Influencing Extension Policy in Australia - Extension practitioners using extension skills to develop extension policy

Extension Policy – Challenges and Solutions

1.1 Introduction

This book, and indeed the wider extension network in Australia, is replete with examples and models of various extension approaches that are employed by intervening agencies seeking to enable desired change(s) in sustainable production and/or natural resource management. Chapter 1 paints a picture of extension as a *policy instrument*, or a method or mechanism used by government and government agencies as well as other institutions including business to achieve a desired effect (also see Vanclay and Leach 2006)[1]. This chapter provides a perspective on extension policy in Australia, a framework in which a national extension policy platform can rest and a process model for negotiation of effective extension policy as an effective instrument for enabling change.

1.2 Inherent Changes in Extension Policy

What is extension policy? Although extension is a long-term discipline, it seems that a relatively small number of people have seriously studied the role of extension policy, and indeed the need for adaptive extension policy within agencies to enable practitioners to effectively achieve the outcomes for which they are funded. Maybe this is part of the challenge for extension – Or conversely, an opportunity for its improvement.

Between 1987 and 1994 Jeff Coutts investigated the role of extension policy in the development and early implementation of a formal extension policy in the Queensland Department of Primary Industries. His findings included the realisation that the formulation of extension policy occurred at the strategic level. This included the need for building external commitment with stakeholders and cross-agency negotiation. While this process secured resources to put in place new structures, processes and positions and continued to legitimise public sector extension, the implementation of the extension strategy and longer term results were somewhat problematic. The roll-out of the extension strategy was prescriptive rather than consultative which limited 'commitment at the collective level' to 'policy endorsed at the executive level'. Also the policy remained unaltered for about a decade which further embedded issues with the initial implementation (Roberts Pers Comm[2], Foster Pers Comm [3] and Hamilton Pers Comm [4]).

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[1] Vanclay, F. and Leach, G., 2006, Enabling change in rural and regional Australia: The role of extension in achieving sustainable and productive futures

[2] Roberts, G., 2005, Personal Communication. Gerry is an Extension leader in western Queensland

[3] Foster, D., 2004, Personal Communication. Derek is an Extension leader in south-east Queensland

[4] Hamilton, G., 2006, Personal Communication. Gus is the ex-Extension Chief of the Department of Primary Industries.

One of Coutts' key recommendations was that regular and inclusive negotiation and review of extension policy within the organisation is needed to meet changes of priority and mitigate against resistance to prescriptive policy implementation (Coutts 1994)[5].

Why do we need regular and inclusive negotiation and review? Understanding the context within which extension policy exists is important. Sustainable production and natural resource management (NRM) is a complex and dynamic business. There are a multitude of interested parties and resource managers are encumbered with an increasingly complex array of decision-making, planning and regulatory apparatus. Further, it seems that despite the great number of well-meaning efforts in pursuit of sustainable development (extension included), there are an even greater number of opposing factors. In the lead up to the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg 2002, Minu Hemmati made the following observation:

> Many individuals, organizations and institutions have been responding to the challenge of sustainable development. Yet many still seem reluctant to take the need for change seriously. We have a long and difficult way to go if we want to live up to the values and principles of sustainable development. Taking one step beyond the stalemates, which we face, in many areas, we need to learn how to listen to each other, to integrate our views and interests and to come to practical solutions which respect our diversity (Hemmati 2002:1)[6].

1.2.1 Introducing the context of extension policy in Australia

In rural and regional Australian terms Scott-Orr and Banks (2002) talk along similar lines about agriculture, NRM and service provision:

> In the 21st century environmental issues have come to dominate Australian agriculture and natural resource management. Sustainable management of our natural resource is the greatest challenge facing our agricultural industries and this must be done while maintaining or improving farm profitability. Facilitating this change and empowering communities is arguably the most valuable service agencies can provide. Communities, especially urban communities, are requiring greater environmental stewardship from land managers. They are demanding solutions to issues such as salinity, water sharing, soil acidification, chemical dependency and native biodiversity preservation or restoration. A new paradigm of engagement between rural and urban communities is needed (adapted from Scott-Orr and Banks 2002: 2)[7].

Obviously, service delivery and interventions of the past are not meeting current needs. The 'old paradigm of engagement' that Scott-Orr and Banks (2002) advise retreat from is

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[5] Coutts, J., 1994, Process Paper Policy and Practice – a case study of the introduction of a formal extension policy in Queensland Australia, PhD Wageningen Agricultural University, The Netherlands
[6] Hemmati, M. 2002. Multi-stakeholder Processes for Governance and Sustainability - Beyond Deadlock and Conflict, Earthscan Publications Ltd London - Sterling, VA
[7] Scott-Orr, H. and Banks, L., 2003. Agriculture and the environment - Adaptive policy responses by NSW agriculture, Proceedings of the OECD CRP Workshop on "An Interdisciplinary Dialogue: Agriculture and Ecosystems Management" (Ed. A.Woodhead, A.Jenkins, R.Packham).

arguably the technology-transfer extension model which served rural development and the primary industries sector well through the 1950s to the 1980s. Historically extension has been used as a policy instrument for over a century in Australia, and much longer internationally, for engaging rural and regional stakeholders in numerous ways to promote voluntary change in how resources are managed. In the last decade however changing economic, ecological and social contexts see a broadening emphasis on the management of natural resource systems for sustainable futures. So how has extension practice and extension policy kept pace with this need for change?

In the 1990s Marsh and Pannell observe that extension policy in Australia was heavily influenced by changing administrative structures (e.g. Funder-Purchaser-Provider) and a change in the paradigm within which the extension community operated. Moreover, they provide that the extension environment in Australia reflected a world-wide trend towards the privatisation of agricultural extension services. This trend appears to be related to factors such as the declining relative importance of agriculture in the economy and budget pressures on governments, as well as the increasing influence of economists' theories and prescriptions within government (Marsh and Pannell 2000)[8].

1.2.2 Considering Extension Internationally

As presented above, extension in Australia is on uncertain ground. Extension also seems to be in a critical position globally. Rivera notes that public sector agricultural extension, assailed by economists and politicians in the 1980s, underwent diverse policy-driven structural as well as managerial and grassroots changes in the 1990s. Extension policy has been shifting in light of conflictive views held by different interest groups and the tension that exists between those who would concentrate on agriculture and land management mainly as a business and those who see multiple functions, especially related to social development and natural resources management. (Rivera 2000)[9]. Extension is now broadly acknowledged as a pluralistic array of institutions engaged in knowledge and information related to technological change, not restricted to the public sector (even though in many countries it remains a significant stakeholder). Importantly, Christoplos argues that in the 21st century it is critical to transcend the assumption that extension policy is a matter of a simple choice between traditional public sector service provision and full-scale privatisation of service delivery (Christoplos 2003)[10].

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8 Marsh, S. and Pannell, D., 2000, Agricultural extension policy in Australia: The good, the bad and the misguided. Australian Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics 44(4): 605-627.

[9] Rivera, W., 2000, The Changing Nature Of Agricultural Information And The Conflictive Global Developments Shaping Extension, Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension, Vol 7,No 1, pp 31-41

[10] Christoplos, I., 2003, Common Framework for Supporting Pro-Poor Extension, Swiss Centre for Agricultural Extension and Rural Development (LBL), Department for International Cooperation, Switzerland. See:
http://www.neuchatelinitiative.net/english/documents/CommonFrameworkforSupportingPro-PoorExtension_Mail_.pdf

On one hand world demand for food and sustainable production systems and landscapes continues to escalate (Feder et.al. 2002)[11] but on the other, extension programs are being wound back drastically (Röling Pers Comm)[12]. World Bank staff members see challenges facing extension are a reflection of current times, but argue that the rural sector must nearly double biological yields on existing lands to meet food needs in the next quarter century.

"The world has nearly 1 million agricultural extension personnel. More than 90 per cent of them are in developing countries. Development agencies have poured US$10 billion into public extension programmes over the past five decades. Yet a study published in 2001 by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation found that extension services across the developing world are 'failing' and 'moribund", in 'disarray or barely functioning at all'" (Feder 2005:1)[13].

Feder et.al. suggest a sustainable approach to providing extension services—minimal external inputs, a systems orientation, pluralism, and arrangements that take advantage of the best incentives for landholders and extension service providers—is needed to release necessary local knowledge, resources, common sense, and organising ability of rural people (Feder et.al. 2002).

Additionally, staff of the Overseas Development Institute see that a focus on whole property enterprises and their natural and human resources is more likely to contribute to sustainable livelihoods and production systems than one which concentrates on single commodities or which separates extension services to different organisations. They suggest that extension objectives can range from the effective transfer of technology to the building up of strong rural organisations that can exert influence over future research and policy agendas, and also take and enforce collective decisions over natural resource management (Garforth and Lawrence 2002)[14]. These authors advise that a shift towards organisational (institutional) development will in turn promote more sustainable agricultural and rural development.

1.2.3 A look at extension institutions

Generically, Leeuwis (2003)[15] suggests that challenges land users **and** extension practitioners face in the quest for sustainable futures are indeed complex and endemic. Challenges for extension mirror the very pressures and changes that landholders, resource users and farmers are exposed to in their evolving social and natural environment. Leeuwis (2003) further maintains that extension organisations themselves are the source of many underlying issues with re-positioning of priorities and funding arrangements,

[11] Feder, G., Willett, A. and Zijp, W. 2002, Agricultural Extension: Generic Challenges and Some Ingredients for Solutions, World Bank

[12] Röling, N. 2004, Personal Communication. Note: Niels is a long-standing recognised academic leader with the extension discipline

[13] Feder, G., 2005, Perspective: The challenges facing agricultural extension - and a new opportunity, New Agriculturalist on-line, WRENmedia, UK. http://www.new-agri.co.uk/05-2/perspect.html

[14] Garforth, C. and Lawrence, A. 2002, ODI Natural Resources Perspective No. 21, Occasional paper

[15] Leeuwis, C. with Van den Ban, A., 2003, Introduction to communication and innovation studies, Course Reader CIS 22304 (2003-04) Wageningen University, Netherlands.

new communication technologies, and developments in theory putting new pressures on service delivery. Institutional challenges for extension include developing capacities for 'dealing with collective issues' where there is an inherent need to manage complexity, conflict and unpredictability. Institutional stakeholders designing and participating in innovation processes require capacities in translating and re-interpreting knowledge and technologies across different social groups rather than disseminating or transferring it. Matching the technical and social dimensions of an innovation requires new things of extension institutions as does the need to cater to diverse farming, NRM and livelihood strategies. Moreover, extension organisations (and institutional arrangements) need to continuously learn and adapt to add value in times of discontinuous change. A key to this will be the recognition of *changing professional identities* where as the context, aims and outcomes of change arenas rapidly evolve, the range of professionals in the same or overlapping space with extension is also increasing (adapted from Leeuwis 2003).

1.2.4 Australian responses to extension policy tension

A key concern for extension policy in Australia is that these tensions have not given rise to an effective transition of paradigms enabling 'agricultural extension' to be re-discovered (Woods Pers Comm)[16] to include broader notions of 'Sustainable Production' and 'NRM extension'. In 2007 in the wake of several activities that have done well to unearth the intractable nature of extension policy (e.g. CVCB extension review projects[17], SELN-RDC workshops[18], APEN national extension policy forums[19]), Beilin et.al. provide further reasoning as to why extension policy remains elusive in Australia. They argue that in order to achieve the economic, environmental and social outcomes required for sustainability in Australia, extension policy needs to understand the complex context in which it operates. Thus, extension policy makers must involve the range of stakeholders, including official institutional and local stakeholders, and allow their various perspectives on policy and practice – in particular, their definitions of best practice – to be represented. Moreover, genuine collaboration through discourse between institutional policy makers, researchers, extension practitioners, program participants and other stakeholders is essential (Beilin et.al. 2007)[20].

As we can see, the increasing complexity of the extension policy environment requires that policy makers need to maintain a vigilant stance and progress inclusive and ongoing

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[16] Woods, E. 2005, Personal communication. Note: Beth is the Executive Director, R&D Strategy, Industry Development in the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. She has a long-standing history with extension in Queensland and was the inaugural Director of the Rural Extension Centre at The University of Queensland

[17] The Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building has commissioned considerable research into extension and capacity building in rural and regional Australia. See http://www.rirdc.gov.au/capacitybuilding/

[18] The State Extension Leaders Network organised a

[19] The Australasian Pacific Extension Network organised and facilitated a smaller extension policy forum in 2003 and a larger forum in 2004, both in Sydney. See http://www.apen.org.au/

[20] Beilin, R., Paine, M and Pryor, R., 2007, Designing Extension to Deliver Triple Bottom Line Outcomes: A report for the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building, RIRDC Publication No 07/100. See: http://www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/HCC/07-100sum.html

negotiation processes in order to adapt the extension policy instrument to meet changing needs. So is this actually happening in Australia?

1.3 Transitions with Extension Policy Negotiations in Australia

Through much of the 20th century as extension policy remained the province of State Government Agricultural Departments, extension policy negotiations were internal and largely confined to these agencies and close industry partner organisations. Funding for traditional research and extension services from the 1950s and through to the mid 1990s was provided predominately by State Governments, CSIRO and agricultural university faculties (Mullen et.al. 2000)[21]. In the mid to late 1980s however, as the role of the public sector in delivering extension services to meet 'market failure' came into question (as per Mullen et.al. opcit), and improved technology facilitated cross-border interaction and exchanges amongst extension practitioners and organisations such as APEN (the Australasian Pacific Extension Network) developed to activate these developing extension networks, it could be expected that extension policy makers would follow suite and coordinate extension policy nationally. This however did not occur and despite attempts through Research and Development Corporations to improve arrangements between State and Federal Government and Industry extension efforts[22], national coordination of the extension policy environment remained obscure.

A further complication for extension policy negotiation and coordination was the progression of national natural resource management initiatives including the Decade of Landcare (1990-2000), the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (2001-2006) and the Natural Heritage Trust I, II and now III packages (1997 - Present) amongst a number of other associated programs. Each of these initiatives sought to encourage landholders to adopt more sustainable practices mainly through information provision and social processes (Pannell et.al. 2006)[23]. While the delivery of extension services was resourced, with extension sometimes rebadged as 'capacity building'[24], a clearly articulated policy platform to coordinate agricultural extension with NRM extension was not progressed at a national scale, or indeed at state and/or regional scales.

Naturally, APEN was an interested player in the status of extension policy at different scales, but with particular interest at the national level as the benefits of improved coordination of effort was becoming increasingly evident. The protracted *lack* of negotiation and the ownership and control of extension policy (Marsh and Pannell

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[21] Mullen, J., Vernon, D. and Fishpool, K., 2000, Agricultural extension policy in Australia: public funding and market failure, Australian Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics, 44, 629-645
[22] Culminating in the institution of the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building, an initiative funded through an RDC partnership with a key aim of 'Promoting the benefits of capacity development in managing change'
[23] Pannell, D., Marshall, G., Barr, N., Curtis, A., Vanclay, F. and Wilkinson, R., 2006, Understanding and promoting adoption of conservation practices by rural landholders, Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture 46(11) 1407-1424
[24] See National Natural Resource Management Capacity Building Framework: http://www.nrm.gov.au/publications/frameworks/pubs/capacity-building-framework.pdf

2000)[25] within industry and the NRM sector as well as traditional state government agricultural extension agencies saw dialogue develop amongst APEN membership. Building on arguments from Marsh and Pannell (1997[26] and 2000), Coutts et.al. (2001) called for concerted effort to address widespread inefficiencies in the Australian broader 'extension system' as well as with specific extension programs in rural and regional communities. These authors argued that important issues include:

- declining investment in building extension capacity since the 1960s, with state agencies no longer providing this role, results in large gaps in professional development for extension practitioners;
- extension in Australia is involving a greater deal of private sector delivery with some extension personnel lack basic skills for their role;
- fragmentation between research organisations and extension or advisory agencies, government departments, private agencies and related industries;
- major funding programs largely rely on junior professionals on short-term contracts leading to institutional amnesia, no continuity or career structure, very high job turn-over, burn out and frustration at all levels;
- arguments about cost-shifting, and mutual suspicion and distrust are perpetuated by Commonwealth/State demarcation disputes;
- overlaps, inconsistencies and deficiencies occur (e.g. CSIRO and Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs) often excluded from extension loop);
- different programs occurring in the same regions sometimes cover the same ground with limited collaboration and/or communication;
- little consensus is reached at a policy level about modes of extension;
- limited investigation of new and emerging information and communication technologies (ICT) for social learning and the design of extension systems, and;
- no consensus, consistency or coordination around evaluation of extension programs.

In 2001 Coutts, Douglas and Campbell (2001)[27] called for APEN involvement in the instigation of, or at least actions toward the establishment of a National Framework for Extension. Campbell later amplified similar concerns in a national newspaper claiming efforts are needed to take the lead in working with all levels of government, industry and non-government organisations to rethink extension and agree on a national extension framework. He argued that the framework should set out the respective roles and responsibilities of governments, catchment and regional bodies, local governments, NGOs and industry. Furthermore, that the Prime Minister and the premiers need to work

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[25] Marsh, S. and Pannell, D., 2000, The New Environment for Agriculture: Fostering the relationship between public and private extension, A report for the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, RIRDC Publication No 00/149
[26] Marsh, S. and Pannell, D., 1997, The New Environment for Agricultural Extension in Australia: the changing role of public and private sector providers, RIRDC Publication.
[27] Coutts, J., Douglas, J. and Campbell, A., 2001, Cooperation, collaboration and common sense: Towards a National Extension Framework for Australia, APEN International Extension Conference, Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia

together through the Council of Australian Governments to address the extension policy coordination issue (Campbell 2003)[28].

The following section discusses attempts by extension practitioners, through APEN as the representative organisation, to carry such recommendations forward and facilitate negotiations amongst policy makers to develop an 'Extension Framework for Australia'.

1.4 APEN efforts in facilitating extension policy negotiations

Since its inception in 1993, APEN, as the peak body for extension in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific region, convened a number of conferences and forums targeting the future of extension in Australia[29]. APEN's vision and role statements reflected this:

> **"Vision**: APEN is the peak body for professionals working with people to manage change in agricultural and natural resources management communities
> **Role** in contributing to this vision: To provide a platform for networking, professional development and representation of members" (APEN 2004:1)[30]

APEN has been endeavouring to move extension out of the 'agricultural rut' (James 2001)[31] and broaden its base to include other key disciplines and stakeholders facilitating change in rural and regional Australia. This is challenging and events such as the 2003 APEN National Forum[32] saw extension continuing to be re-defined with ongoing confusion both within and outside the field of extension about its role and function.

Many APEN members, particularly the Management Committee (MC), were increasingly concerned about the need to improve extension policy for the new and emerging needs of stakeholders in rural and regional Australia. In 2002, spurred on by Coutts et.al. 2001, Campbell 2003 and a wider dialogue with members, the APEN MC recognised that the paucity of coordinated extension policy negotiation led to further issues:

- seemingly irreversible reduction in publicly funded extension staff in every State;
- questionable coordination by regional bodies and catchment management authorities for using extension as a delivery mechanism to assist achievement of regional or catchment NRM plans targets;
- a growing complement of private providers who may not associate with 'extension';

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[28] Campbell, A., 2003, Key to sustainability lies down on the farm, Australian Financial Review Friday 28/11/2003

[29] See the APEN Website for more detail: Australasia Pacific Extension Network (APEN): http://www.apen.org.au

[30] APEN, 2004, Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN) - Strategic Plan 2004/2005, www.apen.org.au

[31] James, J., 2001, Getting out of the Rut, Proceedings from APEN 2001 International Conference Toowoomba, 4th-5th October 2001. http://www.regional.org.au/au/apen/2001/o/p-02.htm#TopOfPage

[32] APEN, 2003, Extending Extension: beyond traditional boundaries, methods and ways of thinking, http://www.regional.org.au/au/apen/2003/title-01.htm#TopOfPage

- Governments' frustrated policy responses to *slow* achievement of behaviour change through voluntary instruments such as extension, Landcare, incentives and education, and reversion (NRM agencies particularly) to regulation and compliance, aiming to achieve responsible practices through coercive means;
- many APEN members had to redefine their job descriptions as agencies moved to short-term project funding (eg. 1-3 years) (Leach 2002)[33].

Later in 2002 the APEN MC agreed to increase the network's role in addressing the issue of representation of members' professional interests which included more rigorous inquiry into what is going on with extension policy within agencies across Australia (APEN 2003)[34]. A small Extension Policy Development Workshop was coordinated in Sydney 24-07-03 to scope the needs for progressing extension policy negotiations at different scales. Building on this, Childs (2004) suggested that extension (and APEN) should not endlessly plan, argue about process and procrastinate, but rather put something *sensible* in place and learn through action and continuous improvement (Childs 2004)[35]. In liaison with the APEN MC, a group of APEN members then took up this challenge and planned a larger National Extension Policy Forum 21-22 July 2004 and other activities in 2005. The resolution from these activities was that extension policy needs to be considered as a mainstream policy agenda item and be negotiated at a national level amongst agencies, industries, NRM regional bodies and key political stakeholders.

In the following section presents the outcomes from these activities.

1.5 Towards a National Extension Policy Framework

1.5.1 APEN Extension Policy Workshop - July 2003

An Extension Policy Workshop held 23rd July 2003 in Sydney involved the APEN executive, a small number of CVCB members as well as RDC and academic representatives. This workshop resulted in draft extension policy documents and a recommendation for a higher order extension policy process involving wider practitioner, funder, beneficiary and political input. A key resolution from the workshop was to conduct a wider extension policy forum in 2004. Evaluation processes showed that the majority of participants believed the event to be an effective step in the development of an APEN position on extension policy. Workshop participants considered that this needed to be contextualised however, alongside a character description of 'good extension practice.' Key outcomes are presented in Box xx.

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[33] Leach, G., 2002, Issues for Extension Policy in Australia, APEN Management Committee working document. Note: Greg Leach was nominated onto the Management Committee to advance extension policy issues.

[34] APEN, 2003, Australasia-Pacific Extension Network Strategic Plan 2003/2004, See: http://www.apen.org.au

[35] Childs, J., 2004, Extension in Australia – A Point of View, A Discussion Paper for the APEN 2004 National Extension Policy Forum. See: www.extensionpolicy.com.au

APEN – Extension Policy draft (30-7-03)

: APEN Extension Policy Draft (Leach 2003)[36]

APEN supports that good extension practice;
- is working with different communities of practice and providing facilitated leadership to enable people and groups to work together
- targets positive outcomes through bringing together and managing the tension between different communities of practice
- targets and results in an enhanced stock of capital (5 K's)
- continuously improves and is influenced by its relevance and continuity for working with government, RDC, industry and community systems
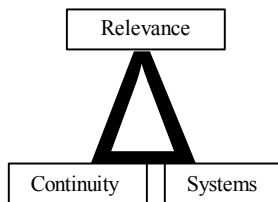
- focuses on personal self-development to promote personal capacity to change
- involves an appreciation by everyone that we are learning together
- is focussed on outcomes not outputs

It is APEN's policy to;
- proactively intervene on behalf of its membership
- proactively define, describe and exemplify good extension principles and practice.
- have formalised communication with RDC's, CRC's, Government Agencies, Community Organisations and other key Stakeholders
- support the advancement of capacity-building as core focus of extension
- increase private sector involvement
- focus extension on outcomes not outputs – making a difference
- market contemporary extension to increase membership
- maintain a rural focus
- target the career development of extension professionals
- promote extension as a discipline
- think critically about extension as a practice and profession
- proactively identify and manage expectations of extension stakeholders
- advocate extension across diverse rural communities of practice
- advocate the position that extension recognises, harnesses and enables diversity
- advocate extension as a social (people) process

A strong element of this workshop was the consideration of extension networks and the extension policy negotiaion dilemma as functional characteristics of a Community of Practice (CoP). A CoP is a group of people who share a common interest or passion and who, through voluntary exchange of their knowledge, insights and experiences, learn together and through action to develop new ways to deal with problems and challenges. CoPs define competence by combining three elements. First, members are bound together by their collectively developed understanding of what their community is about and they hold each other accountable to this sense of *joint enterprise*. To be competent is to understand the enterprise well enough to be able to contribute to it. Second, members build their community through mutual engagement. They interact with one another, establishing norms and relationships of *mutuality* that reflect these interactions. To be competent is to be able to engage with the community and be trusted as a partner in these interactions. Third, communities of practice have produced a *shared repertoire* of communal resources—language, routines, sensibilities, artifacts, tools, stories, and styles. To be competent is to have access to this repertoire and be able to use it appropriately (Wenger 1998)[37].

Following this, APEN instigated a working group to plan a process for enabling policy dialogue within the 'extension CoP' at a national scale. This working group organised the National Extension Policy Forum held July 21st-22nd 2004 in Sydney. The working group saw the forum as a critical stage in a longer-term process including a National Extension Policy Summit with wide representation, as well as interactions with national bodies and political stakeholders (such as CoAG)

1.5.2 National Extension Policy Forum – August 2004

Purpose of the Forum

Through an interactive process the working group resolved that the purpose of the forum was to agree on the scope and elements of a National Extension Policy Framework and a way forward to developing and implementing this framework. To achieve this, the forum aimed to:

- review existing state of extension programming and application in Australia and current research that would contribute to the framework;
- investigate the needs of both extension providers and recipients of extension services/products;
- define "extension" and the scope of what the Framework will include;
- consider how the Framework might be coordinated across the range of organisations and individuals involved in extension activities, including mechanisms that might be used to implement it;
- develop a first draft of the key elements of the Framework and an action plan to progress it leading into the National Summit.

It is very important to note the high level of interest in the forum. The working group initially set a firm ceiling of 40 for the total numbers to attend the forum. As the date

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[37] Wenger, E., 2000, Communities of practice and social learning systems, Organisation, vol. 7, no. 2

drew nearer however, and the total numbers began to edge over 40, a wave of inquiries about the possibility of attendance expanded numbers to 56.

Ground covered – Progress made

The forum was introduced by Andrew Campbell, who positioned the context of extension policy in Australia and the need for a national framework for extension. Andrew proffered the Triple Helix of "landscapes, lifestyles and livelihoods" as a broadened focus for extension and a list of proposed framework elements. Following this Jeff Coutts presented thoughts about extension policy within existing multi-stakeholder/multi-agency environments. He suggested there is currently no one organisation or arrangement in which a national extension policy framework would sit. An articulated and *mutually owned* extension policy framework would make visible roles, relationships, gaps and needs that would assist dialogue, negotiation and understanding amongst the different players and guide the internal policies and direction of those players towards a better collective national outcome. Following these presentations Tony Gleeson and Gerry Roberts presented key points from nineteen briefing papers prepared for the forum[38].

The forum then continued with workshop processes using presented information to further consider the needs for extension policy in rural and regional Australia. A brief synopsis of the 55 pages of butchers' paper notes that resulted from these group sessions was reorganised into a similar format to the Andrew Campbell's suggested policy elements. It was agreed at the forum that this list would provide a good starting point for developing a National Extension Policy Framework. The draft skeleton of this framework follows in Box xx.

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[38] Which were available on the forum website until 2006. See: www.extensionpolicy.com.au

1.1.1 Case for a national extension framework

Value proposition of extension - Promoting the **value of extension as a policy instrument** within a broader policy mix.

Why an extension framework? - Promoting the **role of extension** (alongside other instruments) in sustaining the **triple helix (lifestyles, landscapes and livelihoods).**

Benefits to Australia – Highlighting benefits of: **improved 'public good' outcomes** in publicly funded programs; **communities assisted** through social change; more **efficient public and private sector investment**; improved range of **skilled people to support change** agendas in rural and regional Australia

Raising the extension profile - Raising the **profile and professionalism of extension** as a discipline and practice.

1.1.2 Framework components

Embedded principles - Enabling **practitioner collaboration** in new ways of doing business.

Extension infrastructure - Moving toward **improved extension infrastructure.**

Extension values - Improving transparency in the **'common identity' of extension.**

Roles and responsibilities - Supporting **strategic partnerships in extension** (vis-à-vis education, training, capacity building, regional bodies, public/private).

Funding logic– **Balancing public (Federal-State-Local govt), private, and beneficiary stakeholders** on a case-by-case basis.

Choosing the right instrument – Identifying the **best policy instrument mix for achieving outcomes** (purpose, objectives).

Continuous improvement – *M&E* - Strengthening **quality of extension service delivery and** increasing the **capacity of extension practitioners** and service delivery programs.

1.1.3 Implementing the framework

The framework highlights:
- Who delivers it;
- Funding needs
- Leadership;
- Transparency of intent;
- Key influencers and stages of contact between funders-providers-clients;
- Approach (paradigms) suited to meet different (institutional) needs; information sharing needs within the extension discipline;
- Continuous improvement – capturing experiences from extension discipline;

Box 1: Draft Extension Framework Components

The Forum recommended development of a National Extension Framework is progressed by the working group in concert with key stakeholders in the wider Extension CoP.

1.5.3 Triple-Loop-Negotiation – A Platform for Influencing Extension Policy

A meeting of the working group in Brisbane was scheduled 13th October 2004 to build on outcomes from the Sydney Forum and progress a funding application for development of a National Framework for Extension. Participants were invited to enter their ideas of needs for progressing development of a national framework against the elements of the triple-loop-negotiation model (see Leach 2003 and Forthcoming[39] for in-depth theoretical development of this model).
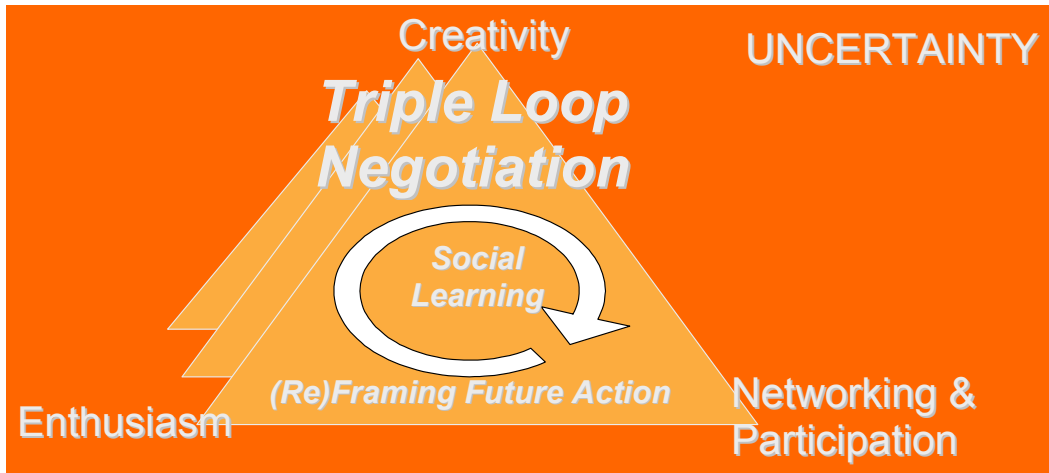

Figure xx: The Triple-Loop-Negotiation Model – A tool for organising and facilitating complex multi-stakeholder negotiations

Triple-loop-negotiation was presented as an approach for identifying and building on the enthusiasms driving different stakeholders as a point-of-entry to influencing the resolution of complex problems and intractable issues. Following are key elements of the Triple-Loop-Negotiation model.

Triple-Loop-Negotiation Plan Components

1.   Convergence on the purpose for influencing others
Agreeing that negotiation is necessary.
2.   Choosing a negotiation strategy - Agreement to move toward collaboration
(i)   Deciding which of the four accepted negotiation strategies is preferred (Figure xx) for dealing with the problems and intractable issues faced.

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[39] Leach, G., 2008, Institutionalising Extension Policy for Natural Resource Management in Australia, PhD Thesis, Wageningen University, The Netherlands
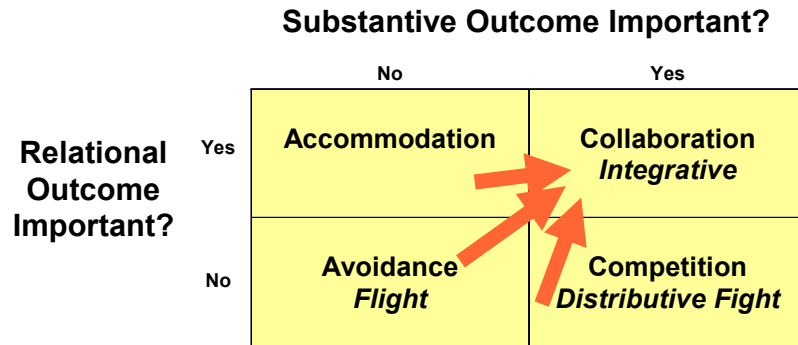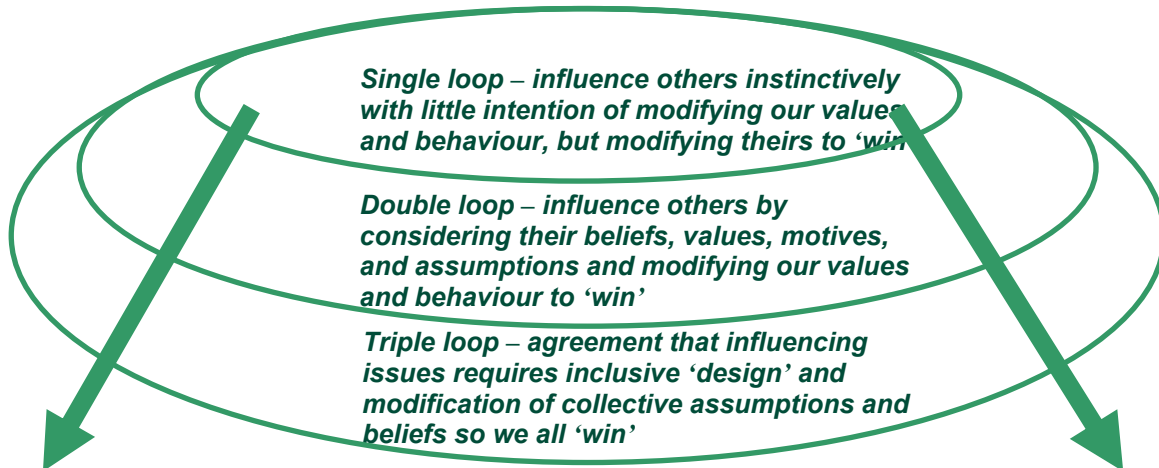
Substantive Outcome Important?

		No	Yes
Relational Outcome Important?	Yes	Accommodation	Collaboration *Integrative*
	No	Avoidance *Flight*	Competition *Distributive Fight*

Figure xx: Deciding to move multi-stakeholder negotiations toward collaboration (Based on Lewicki et.al. 2001)[40]

(ii)   Resolution on the level of convergence on the best negotiation approach for resolution of specific issues. It is important to consider the level of reflexivity required by considering the following three negotiation loops:

Single loop – influence others instinctively with little intention of modifying our values and behaviour, but modifying theirs to 'win'

Double loop – influence others by considering their beliefs, values, motives, and assumptions and modifying our values and behaviour to 'win'

Triple loop – agreement that influencing issues requires inclusive 'design' and modification of collective assumptions and beliefs so we all 'win'

3. **Process drivers – 'What's in it for me?' Targets:**
    - Identify and target stakeholder enthusiasms
    - Identify effective networking and participation
    - Identify creativity and innovation benefits
4. **Core negotiation mechanisms – 'What's in it for us?' Targets:**
    - Enable stakeholders to negotiate how they 'want to negotiate'
    - Consider interactions from three positions
    - Enable stakeholders to (re)frame interpretations of future actions needed for achieving desired outcomes (e.g. sustainable NRM)
    - Encourage social learning through actively exploring different perspectives

Following presentation of the triple-loop-negotiation model, working group members ratified the need for a collaborative approach and discussed **Process drivers** and **Core**

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[40] Lewicki, R. , Saunders, D. and Minton, J., 2001, Essentials of Negotiation, Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, Higher Education NY

negotiation mechanisms. In a workshop format, members then and entered elements of a negotiation plan onto butchers' paper. The negotiation plan presented in Figure xx came from this activity.

Process Management for Developing a National Extension Framework - Triple Loop Negotiation Plan

1. Networking and Participation
- Use rigorous tools/processes to engage/enable participation – interact, create and develop as well as 'discuss', 'argue' and 'decide'
- Identify 'political winners' to attract participation of leaders and other key players
- Inform process participants (Sydney) of progress to date and invite feedback
- Engage with APEN clusters to advance awareness, interaction and input
- Map ('Mindmap') the networks, connections and priority of those connections
- Conduct Inter-State process with aims of advancing extension in a coordinated manner across State governments in Australia
- Network to achieve wider participation and broader (than APEN) ownership of the Cooperative Venture Proposal to advance the development of a National Extension Framework

2. Reducing Uncertainty and Learning
- Develop a communication plan – communicate project process, progress and outcomes frequently
- Inquire into State-Govt extension 'restructures' and incorporate learnings into next stages (and project proposal)
- Present National Extension Framework proposal to Director Generals and Senior Management in State Governments (eg DPI&F) to enrol support, input and feedback
- Plan and implement meetings and workshops with participants to gain clear buy-in of this process and outcomes
- Invite stakeholders/participants to 'be uncertain' and encourage/enable all to fill knowledge gaps together
- Identify and learn from similar interactive and multi-stakeholder processes

3. Listening and Reframing
- Enable interpretation and understanding of key drivers and influences of participants/stakeholders
- Formally reflect and evaluate (explicit interpretations and learnings of working group and wider process)
- Clearly state and communicate the learnings, progress and impact made at the end of each stage of the process (eg. meetings, events)
- Working group members need to explicitly practice moving between the three negotiation loops
- Working group members reflect on how we listen and how we respond to observations about our listening
- Working group members need to revolve through the triad of learner, listener and observer (in an overt/explicit manner) to reflect on how we learn and negotiate

4. Creativity
- Need to use process tools to think outside the box – eg. The 6 hats, etc….
- Expand the 'diversity' of working group membership to include other 'change' sectors/professionals
- Get strategic high profile people (like Leslie Moody) to advocate the need and advantages of a well negotiated and organised extension framework and service-delivery system and seek wider (creative) input
- Use the 'arts'

5. Values in Action
- Working group members participate in a 'values survey' – inquire into 'our values'
- Working group is trying to facilitate change so we should bring in all our tools to effect this and be explicit re how they are used eg. Photoelicitation
- Working group members should be modeling our values through communicating and interacting with stakeholders (practicing what we believe in)
- Working group members need to be explicit about the 'Extension Framework' development process

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<mark>Figure xx</mark>: Triple-loop negotiation plan national extension policy development (Leach 2004)[41]

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[41] Leach, G. 2004, Meeting Notes, Extension Policy Working Group

A collective agreement from the meeting was that a project application be submitted on behalf of the working group for an RDC general call for research projects late 2004. A very inclusive project application process was coordinated, inviting and receiving comments and additions to the preliminary proposal from participants at the Brisbane meeting. A graphical representation of the learning-negotiation plan is shown in Figure xx.
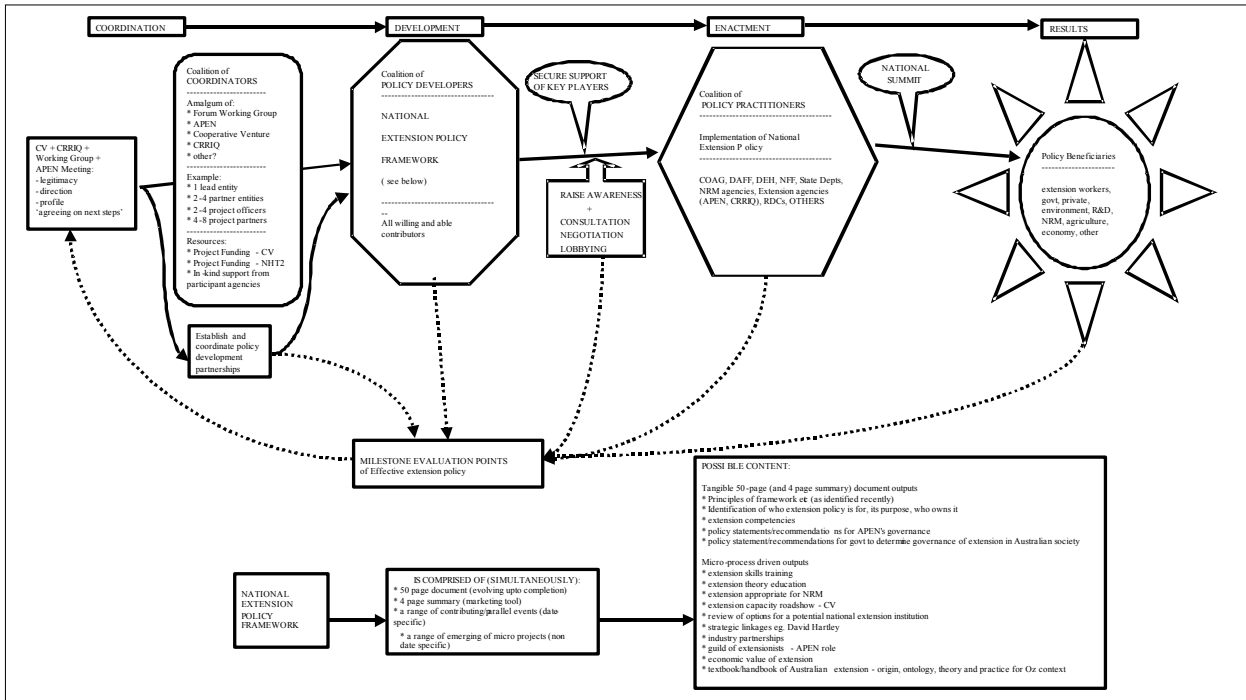
Figure xx: Proposal for the development of a National Extension Framework for Australia (NEFA) (Jennings and Leach 2004)[42].

Much to the disbelief of the working group however, the project application was rejected in the first round. As a consequence, all preceding efforts, including the two national workshops and substantial time devoted by the working group and others, was in dire jeopardy of resulting in nought. The funding knockback was a significant indicator and waning energy in the working group testified the fact that 'higher-order' champions were needed to secure legitimacy in further negotiations with extension policy at a national scale. Interactions amongst working group members continued and a proposal emerged for engaging a higher-order 'nested system' in transitioning this negotiation to the management and policy domains of Government in Australia.

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[42] Jennings, J. and Leach, G., 2004, National Extension Framework for Australia (NEFA), Proposal to the Cooperative Joint Venture for Capacity Building. Note: This proposal was submitted to the CVCB for funding in September 2004

1.5.4 Activating Nested Systems to Influence Extension Policy Negotiations

In December 2004, a member of the working group met with noted extension academics Niels Röling and Janice Jiggins in the Netherlands who advised that further efforts should consider 'nested systems' and their crucial function in the multistakeholder negotiation environment in which extension policy exists. Early in 2005 other members of the working group were very supportive of this. "There needs to be a better linkage between the State Government system and the Federal system," one suggested. "There needs to be better representation and linkage at the PISC[43] and NRMSC[44] levels."

An investigation of literature revealed that the consideration of the Australian Extension CoP as being comprised of 'nested systems' could be a useful option for engaging higher order champions and organising policy negotiations. Systems thinking theory considers systems as whole, evolving, emergent and nested (following Capra 1979)[45]. Considering extension stakeholder networks as 'nested systems' carries the strengths of systems thinking where purposeful social structures (stakeholder networks) are operationalised to deal with the complexities and paradoxes of natural phenomena (eg. NRM and Sustainable production). An additional benefit is that of autopoiesis, or the claim for self-organisation where these 'nested' social systems determine their own form and process(es). Autopoietic (self-reproducing) systems continue to recreate themselves through the ongoing production of the elements that constitute the system (Maturan and Varela 1992)[46].

An aligned concept is that of a holarchy which is comprised of 'holons' (or nested systems) as proposed by Koestler (1967)[47]. Every system can be conceived as an autonomous entity (the insiders) and an integral part within the hierarchy of a larger system (the outsiders). Nested systems therefore face the dilemma of whether they should be integrating with other systems or contesting space. As systems are human constructs, their boundaries are always arbitrary and often negotiated amongst the stakeholders in those systems (Jiggins and Röling 2000)[48]. This negotiation process is ongoing requiring new agreements as the boundaries of the nested systems they are dealing with change.

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[43] Primary Industries Standing Committee, http://www.mincos.gov.au/about_pi_sc.htm

[44] Natural Resource Management Standing Committee, http://www.mincos.gov.au/about_nrm_sc.htm

[45] Capra, F., 1996, The Web of Life, A New Synthesis of Mind and Matter, Harper and Collins, London.

[46] Maturana, H., and Varela, F., 1992, The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding, Boston: Shambhala.

[47] Koestler, A., 1967, The Ghost in the Machine, Arkana, London

[48] Jiggins, J. and Röling, N., 2000, Adaptive management: potential and limitations for ecological governance', Int. J. Agricultural Resources, Governance and Ecology, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 28–42.

Nested (social) systems can employ systems thinking to explore problematic situations and enable debate leading to accommodation between *ideas* and the *maintenance of relationships* (Metcalf 1999)[49]. In this perspective, while systems thinking aims to find efficient solutions to predefined problems, the social institutions performing this are largely frameworks for action and, as such, operate outside the scope of strategic manipulation (Holm 1995)[50]. On the other hand 'nested systems' operate somewhat autonomously within institutional and social considerations that include the complex interactions between multiple stakeholders, unpredictable non-linear changes over time, and the multiple spatial and temporal scales of nested hierarchies (Parkes and Panelli 2001)[51]. This perspective considers that the norm-governed behaviour of [nested] stakeholders and the processes by which institutions are formed and reformed tend to be interest-driven and highly political (Holm 1995).

Viewing the extension CoP as nested systems responds to critiques by Leeuwis (2004) who claims that effective consensus among some (that is, consensus that leads a specific set of actors to generate tangible 'progress') is frequently based on conflict and competition with others.

1.5.5 Working Group transitions to SELN Nested System

Working group members supported recommendations from Röling and Jiggins and considered policy negotiations would be well served by identifying critical nested systems in the larger extension CoP in Australia. The state government extension leaders were suggested as one of these nested systems, along with the NRM Steering Committee and the Primary Industries standing Committee, and the Council of Australian Governments. They were in agreement. A workgroup member then suggested, "I think the State Leaders nested system needs to lead into NRMSC, PISC and hopefully CoAG."

While the development of SELN is a story within itself, two particular products of the network's interactions are important to consider here. The first is the business strategy that SELN initially set for itself with an agreed mission to provide leadership and strategic direction in the development of State and National extension service delivery. SELN's agreed aims included connecting with rural and regional stakeholders across Australia to:
- clarify the purpose and role of the extension policy instrument, both in its own right and within policy instrument mixes;
- instigate efforts to improve communication, cooperation and collaboration across extension service providers;
- encourage key stakeholders to reassess the role of extension policy and extension services, and;

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[49] Metcalf, G., 1999, A Critique of Social Systems Theory, In M. L. W. Hall & J. Wilby (Eds.), Humanity, Science, Technology: The Systemic Foundations of the Information Age. From the 43rd Annual Conference of the International Society for the Systems Sciences

[50] Holm, P., 1995, The Dynamics of Institutionalization: Transformation Processes in Norwegian Fisheries, Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 40, Issue 3

[51] Parkes, M. and Panelli, R., 2001, Integrating Catchment Ecosystems and Community Health: The Value of Participatory Action Research, Ecosystem Health, Vol. 7, Issue 2

- progress the development of a national coordinated approach for extension.

SELN sees that its role in progressing these initiatives is to instigate and facilitate interactions with State and Territory Governments, Industry Bodies, Research and Development Corporations, the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building, rural industries and the Ministerial Advisory Committees for primary industries and natural resources. SELN sought to work with the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN), a professional association for extension practitioners to help achieve desired outcomes. The second product is the policy discussion document prepared inclusively by members with endorsement from all State and Territory governments (see Vanclay and Leach 2006 Chapter 1).

Arguably, SELN was shaping up quite nicely as a nested system for activating and indeed mobilising extension policy negotiations. This was supported by SELN instigated initiatives within the extension CoP including:

1. project proposals from a SELN – RDC workshop in early 2006 (opened and endorsed by the Parliamentary Secretary the Hon Sussan Ley):
   - Project 1 - Better results from investment in RD&E through a shift from commissioning research outputs to commissioning industry and landscape outcomes.
   - Project 2 - RD&E projects designed and managed to achieve outcomes (rather than just outputs) (Metcalfe 2006)[52].
2. recommendations made by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry "that the Australian Government, in conjunction with State and Territory Governments and industry, develop a national extension framework to coordinate the provision of agriculture extension services nationally, and define the roles and responsibilities of governments, industry and extension providers." (Commonwealth of Australia 2006).[53] SELN and APEN members played a key part in commissioned parliamentary interviews and were surprised that the final recommendations were almost verbatim reproductions of those provided at the public hearing.
3. Peter Metcalfe's presented to a working group of PISC in June 2007 on behalf of SELN. The case presented was for considering extension as a policy instrument and its place alongside other instruments in achieving outcomes rather than outputs. Feedback from PISC was very positive and yet the next steps for the SELN-PISC engagement to operationalise this are not clear.

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[52] Metcalfe, P., 2006, SELN/RDC's Meeting 3 March 2006, Workshop minutes – SELN Working Document

[53] Commonwealth of Australia, 2006, Skills: Rural Australia's Need - Inquiry into rural skills training and research, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Note: This report was tabled in the Australian Parliament (House of Representatives) February 2007.
http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/primind/ruralskills/report.htm

1.5.6 Continuing Issues

Despite these significant achievements over a relatively short time, SELN runs the risk of not being able to capitalise on the opportunities resulting from interactions with 'insiders' within state Government (e.g. the endorsement of the SELN document: See Chapter 1) and with 'outsiders' such as the RDCs, PISC, NRMSC and others. As evidenced in recent SELN meetings, while most support that providing leadership for the development of nationally coordinated extension policy and a National Extension Framework for Australia (NEFA) is a very altruistic and noble goal, few members are individually supported for this by their employers. Development of a NEFA is not part of their job and the direct benefits to respective State governments for playing a coordination role within the multistakeholder extension CoP are unclear.

Interestingly, the CVCB after commissioning research into capacity building[54] in rural Australia and further funding a project to investigate implementation of this research has run into similar issues. As with extension, commitment for the coordination of capacity building initiatives and policy frameworks within this multistakeholder environment are plagued by leadership paralysis. No-one has a mandate to do this! (Kelly Pers Comm)[55].

1.6 Recommendations

The following recommendations draw directly from discussions above. These recommendations are chronological steps for operationalising the interactions and negotiations needed to move toward convergence nationally on the role and function of extension policy. These recommendations progress from smaller achievable steps with existing nested systems through to ambitious systemic revolutions in the professional environment in which change practitioners deliver services in Australia.

1. **Clarification of a Multistakeholder Negotiation Approach** – Triple-Loop-Negotiation is proposed as a normative model to aid understanding, organisation and facilitation of multi-stakeholder processes, particularly those aiming to negotiate complex intractable issues that deal with differences in perspective rather than divergences in tenets of law. The triple-loop-negotiation model is particularly suited to deliberations over the issue of extension policy with multiple stakeholders each with unique perspectives about the role of this policy instrument. An important feature of multi-stakeholder processes concerning extension policy is that no sphere or nested system within the national extension and capacity building system is all powerful, yet each is capable of subverting actions of other spheres. The key to achieving successful collective outcomes in this system is the social capacity, perceived need and interests of the people from different organisations for constructively engaging with each other.

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[54] Extension and capacity building are highly interconnected, with capacity building being an important component of extension activities: See Vanclay and Leach 2006 (Chapter1)

[55] Kelly, D., 2007, Personal Communication. Note: Dana Kelly is a researcher working with the CVCB Policy Synthesis Project

2. **Start Small: Presentation of Triple-Loop-Negotiation Research and Messages to SELN (and other nested systems in Extension CoP)** – The above key messages needs to be presented to SELN along with the triple-loop-negotiation concept and model. SELN members need to collectively decide on the degree to which they need to interact with stakeholders from other nested systems to achieve the purposes of the group. The core ethos of triple-loop-negotiation, 'negotiate how to negotiate', provides that if SELN members collectively decide that they wish to develop a 'negotiation plan' amongst themselves for achieving outcomes with the RDCs, NRM regional bodies and other nested systems, they can use components of the triple-loop-negotiation model, or alternate tools.

3. **Identify the Benefit-Cost of the Extension Policy Instrument** – SELN (along with other nested systems) needs to secure funding to continue developing case studies in each state and territory, but place a specific emphasis on the outcomes and benefits achieved for the financial and human resources invested. This analysis will assist stakeholders from economic, legal and management domains to reframe extension using language frames and paradigms they are familiar with.

4. **SELN instigate negotiations amongst key nested systems** – To move toward improving the communication, coordination and collaboration in the extension/capacity building system, SELN needs to identify, contact and engage with stakeholders from other nested systems. Using common-enthusiasms as a point of entry, SELN members can participate with representatives from other nested systems to create new relationships and establish collective interpretations of the role and function of extension. This may involve a commissioned working group made up of SELN members in collaboration with stakeholders from primary production and NRM nested systems. An important conditionality on interactions with other stakeholders is the negotiation of funding arrangements and institutional support for participation in negotiations for considerable time. While SELN may have limited initial seed funding to initiate wider multi-stakeholder processes, equitable contributions should be expected from participating organisations. An example of this working group may comprise representatives from SELN, regional NRM bodies and RDCs. Endorsement is required through PISC and NRMMC for developing a NEFA with the aims of enabling improved collaboration, coherency, correspondence and achievement of agreed outcomes for sustainable NRM and agriculture. A primary purpose for this group is to negotiate with the NRM and primary production 'legal-administration systems' and 'economic-management systems' **how** extension can help these stakeholders meet their needs. The triple-loop-negotiation model can assist these inquiry and negotiation processes. The commissioned working group can also learn from large scale negotiation models that worked effectively in previously successful multi-stakeholder policy processes including the 'Landcare' and 'Salinity and Water Quality' movements in the late 1980s and 1990s respectively. As with these movements, SELN needs to consider securing participation of influential and high-profile stakeholders from diverse disciplinary, industry and socio-political domains (Gordon 2006)[56].

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[56] Gordon, I., 2006, Personal Communication. Note: Ian Gordon has a high profile amongst national stakeholders in the salinity and water quality movement in the late 1990s. Ian suggested that the extension
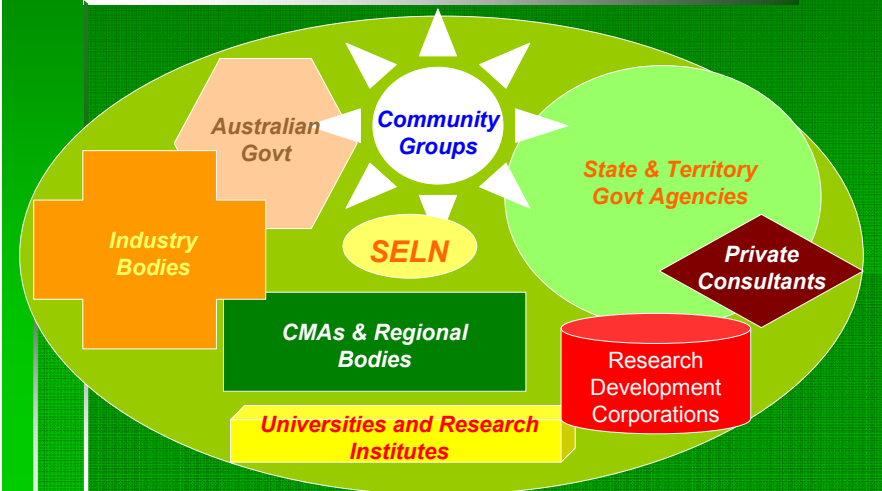
5. **Endorsement by CoAG of an initiative to develop a wider National Extension Framework for Australia** – The commissioned working group that develops the NEFA for enabling sustainable NRM and agriculture needs to present the policy outcomes of this initiative to CoAG. The group can present a proposal to continue the processes of inquiry and negotiation regarding **how** extension can help meet desired outcomes of the legal and economic drivers within other key socio-political domains such as health, community development, education and crime prevention. This proposal should contain recommended options for a multi-stakeholder process and organisation to progress this.

6. **Developing an Extension MSO (Multi-Stakeholder Organisation)** – The endorsement by CoAG of the development of an Extension MSO will enable the stakeholders involved with 'enabling change with rural and regional people' to establish institutional space for negotiation of improved linkages across service delivery domains. This organisation can implement the CoAG endorsed initiative above using a triple-loop-negotiation approach by 'negotiating amongst partners how they want to negotiate' and furthermore how they can enable effective collaboration. The opening of collaborative space will be essential for pooling of appreciations and/or tangible resources such as knowledge, skills, finances and

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movement should implement some of the effective aspects of the multi-stakeholder process that secured political support and endorsement of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. http://www.napswq.gov.au/

[57] Leach, G., 2005, SELN Project Application: Native Vegetation and Biodiversity Program, Social and Institutional Research Program and Tropical Rivers Program - 2005 Research Call, PowerPoint presentation, SELN Meeting 28-29th November 2005, Brisbane.

networks amongst extension stakeholders to solve service delivery coordination problems that cannot be solved individually (as per Gray 1985)[58]. The Extension MFO can learn from the successes and limitations of national programs such as NAPSWQ and NHT1, 2 and 3, to design a national devolved funding program for improvements in landscapes, lifestyles and livelihoods for all Australians through the effective delivery of extension and capacity building services. This national program should encourage collaboration and partnerships amongst government, industry and private sector investors and service providers. The program proposal should include consideration of the resources required to establish sufficient infrastructure and support for ongoing research into extension and capacity building science and professional development of practitioners.

7. **A National Action Plan for Extension and Capacity Building (NAPECB)** - The Extension MSO can use a triple-loop-negotiation approach for organising and coordinating the partnerships required amongst public, industry and private sector stakeholders to implement the NAPECB. The implementation of a national program with considerable profile and international visibility will help improve the relationship between the extension policy instrument with economic and legal instruments along with the range of other policy instruments, such as those outlined in the SELN discussion paper (Vanclay and Leach 2006).

1.7 Conclusion

Indeed, for extension to 'practice what it preaches' and attain the status of being a critically reflective, truly reflexive and continuously improving discipline it is essential that the purpose of extension, 'enabling change', is also focussed on the very institutions that employ the extension policy instrument to help achieve their ends. Authors such as Röling (1988), van den Ban (1996), and Leeuwis (2004) amongst a range of others document extension theory and practice as a product of these respective times. Extension is broadly focussed and applied to thinking about and enabling practice change within rural and regional social systems. Few authors however, articulate strongly the key tools for effectively 'institutionalising' extension through 'enabling change' in the policy environment. Rather than progressing a self-serving agenda (a concern of some extension critics) extension theorists and stakeholders need to also target the policy development processes and multi-stakeholder institutional environment within which policy instruments are developed and delivered.

Extension policy needs to support provision of models and tools that enable effective interaction, negotiation and ultimately collaboration to occur within the institutional networks containing stakeholder agencies, bodies, community groups and commercial interests that are each attempting to contribute to achieving sustainability. Contracted by CHASS[59], Metcalfe et.al. (2006) identify that the "world is turning to multi-disciplinary

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[58] Gray, B., 1985, Conditions facilitating inter-organizational collaboration, Human Relations, Vol 38, p 912.

[59] The Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS) was established in 2004 as a peak representative body for the humanities, arts and social sciences sector in Australia. In December 2005 CHASS commissioned research into collaborating across sectors in Australia

collaborations to deal with the big issues we face, critical problems such as water shortages, global climate change and threats to national security, human health and economic sustainability. No single discipline has all the answers" (CHASS 2006:7)[60]. From their research into 'cross-sectoral collaborations' which combine the humanities, arts and social sciences with science, technology, engineering and medicine they make the following recommendations for enabling effective collaboration:

1. Promote a new mindset – Removing impediments and providing incentives for exploring the power of cross-sectoral collaborations to deal with problems
2. Change research behaviour – Removing institutional barriers at the organisational and disciplinary levels relating to power, resource and status distribution among the different sectors that impede cross-sectoral collaborative research
3. Educate for greater collaboration – Improving understanding and appreciation of other disciplines and sectors and the development of relationships at secondary and tertiary levels of education
4. Train 'boundary spanners' – Enabling understanding across sector and discipline boundaries with trained 'boundary spanners' improving communication amongst differing disciplinary languages, research approaches and cultures.
5. Coordinate and advocate cross-sectoral collaboration – Developing an Australian Institute for Collaboration [centre of excellence] to support cross-sectoral alliances

As with the Extension CoP, CHASS is in search of 'boundary spanners' and the tools to enable effective collaboration. I would suggest that the extension discipline has the capacity and theory to fulfil the 'boundary spanner' role required and partially fulfil each of the other recommendations. New models of extension are relevant for enabling cross-agency and cross-sectoral collaboration (eg. the triple-loop-negotiation approach). The SELN discussion document suggests two extra extension models to the five models[61] identified by Coutts et.al. (2005)[62] and Coutts and Roberts (2003)[63]. The methods suggested are:

- "**Multi-stakeholder Negotiation** - supports collective decision-making in complex multiparty situations (eg. in public good issues) using facilitation approaches that build on the enthusiasm of participants, target creativity and innovation as well as enabling effective participation of interested parties.

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[60] Metcalfe, J., Riedlinger, M., Pisarski, A. and Gardner, J., 2006, Collaborating across the sectors: The relationships between the humanities, arts and social sciences (HASS) and the science, technology, engineering and medical (STEM) sectors, Council for Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS). http://www.chass.org.au
[61] The five models are: Group Facilitation/Empowerment; Programmed Learning; Participatory Technology Development; Information Development and Access, and; Individual Consultant/Mentor
[62] Coutts, J., Roberts, K., Frost, F. and Coutts, A., 2005, The Role of Extension in Building Capacity – What works and why, A Report for the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building. http://www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/HCC/05-094.pdf
[63] Coutts, J. and Roberts, K., 2003, Extension Models and Best Practice in Extension, Proceedings of the APEN National Forum, Hobart Tasmania. http://www.couttsjr.com.au/attachments/uploads/030504apen2003_couttsja.pdf

- **Institutional Development** - supports the facilitation of network building, learning and negotiation processes within and amongst institutional stakeholders, programs and networks" (Vanclay and Leach 2006:6).

These models require further grounding within multi-stakeholder and institutional settings and documentation within a peer-reviewed process before they may be considered as accepted extension models in the Australian context.

In closing, NRM and sustainable agriculture is certainly a contested human endeavour. Conflicting objectives, values, beliefs and interpretation frames this as a wicked and disputed action and learning space. The extension policy instrument is a multi-stakeholder apparatus for use in its own right, and in conjunction with other policy instruments. The negotiation of extension policy in Australia requires effective multi-stakeholder engagement and negotiation to advance coherent policies that correspond with the needs of sustainable NRM and agriculture. These negotiations however, need to be driven by extension practitioners themselves. An adaptive and reflexive triple-loop-negotiation plan is central to this.