Issues considered

• Is the system dying or a new model evolving?

• What should the system look like?

• What will it look like?
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Is the system dying or a new model evolving?

- Agricultural extension dates back to show societies in the 1860’s with government appointed researchers and instructors in the 1880’s.

- RD & E was largely provided by government institutions for the next century – state departments of agriculture, CSIRO & universities.

- There were some exceptions:
  - BSES formed in 1900 using levies from cane growers and millers.
  - Farm management clubs form in NSW in the 1950’s.
  - Private consulting firms from 1960’s.

- But still RD & E largely publicly funded until? Governments started selling off banks, transport utilities, health services etc........so why not agricultural services and assets?
So why was extension invented in the first place?

- Cut through complexity
- Integrate complex science with practical & logistical challenges of farming
- Take a broad view

“The problem is that scientists work with technical changes that seem obviously better to them but that may be perceived by the public in general, or their clientele specifically, in an entirely different light.”

Coughenour & Chamala (2000)
Is the system dying or a new model evolving?

• In recent decades:
  – formation of farming systems groups
  – agronomy services from commercial input suppliers
  – private consultancy
  – on line information sources
  – 1800 agronomist
  – large corporately funded R & D programs in gene tech and molecule development
  – no till – Monsanto / ICI

• So, a new model is clearly emerging........
Potential issues with the new model

• complexity of balancing economic, social, environmental & political needs (used to be purely production focus)

• how do disparate groups effectively communicate and interact - how do:
  – government funded researchers engage private extension resources
  – private / commercial advisors keep updated with current R & D

• how is the industry regulated

• what occurs in a crisis e.g. disease outbreak

• how do industries ensure key issues are researched and therefore appropriate advice given

• what structures exist for succession and training
So, what **SHOULD** the new model look like?

- effective / efficient mediums for extending evidence based science
- regulatory checks and measures in place / minimise red tape
- separation of extension / advice from the sale of a product
- ensure adequate training for extension officers
- integrate economic, environmental, social and political factors
- be attractive as a career option for new starters
Drivers for the new model?

- Researcher
- Developer
- Processor/Supermarket
- Consumer
- FARMER
- Extension officer/information system/commercial entity
- Regulator
- Financier

Categories:
- economic
- political
- social
- environmental

Relationships:
- Knowledge flow from Researcher to Developer
- Product flow from Processor/Supermarket to FARMER
- Regulatory flow from Regulator to FARMER
What **WILL** be the drivers for the new model?

In the absence of public funding....... 

- economic factors – extension will need to make money and in turn help generate profit for the farmer  
  – sale of advice  
  – product sale  
  – fund through levy

- environmental, political & social factors  
  – assist with “social licence”

- more consumer driven  
  – feed back from processors / supermarkets
What **WILL** the new model look like?

- Who will employ extension officers in the future?
  - processors / supermarkets
  - levy funded grower groups
  - private consulting organisations – corporate?
  - input distribution businesses marketing high tech / differentiated inputs
  - financial institutions
What **WILL** the new model look like?

- How will information be disseminated?
  - existing means – farm visits, group meetings, field days etc
  - increased dependence on electronic media
Still some questions to answer

- Who will train / influence extension agents?
  - greater dependence on institutions to produce work place ready graduates
  - will corporations invest more?
  - will government’s role be to provide incentives for training?
The new model is evolving......