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This is issue number 8 of the e-newsletter produced by the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building in Rural Australia (CVCB).

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NEW CHAIRMAN FOR CVCB STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee of the CVCB has representatives from all the organisations providing funding. With the departure of chairman, Simon Hearn, who has resigned from RIRDC, Kevin Goss, CEO of the CRC for Plant Based Management of Dryland Salinity will be chairing his first meeting in April.

Kevin has been with the CRC since last year. For the previous 6 years he was Deputy Chief Executive and General Manager Natural Resources for the Murray-Darling Basin Commission. Kevin introduces himself in this article.

I am delighted to take up the opportunity to lead the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building in my new role as chair of its steering committee. I am keen to make my contribution drawing upon my roots in agricultural extension and rural sociology and on my recent policy level concerns with the effective delivery of natural resource management.

Capacity building means many things to many people. Because it is a dominant concept in national programs it attracts critical comment and sometimes the discussion is confused. To me, capacity building is acknowledging a long term understanding about the drivers of behavioural change and testing, at a practical level, more effective ways of working within these social realities.

I worry at times that we remain theoretical and hypothetical, and continue for too long with pilots and case studies before committing fully to stable programs. It is my observation that the length of programs in natural resource management and landscape scale change should better reflect the generational cycle of those involved in the change process (20 to 30 years).

Take regional delivery through catchment management organisations and natural resource management groups for instance. We now have a very good 'laboratory' of policy trial and error and practical experience. While there are still real issues, stresses and strains with regional arrangements this institutional form for coordination of program delivery is here to stay. Our challenge is to embrace it and be a part of the maturing process to stable and effective entities in catchment and natural resource management.

Another contemporary phenomenon we have to deal with more effectively is the rise and dominance of commercial services to farm businesses and natural resource management bodies. Too often I hear the lament of the contraction of public sector extension services, implying that the rise of the agribusiness sector is simply filling this vacated space. My alternative observation is that farmers and rural community bodies are continuing to outsource their knowledge gathering function as an effective way of dealing with its complexity and are prepared to pay for these services on performance. This should open up our thinking on new roles for public sector agencies.

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FROM THE CVCB

Extension database online. The latest item to be posted on the CVCB website is a database of extension projects implemented around Australia. This database has been developed as part of one CVCB's major projects, a national review of extension and education across Australia.

The database lists almost 50 projects from all around Australia and all agricultural industries. Natural resource management projects and information projects are also listed. You can link to detailed reports that describe factors such as how and why projects were developed, learning outcomes, philosophy and approach, evaluation and issues identified.

It is an excellent resource for developing a project or if you are looking for ways to evaluate extension projects. You can search the database by project name, model or industry. The address is <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/capacitybuilding/index.html>

FOR THE DIARY

International Conference on Engaging Communities. This conference is an initiative of the United Nations and Queensland Government and will be held 14 - 17 August 2005 at the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre. It will explore all issues related to community engagement and address the experiences, challenges and research which affect all citizens, governments and organisations alike. The program is designed to interest representatives from community groups, academia, government agencies, corporations, associations and the like. For information: Conference Managers, phone 07 38541611, email: info@engagingcommunities2005.org, website: www.engagingcommunities2005.org

While it is not appropriate for me to have an agenda as the incoming chair of the CVCB steering committee, I do want to apply myself to the practical side of facilitating behavioural change, drawing upon the long and proud tradition of understanding the social processes at work.

My early career was in agricultural extension, communication and information services with qualifications in rural sociology and agricultural science. More recently I have held senior public sector positions in natural resource management and agricultural policy, research and development, and knowledge management. To all readers of this newsletter who had a stake in CVCB I say I am very keen to apply my experience in agricultural extension, communication and senior public sector management to making our program effective.

WORK OUT THERE

DAFF young people's project. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia has just announced that it has a Leadership in Extension project running during this first half of 2005. The department has provided funding for this project being run by APEN and Rural Development Services, which organised the 2003 APEN Forum.

AFFA and APEN are encouraging extension and research people to support young extension officers (field/ advisory/ education etc) to participate in this event, and come along themselves. Three-day residential regional leadership workshops are being run in various locations around Australia. Young local coordinators are helping organise the regional workshops, to be held as follows:

Hobart, 4 to 7 April 2005
 Toowoomba, 26 to 29 April 2005
 Naracoorte, 9 to 12 May 2005
 Albury-Wodonga, 16 to 19 May 2005
 TBA, WA, 23 to 26 May 2005

An important part of each workshop will be the *Pathways for young extension professionals: focus group* in which issues facing young extension professionals will be explored with participation from employers, clients, experienced extension professionals, funders and researchers. These issues will be included in APEN's National Extension Framework for Australia. A national search conference is being held in Melbourne on 15 and 16 June 2005. For information go to www.apen.org.au/news.

SRDC rewards excellence

The Sugar Research and Development Corporation recently announced that it was providing five regional awards for excellence in grower groups, each of \$12,000. The aim of the awards is recognise the contribution of grower groups, to the sugar industry as well as to their local communities. They recognise innovative grower groups who are identifying, developing, and implementing smart cane farming practices, which are more profitable and environmentally sustainable.

SRDC hopes that these awards will highlight examples of innovation by growers groups and stimulate even greater participation by growers in improving their farm practices. Nominations closed in February and winners will be announced in April.

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CVCB ASSESSES PROPOSALS FOR FUNDING

In response to its call last year for preliminary proposals the CVCB received 104 proposals. Researchers from all states and territories were represented with a cross section from all rural industries submitted proposals covering a wide range of NRM issues.

The CVCB's steering committee was gratified to see this level of interest in researching capacity building, but with such a large number of proposals and a limited amount of funds to support projects it was able to select only a few projects for further consideration. The projects chosen require just over the funds available and give a range across the CVCB's four key result areas.

To be successful projects needed to show they were closely related to the outcomes sought by the CVCB from the key result areas, were likely to apply across industries and regions and to add to the theory and practice of capacity building. Projects which included novel methodology or added to the range of stakeholders engaged with the CVCB were also viewed favourably. The projects invited to submit full proposals ranged from a framework for deciding on capacity building methods in projects to aligning extension and the VET sector to links between RD&E and agribusiness.

Full proposals will be considered in April with projects starting in July 2005. Successful projects will be listed on the CVCB website.

SRDC PhD or Masters Scholarship Opportunity

SRDC is inviting applications from suitably qualified people for a PhD or Masters Scholarship. SRDC is keen to foster the involvement of people with social science expertise in the sugar industry so applications must be in a social science disciplinary area of relevance to the sugar industry and aligned with the SRDC R&D Plan 2003-2008.

The scholarship is open is for a student intending to commence full-time study before 30 June 2005. Applicants should normally have an Honours degree but this requirement may be waived if the applicant has comparable qualifications and/or experience. The stipend is \$26,000 a year for up to three years plus an annual operating budget of \$6000.

For information contact Tracy Henderson, phone 07 3225 9443, email thenderson@srdc.gov.au. To apply, complete the scholarship proposal form at www.srdc.gov.au. Applications must be emailed to srdc@srdc.gov.au by Monday 21 March 2005.

Targetting woolgrower profitability

Queensland sheep producers are being encouraged to take part in a new woolgrower extension program designed to help improve farm management and on-farm production and business profitability. The Leading Sheep program is an initiative of Australian Wool Innovation Limited in partnership with the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and supported by AgForce.

It will involve four regional groups looking at issues and business topics most relevant to their local area.

Australian Wool Innovation says that embracing innovation and change is essential in business these days and the program will provide support for producers looking to do that. It will complement AWI's Bestprac grower group network that already operates in the pastoral zones across Western Australia, South Australia, NSW and Queensland.

For more information contact Geoff Knights, phone 07 4620 8121.

Rural resilience survey

Charles Sturt University is currently running a Rural Resilience Survey and invites you to participate. The survey is part of a project investigating rural wellbeing and resilience in a number of ways, by asking respondents questions about what people like about living in a rural area; what problems or difficulties they have had with living in a rural area and how they have overcome these difficulties; how satisfied they are with their lifestyle; and what support they offer any one new to the area.

The survey is anonymous, and the information collected will become part of a data pool. Principal investigator is Ph. D. candidate, Helen Byles-Drage.

To respond to the survey go to website www.csu.edu.au/research/crsr/survey/

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STEERING COMMITTEE

The Cooperative Venture is managed by a steering committee comprising representatives from the partners. The committee is as follows:

Kevin Goss (Chairman), CRC for Plant-Based Management of Dryland Salinity

Roslyn Prinsley, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation

Steve Coats, Dairy Australia
Paul Comyn, Australian Wool Innovation

Victor Dobos, Grains Research and Development Corporation

Tony Clancy, Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation

Andrew Hodgson, Meat & Livestock Australia

Terry Walker, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia

Alice Roughley, Land & Water Australia

Alison Reid, Murray-Darling Basin Commission

Tracy Henderson, Sugar Research and Development Corporation

John McKenzie, John McKenzie and Associates (Program Manager and Executive Officer)

CONTACTS

For more information about the CV and its activities contact:

Caroline Lemerle, RIRDC, phone 02 6272 4033, email caroline.lemerle@rirdc.gov.au

John McKenzie, John McKenzie and Associates, phone 0402 018 318, email john.mckenzie@rbbs.net.au

WEBSITE

For information about the CVCB and projects go to website www.rirdc.gov.au and click on the Cooperative Venture page.

IN PRINT

Making the connections that build sustainability in natural resource management

Land & Water Australia's newly published Social and Institutional R&D Plan outlines the goals, research themes and strategies for the next 5 years; and emphasises the importance of integrating the social and institutional context of NRM. Order your copy through Land & Water Australia's Products Catalogue at <http://www.lwa.gov.au/products.asp>. Product code is PR040805 or it can be downloaded at http://www.lwa.gov.au/downloads/publications_pdf/PR040805.pdf

Aboriginal Management and Planning for Country: respecting and sharing traditional knowledge

This new report from the Ord Bonaparte Program was recently published by Land & Water Australia and includes information on:

1. Plants and Animals of Kija, Jaru Country: Aboriginal knowledge conservation and ethnobiological research in the upper Ord catchment;
2. Data management, GIS and cultural mapping with Kija and Jaru peoples in the upper Ord catchment;
3. Capacity-building and two-way learning for Kija, Miriwoong-Gajirrawoong and Balangarra people in the lower Ord catchment.

Order your copy through Land & Water Australia's Products Catalogue at <http://www.lwa.gov.au/products.asp>

The summary report is available in booklet form with the full report on CD in the back cover. The product number/code for the summary and full report is PK040789. The product number/code for the full report (only available on CD) is PK PR040788.

HANDY LINKS

Social marketing is one way of involving communities and building capacity. A great site to find out what social marketing is and how the principles can be applied is www.cbsm.com

This site includes an online guide which provides valuable information on the use of community-based social marketing to design and evaluate programs to foster sustainable behaviour (very handy); searchable databases of articles, cases, graphics, and downloadable reports on fostering sustainable behaviour; and discussion forums for sharing information and asking questions of others.

The *Journal of Extension* has a range of interesting extension papers. You can read the December 2004 issue is available to read online at <http://www.joe.org/joe/2004december/index.shtml>

Check out the articles on whether extension has a future, *Is Extension an Idea Whose Time Has Come—and Gone?* and *Is Extension Relevant for the 21st Century?*

Also interesting is an article on using GIS software for community based planning, *3D Visualization in Community-Based Planning*