

NURSERY PAPERS

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Cultivating the nursery industry's most important resource – people

SUMMARY

- An integrated approach to nursery industry careers is being progressed based on the five themes of Promotion, Policy, Training, Human Resource Management and Career Pathways.
- The nursery industry is committed to ensuring they remain at the forefront of productivity, innovation and growth, and its people are paramount to this.
- A new nursery industry specific project has launched which aims to have a united approach to a workforce attraction, training, development and retention strategy, with a focus on highlighting career pathways.
- Hort Innovation facilitates a range of programs such as the Hort Frontiers Leadership Fund, that identifies, builds and empowers future industry leaders at all stages of their career.
- Dozens of nurseries and people have participated in these programs.
- This Nursery Paper provides information on current professional development and career pathway projects and shares details on where to apply or find more information.

BACKGROUND

According to a study commissioned by Hort Innovation and conducted by the University of Queensland, the Australian horticulture industry outperforms the average Australian business in the innovation field – with almost 80 per cent of horticultural producers reporting some form of innovation, whether it was new to the farm or new to the industry.

But there is a risk of our industry losing talent. Currently, only 16% of the nursery workforce are aged under 39. In addition, the size of the workforce has slightly (though not statistically significant) contracted from 24,500 to 22,000 full time equivalent staff in recent years. Presented with an ageing workforce we need to find, attract and retain new generations of passionate, skilled and innovative workers that are willing to learn and see the nursery industry as a career.

So how do we attract the next generation of nursery, greenlife, horticultural, plant production workforce to maintain the industry and then cultivate them into innovators and industry leaders? This is a major focus for both the nursery industry and the wider horticulture sector, with a series of new and ongoing projects underway to attract, grow, and retain the most passionate, enthusiastic and best talent Australia has to offer.

A recently completed project identified the following five themes to address the challenge – Promotion, Policy, Training, Human Resource Management and Career Pathways.



Green Leaders participants



CAREER PATHWAYS IN THE NURSERY INDUSTRY

A new project launched

The nursery industry is valued at \$2.44 billion as per the 2018-19 Nursery Industry Statistics report. It is a thriving and has experienced strong sales growth in recent years. In order to maintain and ensure long term sustainability, productivity, growth and innovation there needs to be a focus on attracting, then fostering talent and building career pathways.

A new project, *Developing nursery career pathways* (NY19006), led by RMCG Consulting Group and Greenlife Industry Australia (GIA), is focusing on boosting career development within the nursery industry.

Peter Vaughan, CEO of Greenlife Industry Australia (GIA), indicated that identifying the next generation of nursery industry workforce is a vital area to address. He advised that the project would focus on the training and career pathway strategic themes which will align with the promotion, policy and human resource management activities being progressed by GIA.

Project structure

The project will have an integrated approach to attraction, training, development and retention strategies of nursery industry people with a focus on training courses and career pathway development for people in horticulture, as well as young people who have not yet entered the workforce and the careers advisers that support them.

It will highlight the dynamic career opportunities within the nursery sector, and at the same time, facilitate the targeted design and delivery of education and training programs including defining, developing and showcasing jobs and career pathways.

The project is creating a range of tangible outcomes including the development of a Careers Hub with an eLearning component to educate, inform and engage stakeholders on the benefits of upskilling and the training opportunities available to those in the industry and those seeking a career change. The hub will also provide information on access to apprenticeships and communications materials designed to reach those outside the industry such as careers advisors and students.

Led by forward-thinking, adaptable professionals with a background and experience in similar programs, this project will ensure the nursery sector remains a thriving, dynamic and profitable industry by enhancing education, training and showcasing the diverse career opportunities within the sector.

PROJECT OUTPUTS



Development of a Careers Hub



Access to apprenticeships



Communications outputs to advocate for a career in the nursery industry



Education and training programs



2019 Green Leaders participant, Annette Thompson



HORT FRONTIERS LEADERSHIP FUND

Masterclass in Horticultural Business

The Masterclass in Horticultural Business is one of the most successful programs run through the Hort Frontiers Leadership Fund. Every year, Hort Innovation utilising industry levies and funds from the Australian Government, provide a range of scholarships for levy paying businesses to undertake the course, valued at \$10,000 each.

The course run by the University of Tasmania is aimed at those looking to accelerate their careers in horticulture. At the end of the 10-month intensive course, participants receive a Diploma in Horticultural Business. The Masterclass provides the theoretical application of business disciplines for practical horticultural and plant production. It formalises what is being done in practice to progress the business and leadership qualifications of attendees.

There is a growing honour roll of nursery industry graduates from the program, and each of those



Participants in the Masterclass in Horticultural Business (Source: University of Tasmania)

participants have returned to their businesses with learnings and knowledge that have not just helped them grow as people, but that have improved their businesses too.

SEE WHAT PAST PARTICIPANTS HAVE HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE COURSE:



Ben Scoble, Speciality Trees

"I've developed a spreadsheet which now analyses our tree crops including input costs and selling price, so that we can improve our strategic decision-making process. It provides a good analysis on the costs going out and the profits coming in."



Emma De Landre, Greenlife Industry Australia

"With guidance from an exceptional lecturer, I developed a cooperative business model for Australian hazelnut production. The model included techniques used for propagation, cultivation and harvest."



James Edge, Humphris Nursery

"The strategic analysis and risk management aspects of the course has allowed me to more effectively assess return on investment for new business ventures and provide greater support across the business."



Nathan Wells, Yarralumla Nursery

"I took real business skills back to the nursery. For example, a cost benefit analysis identified a need to reduce the distance to move our plants from potting machines to trailers, so we were able to plan physical changes to our potting shed that improve efficiency."



National Leadership Development Program

This program is an evolution of the previous Growing Green Industry Leaders Program, a four-month professional development course which equipped future nursery industry leaders with career-focused skills and knowledge aiming to start in 2021.

Originally tailored specifically for the nursery and turf industries, this program now includes participants from other sectors. This will allow for the meeting of the minds for across horticulture learnings and interactions.

The focus of this program is on personal development. Nursery participants are challenged to reflect on their current leadership practices and how they can collaborate with a wider range of industries to develop

their approaches to leadership and best apply these to the running of their businesses.

For more information on the National Leadership Development Program, contact David Hanlon from The Right Mind ghanlon@therightmind.com.au

Attracting new entrants into Australian horticulture – promoting careers in horticulture

Led by Rimfire Resources, this is a graduate engagement program that offers final year university students a placement in a horticultural business, such as a nursery, to do up to a 10-week project/work experience. When that student graduates the nursery would employ them for the first year, with the first year salary subsidised by Hort Innovation.

For more information or to enquire about taking on students for placement contact Gemma Burger from Rimfire Resources gburger@rimfireresources.com.au

Other projects

Women’s Leadership Development Program – Women that are current and emerging leaders in the horticulture industry – including the nursery industry – can apply for a leadership development scholarship opportunity with Women in Leadership Australia.

Churchill Fellowships – Hort Innovation offers three Fellowships annually to drive innovation and transformation within Australia’s horticulture industry. The Fellowships are open to any industry participants who have an idea for a research project that can benefit the sector.

MEET BIANCA CAIRNS, R&D MANAGER

Bianca Cairns is the Hort Innovation R&D Manager for the Hort Frontiers Leadership Fund. Her role is to work across multiple horticultural industries to ensure that funding allocated to leadership projects aligns closely with the strategic priorities of industry.

WHAT IS THE HORT FRONTIERS LEADERSHIP FUND?

The Hort Frontiers Leadership Fund doesn’t operate like your typical levy fund investment. We use a different funding model whereby each investment uses federal government funds, with co-investment from other stakeholders. The investment may come from a specific fund or from a third party.

However, what all investments have in common is that they are national leadership initiatives and are developed and designed to either attract newcomers to the horticulture industries, to ensure that we retain existing talent or drive research innovation through the upskilling of the workforce.

Ultimately the role of the Hort Frontiers Leadership Fund is to build a globally competitive, innovative, resilient and profitable horticulture industry.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR THE HORT FRONTIERS LEADERSHIP FUND?

Everything Hort Innovation does is governed by a Strategic Intent Document, which guides all the investments made, to help shape the future of the horticulture industry.

The strategy is outcome based. If an investment will increase the number of new entrants into horticulture or improve the talent pool with the leadership skills required to drive innovation or help drive global competitiveness, Hort Innovation will look at funding it under the Leadership Fund.

One thing Hort Innovation is proud of is the diverse range of projects. There are projects like the Hort Masterclass which are broad, business-oriented investments, and there are



also projects which are focused on the more technical side of horticulture, like protected cropping production systems.

WHAT SHOULD PEOPLE IN THE INDUSTRY DO IF THEY HAVE AN IDEA FOR A LEADERSHIP FUND PROJECT?

Formally, anyone can submit an idea to us via the Hort Frontiers website (<https://hortfrontiers.com.au/submitting-a-concept/>). Bianca also encourages anyone to get in touch directly at bianca.cairns@horticulture.com.au to share any insights, feedback and ideas.

MORE INFORMATION

Find out more about the Hort Frontiers Leadership Fund: <https://hortfrontiers.com.au/leadership-fund/>

PAST EDITIONS OF NURSERY PAPERS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE on the Greenlife Industry Australia website: https://www.greenlifeindustry.com.au/Section?Action=View&Section_id=46