not deny the importance of regional representation but does say that the final determinant of who can be elected to APEN's management body should be what that person brings to the organisation, not where he or she lives.

I believe that being truly representative ultimately means having a membership offer that attracts investment and/or memberships from the organisations, industries, and communities we wish to represent (and serve), i.e. extension workers (whatever they are called in their job descriptions) and their communities/industries etc.

The big constitutional change to a Company limited by guaranteed structure with a formal skills-based Board of Directors, while retaining and focusing the regional representative roles, has made APEN a really professional organisation. Playing an effective role in the public conversation will be largely the consequence of achieving my beliefs.”



Sophie Folder

TAS

I joined APEN in 2003 when my supervisor at Vic DPI told me that I should. I was lucky enough to be part of the DPI graduate program and have great skilled and experienced extension officers to mentor me in my early extension career. I attended the APEN conference in Hobart that year and to be honest much of the content went over my head, but I still considered it to be a great experience. Now that I operate my own consulting business as a sole trader, I see the benefit of APEN even more as an opportunity to network and share with other likeminded professionals. It is terrific to be amongst a group of people who understand what it is that I do, what the term extension means and to be challenged by new ideas and ways of operating.

I put my hand up to take on the role of Tasmanian Regional Coordinator, a role that I would undertake for 6 years. At my first Management Committee (MC) meeting (which were then held via teleconference) I realised I was the only representative that worked in the private sector undertaking extension. I brought a different viewpoint from the new emerging trend for private extension delivery. Six years on the tide turned and the makeup of the APEN Management Committee became a diverse mix of private consultants, NRM, university and government sector repre-

sentatives. APEN now reflects a diverse mix of employment which now constitutes extension professionals.

So, what did I gain from my six years as an APEN rep? Firstly, it was a wonderful networking experience. I have met and got to know great people through my APEN role. Building relationships with the other APEN MC reps has been a definite highlight. This was initially 'over the phone' or via web conference as part of the monthly MC meetings and then at face-to-face meetings which were held once a year. As a management committee we always came away with a great sense of team and drive as an MC after meeting face to face.

I have gained skills in governance and representation and have my first experience of being a member of a management committee (board). I think it is wonderful that APEN offers this opportunity to its members through the regional representation model which enables those without previous experience in these fields to develop them. I have had the opportunity to represent APEN and present on the benefits of the APEN network at national events including a National Horticulture Industry Development forum and at the Ag Institute AGM.

I am still an active APEN networker. I really enjoyed being on the 2023 APEN Conference Committee.

So, for anyone out there who is considering taking on an APEN role... DO IT! or if you ever get tapped on the shoulder and asked to consider taking on a role with APEN... SAY YES! You won't regret it.

Jeanette Long

SA

A Past APEN President, Jeanette combines her professional skills of motivating others with her love of family farming. Along with her husband, Bill, Jeanette is a Director of Ag Consulting Co and a partner in their farming business in South Australia. This experience enables her to deliver a range of training programs, facilitate meetings and workshops, and assist farm families with succession and business planning. Jeanette is highly qualified in both theory and practice as a facilitator, trainer, and coach.

Jeanette has integrated her years of experience in education, journalism, agriculture, communications, adult learning, peer-to-peer learning, and practical hands-on farming to develop her own training programs to influence positive change in agriculture. She believes in a facilitated learning approach to extension – building the capacity and confidence of those she works with to implement change.

Jeanette's strong commitment to rural and regional community issues were evident in her many roles with APEN. Fortunately for APEN, we continue to engage her to deliver many of our programs.



“I have been a member of APEN for many years and have a commitment to the professional development of our members by facilitating many APEN events for the Board, the Regional Coordinators and Members, including the Growing Emerging Leadership project, ExtensionChat, Mentoring, and Road show. I, particularly, enjoyed attending seven APEN conferences, the networking, roadshows and reading ExtensionNet to keep up with what is going on in the world of extension.

During my time as President, I was keen to increase the opportunities for member interaction. I worked on our social media strategy with Rebecca Wallis from WA taking an active role to increase our use of Facebook and Twitter. The LinkedIn groups were well subscribed with some regular interaction occurring. APEN advertised for a new Webinar Coordinator, acknowledging John James for his commitment to this role over many years. Each year we intended to offer at least four webinars to share with our Members. We encouraged members to share their research or practical extension examples. It was great opportunity to know what was happening in the world of extension.

As a past Mentor in the APEN Mentoring Scheme, I would also love to see enough interest to run this program again in 2025. If you know of anyone who would like to be involved as either a mentor or mentee, please “tap them on the shoulder”. Mentee’s often need the support to put their hand up – the benefits for both mentee and mentor are significant.

In 2015, I really enjoyed convening the South Australia conference, Managing Change, Innovation and Action in an Ever-Shrinking World. The Conference Committee is a great way to become more involved in our organisation. APEN Conferences give me the opportunity to meet people face-to-face.

I am particularly passionate about developing extension skills with a focus on people and in developing the skills and confidence of women in agriculture.”



Chrissy Stokes

NZ

APEN’s been part of my life for over 10 years now. I had a bit of an “accidental” start in the extension field, but I think it’s been in my blood for a long time.

To me, extension is about working with individuals and groups to navigate change. That might mean “selling” them an innovation or helping them wrestle with what a piece of new research means in their own context. I remember at uni being a demonstrator for first year students in a science lab, and the satisfaction I felt when suddenly, they “got” a concept and could make sense of something that had been mysterious and complicated.

My first formal extension role was in 2011 when I

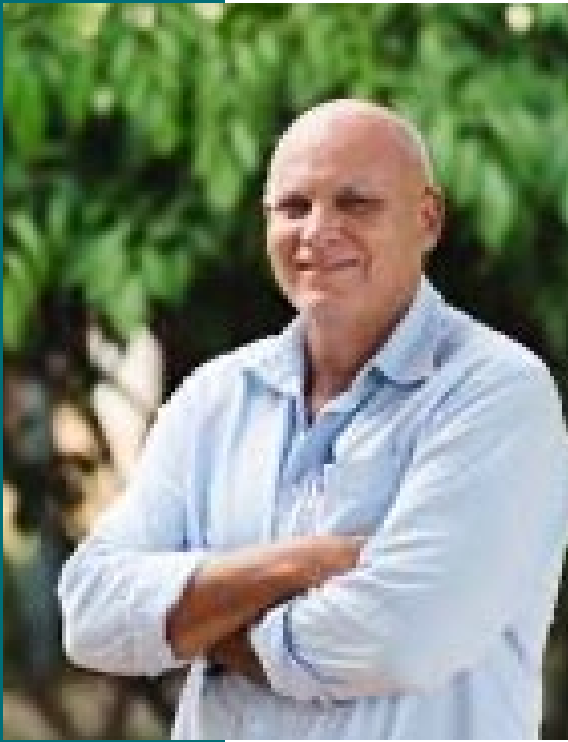
joined Zespri's Extension Team to support New Zealand kiwifruit growers to adopt three new cultivars we'd released, after a couple of years in more operational roles. When I moved into my new role, I loved the real hunger in the growing community for the research and information we were there to share. There was also that same satisfaction when someone suddenly understood why we were asking them to do something a specific way and what it meant for them.

I joined APEN in 2012 (I think) but I didn't really get what it was all about until as a team we all attended the Christchurch conference in 2013. I met all these awesome people who were doing the same sort of work as me – the context was just different. I definitely recognised the luxury we had as a team to be working in permanent roles, rather than on two- or three-year projects, but that long term approach had drawbacks of its own. It's easy for things to get stale, but you also get to build great relationships and networks, see change happening over the long term, and continue to test different approaches each time around the seasonal cycle.

We attended the 2015 conference in Adelaide, and various APEN roadshows and events. In 2016, I took over from Denise Bewsell as the New Zealand member of the APEN Management Committee. I travelled across to Sydney for the annual Management Committee meeting where I spent a couple of awesome days getting to know the team and planning how we were going to transition being a company limited by guarantee. In 2017, the management committee was replaced by a Board of Directors. Regional representation came from a committee of Regional Coordinators. I found myself part of both groups, representing New Zealand and navigating my first governance role all at once.

In the time I've been involved with APEN, I've been to conferences and roadshows, helped to deliver a conference, co-hosted a catchment symposium and a master class, been part of the team that delivered the first ExtensionChat, been the NZ Regional Coordinator, been on the Management Committee and the Board, Chaired the Regional Activities Committee, and for the last few years helped Pat Hamilton, Adrian Englefield and Morag Anderson deliver ExtensionNet. I've worked with some amazing people and learnt heaps about how much you can get done if you have a group of enthusiastic volunteers who have crazy ideas!

My day job these days doesn't have the word "extension" in it. That doesn't mean I'm not using all my skills and abilities to facilitate change though. On the contrary, I'm involved in a digital transformation programme, and putting people at the heart of what we do, collaborating and co-designing, breaking down technical complexity into relatable language and concepts, bringing people along on the journey, using influencers to magnify our impact, evaluating success, and ultimately driving behaviour change in service of improved business and industry outcomes. All feel very familiar for some reason. Hmm, it's a mystery.



Dr Warren Hunt

NT

Warren Hunt has over 30 years of experience in agri-food industry capacity building. His career began in the pastoral zones of western New South Wales and Queensland working in rangeland management and the extensive grazing industries. He progressed to program leadership roles, coordinating integrated pest management in Australian sugar, and later managing a state-wide sheep program for the University of Tasmania on behalf of Australian Wool Innovation.

“Extension has been defined ad nauseam. Simply it’s a vocation involved with working with individuals to make advances in our society. Those advances may be economic, social and/or environmental in nature. Its focus may be to deliver either private or public goods.

The field of Extension is a pretty big place. APEN has been predominantly rural and regional in its overall focus, with its genesis in the production agriculture disciplines. It quickly evolved into capturing the landscape and environmental spheres, something that emerged consequent of the soil conservation and later Landcare movements. Extension encompasses work done at an almost personal level with individuals and their businesses, through to larger programs that have impacts at industry, state, or national levels. The country would literally be poorer without it, as its absence would have led to slower advancements in productivity gains in agriculture for starters. Furthermore, not coming up with and implementing effective means of mitigating environmental impacts would have seen a steady but assured decline in national economic prosperity. The natural resources that underpin our economic and social wellbeing must be sustained and the efforts of extension services have made a strong contribution in raising awareness and implementing changes in practices and technologies that have resulted in substantial environmental dividends from the local to the national level. I’m not asserting we have arrived at Nirvana, I’m just pointing out that the business of extension services beavering away in the background of our economy and society has and continues to make a difference. Industries, Governments, and citizens need to understand this vital role that extension has played in the growth and living standards of Australia. Broadly, this investment needs to be sustained in various forms to continue that prosperity.

I joined APEN in its early years but lost some faith in it at one point. I felt like some people had adopted a religious zeal that they all had to come up with a theoretical model around the process of extension. In my view, many were typically reinventing established models and putting their name to a particular diagram. There was still some serious extension theory being explored, but there was a lot of rebadging and shallow thinking that emerged that was not necessarily stimulating.

In its defence, APEN has strengthened its academic parameters around the conference and the associated journal/proceedings.

The best thing about extension work is seeing outcomes for your efforts. The next

best thing is recording that through publication so that knowledge is not lost. It should never be forgotten by public policy makers and industries, that change is affected one individual at a time.”

Warren was a vital member of APEN’s Management Committee (2010- 2016) representing the Northern Territory.

Warren organised extension services for the Northern Territory horticultural sector before branching into the realm of agricultural policy where he was involved in national drought policy. He is presently leading the Northern Australia Food Technology Innovation project which is investigating the business and technical case for production of shelf-stable foods using novel food processing technologies in the north of Australia. He possesses undergraduate and post-graduate applied science degrees with the University of Queensland, and a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Groningen.

Sarah Hain

NT

For me, my APEN journey started in 2019 at the APEN Conference in Darwin. The NT Regional Activities Coordinator (RAC) at the time, Jacob Betros, had asked me to present in a Sustainable Agriculture concurrent session. I presented “Trusting Quantity and Quality – The Mango Story” and discussed demographics, supply chain challenges and barriers to technology acceptance in the NT mango industry.

Attending this event gave me an insight into APEN and the field of extension.

This then prompted me to take part in the APEN Mentoring Program where I was paired with a mentor. Fortunately, my mentor, Warren Hunt, specialised in extension theory and had a very intimate knowledge of the NT mango industry through his work with small groups of growers.

I formally became the NT RAC in 2019/2020 APEN AGM and continued to fly the APEN flag throughout the NT and other events I attended including partnering with likeminded groups such as NT Farmers Association and Researchers in Agriculture for International Development (RAID).

The 2021 ExtensionChat Masterclass panel featured me, alongside with Peter Newman, Lab Wilson and Angela Williams and we discussed the theme for ExtensionChat – “Foundations of Extension Design and Practice”. As part of my presentation, I discussed building trust with producers and being a young professional in extension. The panel had a diverse range of industries and level of experience but provided valuable and practical learnings to the audience.

The introduction of the APEN Professional Membership (PM) saw a small group of extension professionals, including me, rewarded for actively participating and



working in the field of extension.

I was privileged to be a part of APEN's inaugural Growing Emerging Leadership in Rural Australia and New Zealand program, funded by the Australian Government (thanks to the hard work of Pat Hamilton, leader of the Regional Coordinators, in initiating this project, and others). Jeanette Long's facilitation lead us through topics of communication, conflict resolution, building teams, managing change, influencing others and much more.

IN 2022, as the NT Regional Coordinator, I organised a workshop, Hosting Engaging Events, in conjunction with the very generous sponsorship and support from the Northern Western Australia and Northern Territory (NWANT) Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub, We had 23 participants from across Northern Australia (QLD/WA/NT) over two days in Darwin, facilitated by the fabulous Jeanette Long. The attending extension professionals, guided by Jeanette, discussed techniques for designing, hosting, and facilitating workshops using real life examples. Participants represented forestry, pastoral, horticultural, broadacre and natural resource management sectors and travelled from Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Carnarvon, and Broome to participate.

I had forgotten much of this until I had to put my time with APEN on paper. It has been a pleasure working with the talented and vibrant team of RACs based across Australia and I am grateful for the continuous support and hard work of Pat Hamilton and the APEN team and Board.

APEN has had many people who are leaders in their particular field. Their messages and actions have inspired and motivated the continuous growth of APEN.

Our trailblazers have opened our eyes to "new horizons" with their energy to take ideas to another level.

They are our researchers, our learners, our explorers, our innovators, our problem solvers, our practical teachers, our drivers to achieve positive change.

Are you a trailblazer or a trail follower? APEN needs both.

As a member of APEN, every one of us has the opportunity to be a future trailblazer for our future trail followers.

Capturing APEN's events during the last 30 years

”

Networking is not about just connecting people. It's about connecting people with people, people with ideas, and people with opportunities

Michele Jennae

Member engagement

During thirty years, APEN has shared conversations and stories, caught up with old friends and colleagues, often made new friends, listened to new ideas, expanded our knowledge, skills and widened our experiences.

What does APEN do best? Building positive and productive relationship by Networking. Networking with peers and extending professional horizons.

Networked people make things happen – a key driver of personal and professional success. The dynamics of interaction and discussion - **this is the heart of APEN.**

In this chapter, you will be taken on a year-by-year journey through the thirty years of the Conferences, Forums, Awards, Webinars, Road Shows, Workshops, Mentoring Scheme, Social Media, ExtensionChat#, Projects, APEN Conversations, – all designed to grow the personal and professional development of our members and the wider extension community.

Over the last thirty years, APEN members have been involved in some amazing decisions, written some thoughtful articles and shared the diversity of challenges as we continue to grow - to be the influence we want to happen in the field of extension.

Let's take a walk through the Conferences, Forums, Awards, Webinars, Road Shows, Workshops, Mentoring Scheme, Social Media, ExtensionChat, Projects, APEN Conversations.

Conferences

Since the first Extension Conference at Surfers Paradise where the idea of setting up an Extension Network was hatched in 1993, APEN has delivered a conference and/or a forum every second year. There has been an APEN event happening every year.

The APEN Forums

were held in various years to maximise members' opportunities to be involved and grow personally and professionally through their participation in the forum. It was a place where our members could discuss topics of mutual interest, ask questions, share experiences, create connections, and build a sense of belonging.

Webinars

APEN Webinars were hosted by APEN member Leanne Isaacson from 2016 to 2020. We thank Leanne for her diligence and volunteer assistance during this time. The Webinars are now hosted on APEN Zoom. If you would like further details on the webinars or would like to present or have a suggestion for a suitable topic, please get in contact the APEN Secretariat on info@apen.org.au. A copy of the recording from the webinars can be accessed from the list on the APEN website or the APEN YouTube Channel (thanks to Graham Harris).

The APEN Awards for Excellence in Extension and Life Membership

are open to all extension professionals, individuals or groups, that reside in Australasia who have demonstrated excellence in extension through a work program completed within the last five years. The winner will be required to give a presentation of their work at the APEN Conference and/or at a webinar, and to take part in publicity associated with their success. All the winners can be found on the APEN website.

Road Shows

The APEN Roadshow is a one day, in-person workshop/event that is run across Australia and New Zealand that provides value to APEN members and aims to attract potential new APEN members. The APEN Roadshow provides attendees the opportunity to network, build capability and increase knowledge. They have been delivered in the alternate years to the APEN Conference. Face-to-face communication is a more effective means of transferring knowledge, and more importantly, behaviour change.

Workshops

have been organised by the clusters and the Regional Coordinators over the years – too many to record. You will find recognition of these workshops in many past issues of ExtensionNet. There are heaps of practical articles in ExtensionNet which can be accessed on the website under resources.

Social Media

Cynthia Mahoney, a committee member, invited members to 'get social' and challenged us to be a vibrant and engaging social network in the virtual world as well as the real one. In 2024, APEN is fulfilling these challenges with the appointment of Alice Long as Communications Coordinator.

Projects

APEN's Growing Emerging Leadership in Regional Australia and New Zealand project was designed for our members to become a future effective leader in extension, grow confidence to step up into a rewarding leadership experience by extending participants' reach and engagement throughout the APEN network [and beyond] and strengthen communication/technological skills to enable change in the extension sector.

Mentoring Scheme

The APEN Extension skills Mentoring Scheme is designed as a peer mentoring system, which will benefit the individuals involved in our discipline and our organisation. The mentoring scheme is available to members and non-members.

ExtensionChat

Effective and impactful extension needs new perspectives and tools. APEN has hosted a series of online sessions in 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2024 to provide professional development opportunities to the extension community and to profile extension practice – part education, part motivation, part inspiration - to reinforce our practical, social and technology skills.

APEN Conversations

APEN Conversations was previously the Book Club. One of APEN's core values is communication enabling extensionists to share their experiences and knowledge. What better way to do this than provide a safe place to get to know each other, to share our experiences, to learn something new with a vibrant conversation between and among members.

All these APEN events are a wonderful opportunity to share knowledge and experiences to improve extension as typified by one of our members: "When I went to my first APEN Conference, I realised that I had truly found 'my tribe'" which perfectly sums up the value of the APEN community and the incredible feelings generated by these events.

The APEN philosophy of fostering skills that allow us to facilitate and drive change at both a community and industry level, is one that brings benefit to all who choose to be involved.

The APEN journey of events

1993

The first **Australasia Pacific Extension Conference** was 30 years ago in 1993. Jeff Coutts was responsible for organising an international extension conference in October at Surfers Paradise, Queensland, for the Queensland Department of Primary Industries (QDPI).

- APEN organisation was born at a breakfast meeting at the 1st Australasia Pacific Extension Conference.
- The first ExtensionNet newsletter was sent out.

1994

Com Ex (Communication in extension) forum. APEN /AIAS Melbourne, November. The ComEx Forum was the first joint venture between the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science (AIAS) and the newly formed Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN). Its aim was to determine some of the key issues that needed addressing to achieve best practice in extension and communication and what to do to progress these issues.

- APEN became incorporated on 9th August. Logo was designed. Australian Institute of Agricultural Science appointed was the APEN Secretariat.
- The first issue of ExtensionNet was made available

1995

The **APEN/AIAS seminar** on Taking the Information Superhighway into Agriculture and Rural Industries, held at the Waite, Roseworthy, SA in November, proved to be an outstanding success, both from a point of view of transferring information and financially.

- **APEN International Forum** – Monitoring and Evaluation in Extension, convened by Peter Van Beek.
- AgriLogic Consultants (later called Creative Management Services) appointed as Secretariat

1996

Beyond Technology Transfer **National Forum and AGM**, Melbourne Chapter, University of Melbourne, December 1996. “It will be a learning conference.” Participants represented a range of locations, organisational locations and age groups. Convened by Terry Makin and the Melbourne Chapter Committee.

1997

APEN's first **International Conference: Managing Change** - building knowledge and skills, Albury, NSW November encouraged delegates to discover best practice in extension and develop a professional attitude to extension by sharing ideas and networking and delivering papers in an environment of the current extension direction. Convened by Peter Davies.

- This was the year that APEN's internet site was launched through Charles Sturt University.

1998

National APEN Forum and Annual General Meeting Partnerships in Extension - Extending the Boundaries, University of Adelaide, Roseworthy, SA. The objective was to look at the opportunities for the old and new players in the extension system to learn and work together. This was the era when governments were pulling out of agricultural extension, and research corporations and private enterprises were moving in. Convened by John Bourne.

1999

National APEN Forum and Annual General Meeting, Thursday 11' November 1999, at the Pagoda Function Centre, Perth Way Out West: Evolving Systems - Challenged Minds. Lots of networking was done and our minds were challenged, and systems evolved as we were exposed to different aspects of Interdisciplinarity. Convened by Western Australia Chapter.

- Inaugural APEN Award for Excellence in Extension presented at the conference in Perth

2000

Achieving change through improved knowledge systems - Palmerston North, New Zealand, 2000 The conference was designed for professionals involved in technology transfer, innovation, improvement, change management, and compliance in the New Zealand land-based industries.

- **APEN National Forum Creating a Climate for Change** - Extension in Australia October, Melbourne, Victoria, provided opportunities to explore planning, evaluation and the outcomes expected from extension programs and to challenge participants to think about change in extension methodology and to recognise the untold extension possibilities awaiting extensionists in the global village of the 21st century. The theme of the forum sprang from a growing awareness that, while APEN has been fulfilling its stated purpose of improving the practice and profession of extension through forums and ExtensionNet, we have not been lobbying government, industry organisations and universities as well as we might. (Jane Fisher, President).
- APEN list server and email groups commenced operations nationally.



2001

Australia Pacific Extension International Conference Exploring beyond the boundaries of extension and paving the way for a positive future for regional communities, Toowoomba, Queensland, October 2001. John James, Conference Convenor said, “when we focus on our network, we need to continue taking calculated risks and venture where we haven’t gone before. Contemporary extension is a powerful vehicle for regional change.” Participants were challenged by the keynote speaker, Dr Lin. We must learn from the past and understand the present, in order to create the future. Wisdom is combining hindsight, with insight, to gain foresight. Knowledge of the past (hindsight), the present (insight), the future (foresight). “Choose your preferred future and plan to be there!”

2002

- **Workshop** to explore the possibility of a national accreditation scheme for extension, Canberra, ACT, March 2002, funded by RIRDC and attendance by invitation to AIAST members, APEN members, Department of Agriculture representatives etc, private consultants, those working with state and federal governments, universities and Research and Development Corporations.
- **Joint AAAC/APEN Workshop**, Managing in a time of climate and landscape change, November, Tatura, Victoria. This workshop explored the possibility of a national accreditation scheme. Convened by AAAC’s Dennis Toohey and John James

2003

Ten short years have elapsed since a group of extension professionals met ‘way back last century (1993) on Queensland’s Gold Coast “to put together the best and biggest extension organisation in this part of the world.” APEN’s 10th birthday was celebrated in Hobart at the National Forum Extending Extension: beyond traditional boundaries, methods, and ways of thinking, convened by Frank Vanclay. [Ed. ExtensionNet, July 2003 Vol 1(4), pp5-8 provide a great promotion read!] “There was a real buzz and a real feeling about it back then because for the first time YOU had this group of passionate people together in the one place and founding a community of practice” (Warren Straw.)



2004

- At the AGM a new constitution was proposed by Management Committee (previous National Executive). Chapters changed to Clusters.
- APEN underwent one of the most significant transformations in its 10-year history - an overhaul of the organisational structure which saw chapters - which were state-based - make way for “clusters” which were based on communities of practice.
- First monthly eBulletin sent out.

2005

APEN National Forum, Melbourne June 15-16 Leading the Future. The outcome was to achieve the effectiveness of facilitating change in rural Australia by improving support for the hundreds of young professionals working in industry development and natural resource management. It was the final workshop in the Leadership workshop series (below) lead by Amabel Fulton.

- Leadership workshops around Australia were held in conjunction with Rural Development Services. APEN sent a submission to the Australian House of Representatives Agricultural Committee into rural skills training. APEN assisted with establishing the State Extension Leaders Network (SELN).
- **Road show:** Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building (CVCB). APEN’s collaboration with the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building has attracted almost 300 people to the events around Australia highlighting the R&D outcomes from projects, with keynote speakers Bob Macadam and Jeff Coutts.
- **APEN’s NRM Symposium** “Building Capacity for Sustainable Resource Management...moving a wheelbarrow full of frogs! Toowoomba, September. Convened by John James.

2006

APEN International Conference Practice change for sustainable communities: exploring footprints, pathways and possibilities, Beechworth, Victoria, March 2006. Convened by Jessica Connor and the Melbourne Chapter.

- Extension Farming Systems Journal, Australian Farm Business Management Network and APEN Collaboration began.

2007

Forum “07 - Capture, Consolidate & Communicate, in Canberra, ACT, was the collaboration by leading natural resource managers, extension professionals and delegates to develop an historic cross disciplinary extension publication the working title of which is The Australasian Extension Publication (AEP), to be published in 2008. Convened by Jess Jennings.

- The foundation for APEN’s resource book, Shaping Change: Natural Resource Management, Agriculture and the Role of Extension, was proposed.
- Queensland eExtension Workshop, held in four locations across Queensland at the same time in July.

2008

APEN Mentoring Scheme was introduced and developed by John James. Eight pairs of mentors and mentees have been meeting in person or by telephone on a regular basis through the year.

2009

APEN International Conference Shaping Change in Communities: Dimensions of Excellence, Busselton, Western Australia. The 2009 conference looked to encourage and support all people responsible for 'Shaping Change in Communities' across agriculture, natural resource management, health, education, local government, transport, sport and recreation. The forum was an opportunity for APEN to develop and strengthen partnerships and alliances with the NRM sector and our regional partners. Our hope was to distil the collective wisdom present at the forum so that APEN could continue to service, lead, and provide strategic direction through the ever changing rural and regional landscape of our current time. Convened by Tracey Gianatti and the WA Cluster.

- **The Young Professional Award** was renamed the Amabel Fulton Award for Excellence in Extension by a Young Professional in memory of the late Amabel Fulton who was a major contributor to APEN and the development of extension in Australia.
- **Roadshow- Fostering Rural Innovation and Change** – Dr Ian Plowman. The roadshow travelled to 11 different locations around Australia. In total, there were 270 registrations and interestingly only one in five participants were APEN members.

2011

The APEN National Forum Hitting a Moving Target - Sustaining landscapes, livelihoods and lifestyles in a changing world. November at UNE, Armidale, NSW. Forum Convenor, Greg Mills, invited people involved in driving change and seeking new ways to achieve change within their communities, to attend the 2011 APEN National Forum. The APEN National Forum delivered a dynamic program and was the catalyst for bringing many like-minded professionals together in a single forum that guaranteed an environment of ideas, skill development, networking, and information exchange. It challenged delegates to return to their workplace with renewed motivation to drive practice change within their community.

- APEN's publication resource book, *Shaping Change: Natural Resource Management, Agriculture and the Role of Extension*, was launched.
- Social Media became part of APEN's communications on Facebook, Twitter and the President's Blog.

2012

- APEN supported Enabling Change and Innovation Webinar series coordinated by John James, DAFF QLD and Citrix.

2013

Twenty Years and still flourishing in Lincoln, New Zealand, 28-29th September Transformative Change: Chosen or Unchosen - Pathways to innovation, resilience and prosperity. 152 delegates, 6 countries, 4 keynotes presentations, 52 concurrent presentations, hundreds of questions, lots of discussion – the APEN international conference 2013 in some numbers! It was exciting to host the APEN international conference in New Zealand, the first time the conference has been overseas. Convened by Denise Bewsell.

- APEN Social Media strategy was released.



2014

Roadshow – Designing Effective Events – Using Adult Learning Principles – Andrew Huffer. The Roadshow toured Australia and New Zealand delivering workshops at ten different locations, from Hamilton in New Zealand, Ingham in far north Queensland, and Perth in the far west of the Australian continent. The workshop helped participants to get their message to ‘stick’ through understanding the basic Adult Learning principles to successfully engage people

2015

APEN Conference, Managing change, innovation and action in an ever-shrinking world, was held in Adelaide, Australia on 10-12 November 2015, convened by President Jeanette Long. The focus was on the knowledge and skills needed to embrace the challenges of the changing world before us. With the increasing developments in communication using social media and the on-line world, information from anywhere in the world could be instantly available to everyone. Funding for extension programs was becoming more difficult to obtain through changing government policies and these were some of the ways the world was shrinking!

2016

- **Roadshow – Program Logic – Col Freeman** The program was delivered in NSW, SA, Qld, NT and Tasmania as well as the North and South Island in NZ.

2017

The GFRAS/APEN International Conference was held in Northern Queensland with the theme: Facilitating Balanced Change for Rural and Urban Communities. The conference was held jointly with GFRAS (<http://www.g-fras.org/en/>) and followed the 2017 GFRAS Annual General meeting held in Ingham, North Queensland. The conference was an international meeting for rural advisory practitioners, researchers and academics that combined the best extension research and practice from developing and developed countries.

2018

- Celebrating APEN’s 25-year history - APEN became a Company limited by guarantee with a new Board of Directors, a new constitution, and supported by Regional Coordinators.
- The first three Life members were presented: Terry Makin, Dr Jeff Coutts, Dr John James.
- **Roadshow – Tips, Tricks and a little bit of Magic – Greg Mills** As well as providing a professional a dynamic development opportunity, the Roadshow was successful in attracting 57 new members

2019

The 2019 APEN Conference, Extending horizons: Extension’s role in climate, rural industries, and community challenges was held in Darwin, Northern Territory, convened by Jake Betros. Jake’s enthusiastic, welcome as Conference convenor and MC, in such a stunning location, right on the beach at the Mindil Beach Casino Resort, set the scene for what was to be a jam-packed two days of absorbing lots of useful information, networking everywhere and enjoying the warmth and ambience of the environment and the people.

2020 & 2021 Adjusting to COVID-19

At the 2019 Conference, the APEN Board announced that all roads and flights will lead to Rotorua, New Zealand in November 2021. Unfortunately, this didn't happen.

2020

While COVID-19 took away our ability to meet in-person at the proposed Road Show, APEN hosted a series of interactive workshops via ExtensionChat- APEN Online to support our members and interested extensionists; to provide personal and professional development in profiling extension, different perspectives on how to do extension and connecting after COVID isolation; and opportunities to communicate and network with others with common interests. Those practising extension embraced change and displayed resilience. The presenters, with Dr John James, Dr Jeff Coutts, Denise Bewsell and Jeanette Long shared their expertise as they expanded our horizons on a variety of topics. Many thanks to the Regional Coordinators for their coordination.

2021

Extension has never been more complicated and exhilarating. Extension Professionals are being constantly challenged to respond to a complex array of social, environmental, economic, and personal issues.

- Following the outstanding success of ExtensionChat#1, **ExtensionChat#2 Foundations of Extension Design and Practice** Part Education. Part Motivation. Part Inspiration was delivered – another outstanding success, indicating the importance of continuously growing the skills and knowledge of extensionists. Thanks to Dani England and Jeanette Long for facilitating the three sessions.

2022

The APEN International Conference goes online in February, under the fabulous leadership of Dr Ruth Nettle, APEN Life Member, supported by APEN President Dr Anthony Kachenko and our professional conference organiser, JT Production Management. This was an amazing APEN event! The theme was Facilitating Change and the Opportunity from Disruption. While conferences are largely about learning, the social aspects of attending a professional conference are a large part of what make them memorable and enjoyable. When the conference is virtual, this social aspect is inevitably challenging, but with a great platform, some creative thinking and putting our facilitation skills into practice, APEN 2022 was a great opportunity to meet new people, build connections, and engage in some fun and silliness. While the New Zealand Hub did not go ahead in person, they joined online events from Melbourne.

- 2022- ExtensionChat#3, Skilling up for Virtual Extension – Part Education, Part Motivation, Part Inspiration was successfully delivered. Jeanette Long developed and facilitated three very productive, interactive sessions, involving our members sharing and developing their skills

“While we may have all weathered the same COVID-19 storm, we have all been in different boats!”
Dr Anthony Kachenko,
President.



2023

APEN Thirty years thriving and flourishing November 30th year Celebration at the APEN International Conference in Launceston, Tasmania, Looking to the future: the role of extension and education, held on the lands of the Yorta Yorta People, the Wurundjeri, Woi-wurrung people and the Bunorong and Boon Wurrung peoples.

- The Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN) 2023 Conference, convened by John James, APEN Life Member, was a landmark event. Across three days, the conference unfolded an extensive program including three insightful field trips, four in-depth masterclasses, three keynote presentations, six quick-fire presentations, ten engaging soapbox presentations, 68 paper presentations, five interactive 'solve my problem' sessions, nine workshops, and two panel discussions. This diversity in formats ensured a dynamic and enriching learning environment for everyone. There were well over 290 attendees – many early in their careers and many who were not involved in APEN or attended such a conference before. Many of the participants expressed intentions to implement new ideas and approaches discussed at the conference. This commitment to adapting and evolving is what drives our community forward.



APEN recognises and thanks the many and varied sponsorships over the years. Their support has enabled APEN events to run successfully.

We also acknowledge and thank the APEN members who have been on APEN Committees, participated in events, and contributed their expertise and experience over many years.

We deeply appreciate the generosity of their volunteer time in leading and growing the APEN community in all aspects.

Extension is

an increasingly important profession

Extension is an increasingly important profession to enable society to cope with the challenges emerging in value chains, natural resource management and rural development.

Since the first conference in 1993 and all the events we have shared APEN has been a force for 30 years in developing extension practice and growing the personal and professional growth of our members. We need to maintain this energy and interest generated by continuing our support and build upon the achievements of so many amazing people.

Neil Rudenstine, the President of Harvard, 1999, said, "Beyond the traditional deepening of disciplinary knowledge, there exists for the twenty-first century a powerful imperative to approach new knowledge and its dissemination in radically different ways: our challenge today is to develop more and better programs across those established disciplines."

Many of us will probably not be around to celebrate another thirty years to see what has happened to extension. Our younger members will need to carry the torch- this is their challenge.

” Together, we have the power to inspire, connect and deliver on new opportunities and rich experiences that can open doors to innovation and progress while growing global economies and increasing well-being

Tae Yoo

Looking through the crystal ball what could APEN become?

”

We must learn from the past and understand the present, in order to the create the future

The next 30 years

Do futurists predict the future? The world is littered with examples of failed modelling and forecasting.

When Paul Higgins was asked for a vision of the future, he said, “the only thing I will guarantee you is it will be wrong.” He believed that “many people rely too heavily on historical trends or patterns to plan.”¹

APEN has ‘produced’ many visionaries during the last three decades. These women and men stopped focusing on the organisation that we think we are. Their focus was on the organisation we want to be. They raised the questions- how do we see ourselves? How do others see us?

You have read their stories in previous chapters of this lens into APEN’s thirty-year history.

Their wisdom and curiosity have been consistent.

¹ Paul Higgins, Futurist with Emergent Futures wrote ‘What is all that future stuff all about? In ExtensionNet Vol.18 (4)

The following ideas from APEN's visionaries are being raised as groundwork for further progressing a conversation concerning the future of APEN, based on the legacy of the past and the complexity of the present as we continue to navigate the world and our lives.

Jeff Coutts (QLD)

- The need for skilled and effective extension in our rural and agricultural areas has never been greater. The challenges of climate extremes, environmental imperatives, fluctuating markets, and social pressures are increasing.
- I once wrote that 'extension was the oil needed to bring about change on the ground' – and that has not changed.
- Those in extension (public, private and industry) will continue to need the support and skills to play their role in an increasingly challenging and complex world.
- Those in policy and R&D funding need to understand the essential roles that extension can and must play in this.
- Increasingly, extension – and APEN - needs to broaden its focus towards the broader economic, environmental, and social value chains to facilitate learning that impacts on the whole system.
- APEN is well-placed to facilitate and support this outcome.

Terry Makin (VIC)

- APEN's background, networks and disciplines make us ideal to play a key role to manage our nation's energy and our environmental landscapes.
- We are change agents. We cover the regional areas, and we have broad agricultural knowledge of our areas and our communities.
- We will need to be leaders of these changes and ahead of the community: at the cutting edge, working collaboratively with our communities.

Chrissy Stokes (NZ)

Where could APEN go in the next 10 years? I've got some definite ideas.

- Organisations, like APEN, run on the power of volunteers, and I believe everyone should contribute in some way.
- Here in NZ at least, there are other organisations competing for the membership dollars of potential APEN members, and so we need to be very clear about our reason to exist and our unique value proposition – and stick to that.
- APEN doesn't have the resources to try and be lots of things to lots of people. Sticking to what we're excellent at, and being excellent at it, is where the brightest future lies, in my opinion.

”

I have been in many professional organisations over the years, but APEN is the only organisation in Australia and New Zealand that actively discusses, promotes, provides training and advocates for extension.

Dr. Roy Murray-Prior

Graham Harris (QLD)

- I would like to see APEN recognised as the peak body for extension professionals within the public and private sector within Australia and New Zealand.
- This recognition needs to be underpinned by continued support for the provision of professional development opportunities for the membership and greater understanding by policy makers of the importance of extension in supporting rural communities in addressing the ongoing challenges they face.

Ruth Nettle (VIC)

- The people that hold extension roles and the processes of extension is what provides the spaces for learning and interaction needed to work through the contested and complex challenges facing agriculture and the environment.
- Extension brings people from outside agriculture and with a diversity of expertise and perspectives and connects them to assist in addressing the challenges important to farmers and to the broader society.
- Facilitating learning and being comfortable with complexity and uncertainty is the core role and strength of the extension professional.
- However, to be able to practise their profession, more advocates and leaders are needed who can make the processes of extension more visible and valued to scientists and policy, people who can 'see the system' and position extension efforts among other efforts such as communication and marketing.
- These advocates and leaders will resist adoption and diffusion models of change at the highest level and argue for alternative approaches when needed.
- To me, the role of advocate and leader for extension is one for us all and is needed to secure a valued future for extension.

Jeanette Long (SA)

- Leading by example is an important characteristic of most change agents.
- As a volunteer organisation APEN relies heavily on the time and expertise of its members. Reward them for their generosity.
- Provide an environment of trust where we can share experiences, seek advice, get feedback, access opportunities for personal and professional leadership growth, be mentored by experts, and face achievable challenges. These are crucial for a thriving network.
- We are a diverse membership spread over all regions of a diverse country, in New Zealand and parts of the Pacific.
- Be a strong advocate where it counts with the decision-makers.

Terry Parminter (NZ)

- The future of a profession in agricultural extension in NZ needs suitable papers and degrees. It would be great if this could be provided by NZ universities, but I suspect that it needs something like APEN to establish correspondence courses in Australian Universities that are recognised in New Zealand. I suggest that working with Waikato University and Frank Scrimgeour could provide an opportunity for this.
- Extension skills have a reasonable demand in NZ. I suggest that APEN could put together certificated courses in these skills at introductory, intermediate, and advanced stages.
- APEN establish a set of standards for extension projects that members are encouraged to meet.
- APEN has each year a competition where members can enter projects that are recognised and publicised as examples of excellence.

Austin McLennan (QLD)

- Continue to build APEN's organisational capacity. The focus of business development for APEN must be to build the case for organisations and industry to invest in APEN for laying the stronger foundations needed for APEN to grow into an even more active, innovative, and influential network into the future.
- Reform APEN's governance arrangements. "Are our governance arrangements fit for purpose?"
- Sharpen our focus on what a truly representative extension network would look like and could achieve.
- Play a more active role in the public conversation as the professional body representing extension.

John James (TAS)

- I'd love APEN to be an even more vibrant community of diverse thinking and acting people, achieving change in an even greater variety of areas.
- I remember when Noel Ainsworth went to work with WWF for a while, he was able to use his extension skills to his advantage.
- I think we often don't realise how highly transferable our skills are, and how we can use them in different situations and sectors.
- APEN is the place where we can learn and share these skills, for everyone's advantage!

Cynthia Mahoney (VIC)

- As an agricultural scientist who has worked in facilitation and extension for most of my 30-year career, I am intrigued by what helps people to change their behaviour and what gets in the way.
- We are now well into the decade of disruption with constant change being thrust upon us – it's not going to go away, particularly with the AI revolution already impacting on the way we approach work and life. Our advantage as extension professionals in this space is that we are masters of understanding how humans work and adapt to change.
- We, as individuals, and the people with whom we work, need processes, tools, and techniques to keep thriving despite uncertainty. We also need new mindsets and behaviours and I believe extension professionals can help people, businesses, communities, and industries think differently about the challenges they face – to do this they need to continue to do the work on themselves.
- The challenges we face need groups of people to come together and think collectively, creatively and with the big picture in mind. It's exciting to think what is possible with extension playing a role in shaping the future.

Warren Hunt (NT)

- APEN, first and foremost, must become the professional body of choice for young people involved in the reaching out, engaging, and changing people, communities, and industries.
- Young professionals working in the agrifood, and environmental sectors need a professional body who is willing to welcome them and provide professional development opportunities. There is also a priority for embedding in these young professionals a willingness to record and publish their works and their efforts -else learnings and outcomes are lost.
- APEN must also partner with academic institutions willing to provide an academic home for Extension training and development. An academic home or homes is central to effective and renewable extension efforts over the course of time.
- APEN must also continue to broaden its catchment of sectors involved in the process of extension, communication and capability building in the APAC region. This means becoming a professional body that could also potentially accommodate and support professionals working in the business of resilience and capability building in the areas of rural and allied health, aid and development programs and psychosocial support services.
- APEN has a central role in sustaining the discipline remains strong and effective for Australia and the region in the decades to come.

Denise Bewsell (NZ)

- My vision of extension is that we embrace the role of broker and connector that is central to effective extension.
- I think this is part of what we do individually and collectively. I think this means taking facilitation seriously and putting time and effort into learning and developing this skill and helping others develop this skill (and advocating for the need for facilitation!).
- It means capturing the lessons from what we are doing in a way that we can pass these on to other extension practitioners.
- I'd like to see APEN flourish! I'm wondering what we can learn from other organisations around the world and the types of business models they have.
- What type of business model would it take for APEN to be an effective broker and connector? Change is risky but the alternatives (stagnating or dying) aren't going to help extension!
- In the next decade it would be good to see APEN pursue opportunities to get involved in training and development in extension, appropriately embrace the virtual world, continue to deliver world-class conferences, and grow extension as a discipline.
- Some ways to do this are connecting people and projects working in extension through macro-scale events (conferences, our REIS Journal) and micro-scale events such as developing Communities of Practice that are both online and in person (making the most of resources like the REIS Journal).
- We, as APEN members, need to articulate the value we get from being part of APEN to funders and supporters so that we can help APEN change and grow!

Anthony Kachenko (TAS)

- Promote and support the APEN Professional Membership classification. This classification is a major step-change for the organisation and extension as a profession. We now have a professional standard that acknowledges the high level of extensionists' skills, experience, and knowledge. I encourage all members to look at this program and lift the profile of extension across the Asia Pacific.
- Seek Sponsorship and cement partnerships.
- Finalise new membership category of 'Corporate Supporter'.
- Further progress and advocate for the extension profession.
- As Henry Ford quoted, "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got", and that rings true for what lies ahead for APEN.

APEN appreciates the crystal balls of this group of motivated men and women with a shared purpose to ensure APEN is the organisation we want to be.

”

The future is not some place we are going to
But one we are creating.
The paths are not to be found
But made.
And the activity of making them changes
both the maker and the destination.

John Schwartz
American Political Theorist, 1981

In collating this wealth of information, we canvassed members for their perspectives of a future for APEN

APEN appreciates the crystal balls of this group of motivated men and women with a shared purpose to ensure APEN is the organisation we want to be.

During the last three decades, we have depended on the quality of our members' relationships with us through the generosity of the inspiring conversations that they share. We are not disappointed. They are awesome.

While looking into APEN's future, there is much advice to our young people, to emerging and experienced extensionists, to government and industry bodies that APEN, as an organisation, and extension, as a career and profession, are thriving. There are opportunities in this field for anyone who wants to make a difference in guiding our future.

The APEN networks challenge us to be adventurous by creating and shaping the future together.

”

Experience has taught us that it is best to move forward when the heart and the head [...and feet and gut...] are connected; by saying yes to opportunity and supporting other people to achieve their potential

Elizabeth Broderick

06 It started with a conversation and so what happens next?

”

Experience has taught us that it is best to move forward when the heart and the head [...and feet and gut...] are connected; by saying yes to opportunity and supporting other people to achieve their potential”

Elizabeth Broderick

Where is Extension heading?

Everyone has their unique story to share. The story starts with a conversation. We tell our stories to connect, to link and to engage with people, and to inspire and motivate future storytellers as we convey our real experiences. Each chapter of ‘APEN’s history’ has captured many of the building blocks which have created this history.

In the previous chapter, while collating this wealth of information, members were canvassed for their perspectives and insights of a future for APEN. If we do not build on the achievements of others, if we do not change our thoughts, how can we adapt to changes in society’s achievements?

In capturing the stories of some of our energetic and influential ‘APENers’, we can build on their achievements. We can continue to flourish.

The APEN leadership teams play a pivotal role in all these activities. However, it is our members who shape our future.

There is a future for APEN. Our history, based on the experiences of many people, contains much advice to our young people, to emerging and experienced extensionists, to government and industry bodies that APEN, as an organisation, and extension, as a career and profession, are thriving.

Throughout our lives our priorities shift. However, there are opportunities in the field of extension for anyone who wants to make a difference in guiding APEN's future.

”

If we want to change the future, it's a lot easier to do before it happens. Stories make powerful magic to help us do that

Marti, 2017

APEN's Gratitude

APEN's history wouldn't exist without the awesome networking of our members. The APEN networks and their 'netweavers' challenge us to be adventurous by creating and shaping the future together.

There are so many to thank for creating a snapshot APEN's 30-year history – our visionaries, our leaders, our trailblazers, our supporters, our sponsors, our partners...and our members. And a special thanks to Cathy McGowan AO for her support over many years.

APEN is very grateful to the vision and actions of all these motivated and inspiring men and women who have worked with a shared purpose to create, and to shape change together. Their stories and insights make powerful reading as they share with us their past, present and future aspirations

Finally, a huge personal gratitude

To Roe Currie

I deeply appreciate your impact on APEN over twenty-seven years and the generosity of your time (and eagle eye) to read my draft.

To Alice Long

What would I do without your creativity! Your support is vital and valued.

To grow our influence over the next 30 years, I encourage each member to share your skills, experiences and knowledge by contributing to events, conversations, information, brief articles, letters, upcoming events and lots and lots of stories and photos – all with the intent of growing the organisation into a power of influence. You have many stories that need to be shared and built on as we nurture the wisdom of professionals across Australia, New Zealand and the broader Asia Pacific Region.

It has been a pleasure and most rewarding gathering information for this ‘special’ issue of APEN’s 30-Year History– such a wealth of wonderful memories. I have drawn on the collective views and experiences of a diverse group of people who live in different locations across Australia and New Zealand – all working hard to make a difference in the field of extension. They have generously shared with us who they are and how their experiences have shaped and influenced what is happening around them. I am in awe of the dedication of so many people who have made the field of extension so vital.

To leave you with some challenges

01

Can this ‘brief history’ inspire and motivate you to support future APEN Boards and Committees and our activities throughout the next 30 years?

02

Can you continue to acknowledge and celebrate APEN’s future achievements?

03

Will you reflect on the part you can play in creating a future for APEN, AND then make it happen!

The APEN story is still unfolding.

As we look to the future, APEN continues to evolve, driven by our commitment to innovation and change and to our collective vision of empowering communities through the field of extension.

Warm regards
Patricia Hamilton

Dr Patricia Hamilton

APEN Director [2018-2024]

Chair | Regional Activities Committee

Communications Editor [2017 -]

