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## NIASA helps guide the way for Penrith Council Nursery revitalisation project

**To meet demand for locally grown plants in the Penrith Local Government Area, Penrith Council Nursery has reinvigorated its 35-year-old production nursery, giving new life to the site, and securing its Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA) certification.**

The revitalisation project has increased the nursery's production capacity, expanding the volume and quality of plants produced to meet existing and future council greenlife needs.

The Penrith Council Nursery is situated on 1.5 hectares of land at Castlereagh Road, Penrith. The production nursery employs four full-time staff and one apprentice who is involved in the nursery's newly created apprentice training program.

Used mainly as a plant holding facility for most of its lifetime, the production nursery has been revitalised to keep up with the region's growing demand for greenlife.

In mid-2020, the Penrith Council Nursery began improving the site which included upgrading existing amenity facilities, and the installation of gravel paved work areas and potting tables.

Work was undertaken to improve pathways, refurbish a glasshouse, improve material store, install solar panels, and install underground power lines to improve safety and create a more usable space.

Mark Viler, Nursery Coordinator at Penrith Council Nursery said rehabilitating the nursery provided an opportunity to work towards NIASA certification.

"Before starting the revitalisation process, I knew we wanted to be NIASA certified, we followed the NIASA certification guidelines which gave us a

roadmap of how to build a production nursery," Mark said.

"We have completed the first stage of the nursery revitalisation, which involved not only upgrading the infrastructure but also updating our internal protocols and procedures."



*Penrith Council Nursery plants being grown according to NIASA Best Management Practice*

Central to the success of these improvements was the council's commitment to best management practice, which led to them achieving NIASA certification in November 2021.

"Following the NIASA roadmap and implementing best management practice guidelines ensured that everything we grow is to an industry standard. It was critical in developing our plant production systems, record keeping, and an integrated pest and disease management system," said Mark.





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“Since becoming NIASA certified we have increased productivity to almost maximum levels. We were able to start an apprentice program to nurture the next generation of nursery workers and last year we were able to supply 18,000 plants to council. As of June, this year we are already committed to surpassing that with 25,000 plants currently on order from the council to support its various programs.

“Following best practice across our processing and production not only ensures we are testing our water quality, abiding by safe work requirements, and maintaining up-to-date pest and disease recordings to name a few, it streamlined our entire business.”

The Penrith Council Nursery has completed stage one of a multi-stage upgrade, with the next phase focussed on increasing the growing capacity from 800 square meters to 2,300 square metres and future-proofing the business.

This will involve building new outdoor grow areas with sealed pathways, utilising a recycled water supply, rehabilitating the stormwater swale, installing a rain garden and creating a wastewater filtration area.

Future planned upgrades include a new potting shed, adding a seedbank facility in conjunction with

local bush regeneration groups, and increasing storage options for nursery equipment.

The aim is to eventually open the nursery site to the community, to give social enterprise groups, school groups and TAFE students the experience of a production nursery.

“Over the next 10 to 15 years we expect to see greater demand for our products, particularly as the western suburbs reach record high temperatures in the summer and councils seek to use greenlife to mitigate the urban heat island effect,” said Mark.

“Penrith City Council recognises that creating canopies in their area will help reduce the heat island effect, and our production nursery will play a significant role in being a local provider of Greenlife in our area.

“By completing our NIASA certification, we have created a nursery that will stand for the next 20 to 30 years; now supplying the council with everything from tube stock to 45-75L advanced trees. We also directly supply greenlife for local public space areas, citizenship ceremonies, and the bushland management team.

“NIASA made every process easier and quicker, giving us a roadmap of what we had to do to build a great production nursery for our community.

“We can continue to develop our systems, protocols, and facilities in line with best management practices by diligently following the guidelines. It just gives us peace of mind that we are doing everything to an industry standard and ensuring longevity within our community.”

*Any business that is looking to explore NIASA certification is encouraged to visit <https://nurseryproductionfms.com.au/> or contact Greenlife Industry Australia at [info@greenlifeindustry.com.au](mailto:info@greenlifeindustry.com.au) or on 02 8861 5100.*



Penrith Council Nursery Coordinator, Mark Viler

**ENDS**

**Hort  
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