

Business Skills Development

Kobie Keenan
Nursery & Garden Industry
Australia (NGIA)

Project Number: NY07017

NY07017

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Final Report

NY07017

Business Skills Development

30 September 2008

Author: Kobie Keenan & Robert Prince



Business Skills Development

Final Report

HAL project: NY07017

Completion date: 30 September 2008

The aim of this project was to develop industry skills in the areas of business management, HR management, marketing and retailing skills.

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Summary

The aim of this project was to develop industry skills in the areas of business management, HR management, marketing and retailing skills.

The project provided funding to each NGI State Association for use for specific activities related to achieving business skills improvement.

This project is an integral part of:

- NY07009 – Management & Administration of Awards and Accreditation which aims to make the journey to accreditation an attainable pathway of business improvement.
- NY07501 - Industry & Stakeholder Marketing which aims increase levels of industry participation through increased awareness, interaction and participation in national industry projects and activities.

The funding supported by this project is seen as essential to the communication of many national initiatives and without localised extension through each State such initiatives would not be successful.

In most cases each State NGI Association has a dedicated Business Development Officer (BDO) whose role includes the communication of the national business improvement initiatives to the industry and particularly retail. The BDO undertakes a number of activities including one on one engagement, workshop facilitation, marketing and more to deliver the national business improvement tools developed under NY07009 and NY07501.

The project has faced a number of challenges to meeting targets including strategic decisions made on timing such as the best time to relaunch AGCAS however overall, activities have been successful in achieving the desired outcomes.

A further challenge faced by this project which has had a flow on effect to NY07009 and NY07501 has been the allocation and reporting requirements of the State NGI Associations on receipt of the funds and delivery of the requirements. While the State NGI Associations are fully aware of the deliverables required for the funding, the administrative protocol in relation to accountability has been lacking at all levels. NGIA have taken steps to rectify the issue by arranging for contracts containing measurable and reportable requirements that, for the most part, mirror the requirements of Horticulture Australia Ltd (HAL).

NGIA intends to implement these contracts individually with each State NGI Association together with a range of support reporting templates to help streamline the reporting structure. This process will ensure that accurate figures are recorded regularly and that figures are supported by evidentiary material.

Introduction

This project is a continuation of the Business Skills project NY06015. This project is links into NY07009 Management and Administration – Accreditation and Awards and NY07501 Industry and Stakeholder Marketing.

The project aims to develop industry skills in the areas of business management, HR management and marketing skills. It provides funding to each NGI State Associations to extend national business improvement initiatives to the whole industry.

The projects areas that this project focuses on include:

- Australian Garden Centre Accreditation Scheme (AGCAS)
- Business Skills Communications
- Training
- Nursery & Garden Industry Awards
- NextGen
- Certified Nursery Professional
- Environmental Extension for the retail sector

These business support tools are managed nationally by NGIA and extended by the State Associations to their industry.

It is anticipated that in future projects of this nature will incorporate all the national initiatives that encourage business improvement including production and growing media accreditation and certificate schemes and greater cross over between the technical development officer network and the business development officer network, meaning that all of industry can benefit from the knowledge of the networks which, no doubt, is relevant in all sectors.

Method & Activities

As discussed above, the method of this project is to provide funding to the State NGI Association for them to deliver outcomes, usually performed by a BDO.

Each State has provided a report detailing the activities conducted the period 1 January 2008 – 30 June 2008. These reports are attached here for your information and focus mainly in the key program areas of:

- Australian Garden Centre Accreditation Scheme (AGCAS)
- Business Skills Communications
- Training
- Nursery & Garden Industry Awards
- NextGen
- Certified Nursery Professional
- Environmental Extension

The reports also detail any other relevant business skills development activities performed by the State to promote national initiatives to the industry.

A national summary is also attached here for your information.

Evaluation

The targets reported on in this Final Report are detailed in the proposal attachment titled *Targets for 2007 – Business Skills Development*. In some instances these targets are different to the actual targets achieved in June 2007 under the final report for NY06015. This can be attributed to the timing overlap in proposal submission for the coming year and collation of figures for the current year. It can also be attributed to the multiple and different targets set across NY07009 and NY07501.

The differences in targets across the projects will be rectified in the 0809 financial year through the use of the State Contracting referred to in the Summary of this report.

AGCAS

As reported in NY07501 – Industry Stakeholder Marketing

- To increase AGCAS accredited businesses to 175. As reported in the Final Report for NY06510 and Milestone Report for NY07501 promotional activities for AGCAS has ceased until the relaunch of AGCAS was conducted during National Conference at the end of March 2008. For this reason, we do not anticipate reaching the target of 175. We can report the number of accredited businesses is stable at 113, as reported in the milestone report for this project.
- Business Skills Development Officers have reported continued liaison and support for accredited businesses and with the relaunch of the program can encouragingly report that interest in AGCAS as a business improvement tool is growing with potential businesses engaged in the journey to accreditation up from 27 as reported in the Milestone Report for this project. A question at the recent AGCAS Meeting 23/8/08 showed that the potential for Membership is between 100 and 275 businesses. As shown in the table below.

6.) Within your State, what is a realistic forecast of garden retailers to become accredited each year?

	Responses	
Less than 5	3	25%
5-10	0	0%
11-20	5	41.67%
21-40	4	33.33%
Greater than 40	0	0%
Totals	12	100%

- Sale of manuals has been limited however since the relaunch and distribution of older manuals we can report 480 manuals in circulation

Business Skills Communications

- National initiatives were extended throughout the funding period using State NGI Association newsletters and/or magazines.
- It is believed that the State reported figures on business skills communications do not accurately indicate what the business skills communications have been undertaken by them.
- NGIA believes this activity will be depicted more accurately depicted and will increase with the introduction of targets in the State Contacts discussed above.

Training

- Training workshops continue to be scheduled targeting retail, production and allied sectors to improve business skills. In most cases Training Plans for the next six months have been provided to NGIA.
- The figures reported in Appendix 1 have been reported in the milestone report NY07014 Managing National Training & Recognition program and have been sourced from training plans submitted by the State Associations to the National Training and Recognition Manager, Fiona Kelly. The figures do not include IDO coordinated training or workshops.

Nursery & Garden Industry Awards

As reported in the Milestone report for this project:

- The 2008 Awards saw a 17% increase in overall entrants into the process from 2007.
- 64% of total entries were from accredited businesses and all States except QLD and NT saw an increase in entrants. QLD and NT faced environmental challenges including floods, drought and high season activity.
- The overall increase indicates extension of information on the program through the State Associations.
- Every State except Tasmania had a State Awards night in 2007 with good attendance all round.

Promotional activity performed by the State NGI Associations for the 2009 Nursery & Garden Industry Awards is reported in the attached National Summary.

NextGen

- Figures for NextGen in relation to promotional activities and meetings facilitated have been provided throughout the project period indicate the support for the this Special Interest Group.
- NextGen encourages collaboration by the future of the industry and is a effective avenue to communicate many national initiatives.
- It is anticipated that funding for 0809 will fall under the facilitation of Special Interest Group meetings/workshops.

Certified Nursery Professional

As reported in the Final Report for NY07501 – Industry & Stakeholder Marketing

- CNP has steadily increased participation with the following results reported for the calendar years of 2006: increase of 71%, 2007: increase of 49%. So far in 2008 we can report at 31% with a total of 173 members as at 30 June 2008. While this target has not been met, we believe these increases to be a positive indication of the industry's response to the program. By 30 September there are 230 CNP's which shows that with constant reinforcement industry stakeholders are getting engaged.
- These figures have been sourced from NGIA's CNP system maintained by the CNP Coordinator. Where State figures have been received in the State NGI Association reports they have been included in the National Summary.
- These figures can be attributed to the activities conducted under this project with States undertaking various promotional activities communicating the benefits of CNP. Other projects that have helped in the growth of the CNP program are NY07501 and NY07008.

Environmental Extension

It is a demonstration of the quality of the consumer programs that the whole industry participates including retail and production sectors. As reported in the Final Report for NY07501 – Industry & Stakeholder Marketing

- World Environment Day 2008 participation of 346
- Grow Me Instead participation 400

Other Extension Activities

As reported in the Final Report for NY07501 – Industry & Stakeholder Marketing

- Attendance at NGIA National Conference – an increase in delegates from 285 in 2007 to 317 in 2008.

As reported in the Milestone Report:

- Most States again reported additional contacts with all industry sectors. These contacts were made in a number of ways including onsite visits, telephone advice, invitations to workshops and/or conferences.
- All States reported other relevant activities which they have detailed in their six monthly reports.

Implications

Australian Garden Centre Accreditation Scheme

As reported in the Final Report for NY07501 – Industry & Stakeholder Marketing:

Investment in the industry's retail accreditation program is under review by the industry. Originally positioned as a marketing advantage for retail operators this program has been repositioned as a business improvement program which views business practices and greenlife as essential elements to a successful and sustainable NGI business. The targets set for this program for 07/08 have in fact, only had three months to be delivered. That is, most activities have been conducted from the end of March 2008.

Initial feedback since the launch indicates that businesses are more interested in ways to be successful in the current business climate, fighting for the disposable dollar while addressing the hangovers of water use. This program now offers benefits to businesses they view as vital. With proper planning and extension of activities via the State Associations this program has great potential. This feeling is demonstrated in the increase of businesses engaged in the journey towards accreditation.

Business Skills Communications

As referred to above, the communications of the national initiatives supporting business improvement will more accurately be recorded and will increase in intensity with the introduction of the State Contacts.

NGIA intend on setting realistic targets Nationally and by State and that these targets will be reportable, quarterly.

Training

Training is essential to the professional development of the industry. The State NGI Associations are regularly scheduling workshops and this information is being provided through to the National Training and Recognition Manager in the form of a Training Plan. Other implications on training will be reported in the Final Report for NY07008, National Training and Recognition

Nursery & Garden Industry Awards

One of the recommendations made to the NGIA Board at the conclusion of the 2008 Awards was that the States undertake further promotion of the Nursery & Garden Industry Awards. This recommendation was made with the belief that industry operators are more receptive to their State NGI Associations and that relevance and credibility could be demonstrated further by them.

Figures for the promotional activity conducted to promote the Nursery & Garden Industry Awards have not been requested prior to this report and therefore a comparison is difficult.

In the proposed new format of reporting, targets will be set for State NGI Associations in relation to promotion pre and post entries closing in an effort to ensure that this activity is being delivered and industry operators in every State are communicated to about the benefits of the Awards.

NextGen

It is clear that this Special Interest Group has whole of industry support.

In 08/09 it is intended that this group will be able access financial support via this project in the form of a special interest group.

Certified Nursery Professional

As reported in the Final Report for NY07501 – Industry & Stakeholder Marketing:

CNP has identified the following barriers to participation:

- While production nursery and growing media businesses have increased their membership, there is still a feeling that individual recognition programs benefit retail operators more than other sectors.
- Other barriers including determination of value and benefits for the fee and ability to accrue points is noted as a challenge to some small business owners,

These challenges need to be taken into consideration in communication of messages for CNP for 08/09 activities. Despite these challenges CNP has seen substantial and steady growth since its commencement in 2005.

Environmental Extension

In 08/09 it is intended that targets for the extension of consumer environmental campaigns that are integrated with Life is a Garden will be set Nationally and by State and that these targets will be reportable, quarterly.

The environmental campaigns are viewed as valuable business improvement tools and essential in communicating with the community.

Other project activities

As reported in the Final Report for NY07501 – Industry & Stakeholder Marketing:

Misconceptions on which programs are levy funded are being addressed by NGIA. This is evidenced through the figures detailed in 'Other Project Activities'. Adherence to the new guidelines as indicated by HAL for branding of levy funding projects, will rectify this in 08/09 along with contracting of States and more structured reporting processes in 08/09.

Recommendations

As detailed in the Summary of this project it is necessary that NGIA needs to address the gap with the allocation of funds and subsequent reporting requirements of the State NGI Associations.

NGIA have begun to take steps to rectify the issues surrounding administrative protocol in relation to accountability by arranging for contracts containing measurable and reportable requirements that, for the most part, mirror the requirements of Horticulture Australia Ltd (HAL).

NGIA intends to implement these contracts individually with each State NGI Association together with a range of support reporting templates to help streamline the reporting structure. This process will ensure that accurate figures are recorded regularly and that figures are supported by evidentiary material.

These steps have been detailed in the Milestone Report for NY07016 – Increasing uptake of NGI National Business Development Programs.

Financial Summary:

The funding allocated to this project was \$471,000 split between matchable VC and R&D levy. These funds were allocated to the State Associations for implementation of the program in the following manner:

NSW/ACT	\$90,000
Queensland	\$90,000
Victoria	\$90,000
Western Australia	\$81,000
South Australia	\$45,000
Tasmania	\$50,000
Northern Territory	\$25,000

No funds from this Project were withheld by NGIA, as management for this project is covered under NY07016.

Appendices

1. Business Skills Development National Summary
 2. NGIQ Reports
 3. NGISA Reports
 4. NGINA Reports
 5. NGINT Reports
 6. NGIT Reports
 7. NGIWA Reports
 8. NGIV Reports
-



NSW & ACT AGCAS Technical Officers Six Monthly Report Australian Garden Centre Accreditation Scheme January to June 2008

The purpose of this report is to communicate the AGCAS activities of a State Association to the National AGCAS Advisory Committee and to share AGCAS information with Technical Officers from other States. Please limit your report to two (2) pages.

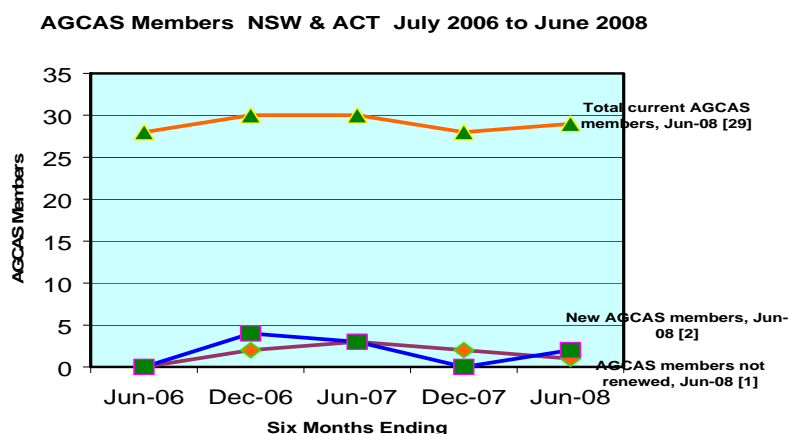
Author: Author: Bob Wynyard
Role: Business Skills Development Officer
Date: 16 July 2008

NSW & ACT AGCAS Committee Representatives

Name	Business
Michael Mehigan (Chair)	Elegant Outdoors
Bruce Pike	Combined Nursery Sales
Geoff Fowler	St Ives Village Nursery
Rodney Toll	Rodneys Plants Plus (ACT)
Michael McNaught	Eden Gardens
Michael Skegg	CEO NGINA
Michael Danelon	NIASA DO NGINA

Michael McNaught, Eden Gardens, has joined the committee.

Number of AGCAS Businesses



One business has left the scheme due to economic hardship. Two new businesses have been approved to join the scheme. **Total AGCAS businesses = 29.**

AGCAS Workshops

Date	Location	Workshop Title	Presenter	Attendees
19/02/2008	Sydney	Recruiting Staff	Geoff Williams	8
20/02/2008	Sydney	Managing Staff Performance	Geoff Williams	19
25/02/2008	Darling Harbour	Developing the Giftware Market	Debra Templar	34
2/04/2008	Sydney	Garden Design insights	Judith Sleijnen	11
9/04/2008	Sydney	Marketing For Growers	Debra Templar	10
9/04/2008	Sydney	Local Area Marketing	Debra Templar	20
15/04/2008	Orange	Local Area Marketing	Debra Templar	11
16/04/2008	Canberra	Local Area Marketing	Debra Templar	20
23/04/2008	Alstonville	Devlping a Successful Bus Plan	John Bowers	11
11/06/2008	Sydney	Effective Website Strategies	David Turner	14
18/06/2008	Port Macquarie	Local Area Marketing	Debra Templar	13
24/06/2008	Wagga Wagga	Local Area Marketing	Debra Templar	8

A total of 12 Business Skills Workshops with combined attendance of 179 attendees. Work is now under way on finalising a Workshop Calendar for 2008-09.

Outline of promotional success

1. The new AGCAS package was launched in Sydney on 9 April to an audience of 34. AGCAS Champion Peter Whitehead spoke splendidly of the value for garden centres in joining the scheme.
2. We joined Reeds in promotion of the Sydney Gift Fair and used the opportunity to run a Giftware workshop at Darling Harbour with 34 participants.
3. Attendance at the Brisbane Green Expo was to gather information on running an Expo in Sydney in Spring 2009.
4. Ensured maximization of statewide publicity of launch of NGIA Awards 2009.

Details of potential opportunities for AGCAS

1. A number of new leads have been followed up after the AGCAS launch with 16 currently engaged in the program although many have yet to finally commit to it.
2. Processing audits has been slow due to:
 - a. The new Management module requiring more time on customer dialogue
 - b. Frustrations of dealing with PDA's – an unknown quantity at the outset
 - c. Dealing with more new audits which take longer to work through and process.
3. The website is a good idea and the report which businesses can download off the website, with benchmark figures beside it really adds value to the scheme.
4. A brief newsletter is being launched in NSW & ACT to continue to keep issues and opportunities in front of AGCAS businesses and ensure better take up and feedback.
5. Subjects will include CNP, Business Benchmarking and other business opportunities.

Other current issues (including management of any complaints)

1. One of the major issues in NSW is the lack of basic accounting skills of many members (grower and retailer). Whilst we have tried to put on relevant workshops we get little support. We think the reason is that the skills are at such a basic level that the benefits of gaining the knowledge are not able to be understood. A lot of effort is going into this area as we believe it is hindering industry development. It is suggested that with a new 'Needs' survey to be undertaken soon that this fundamental area should be included. Would be keen to compare notes with any others who share this problem.
2. The pot recycle bin at Rouse Hill proved very successful collecting 76 cubic metres of pots in its first year. However Sims have made it very difficult by discontinuing collection and other methods of disposal are being checked.

BUSINESS SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER - REPORT

Name: Sharon Ible
State: Qld
Six month reporting period: Jan 2008 - Jun 2008

AGCAS

AGCAS Progress Report Attached: YES

Summary of Progress:

Total accredited in state at commencement of reporting period: 19
Total accredited in state by end of reporting period: 18
Net increase or decrease in six months -1

Engagement of retail businesses in relation to Garden Centre Accreditation 31

AGCAS audits conducted during period: 12

AGCAS manuals sold in State during period 48 Old manuals

AGCAS State Accreditation Meeting held (Date) meeting cancelled due to staff shortages
If more than 1 mtg held during period dd/mm/yy

Promotional Report Attached: YES

This report needs to cover:

Advertising
Events & Activities sponsored or attended to promote AGCAS
Ideas for national marketing
Barriers to promotion encountered
Presentations to key influencers
Promotion and sale of Best Practice Guidelines
(It is likely that the 6 monthly report prepared for the AGCAS meetings will suffice provided that it covers this information)

Communications

Stories on horticultural/technical/environmental/business improvement issues written:

Nursery papers	Date:	<u> </u>	Topic:	<u> </u>
State Magazine:	Date:	<u>Febuary</u>	Topic:	<u>16 rules for life</u>
		<u>April</u>		<u>Pricing for profit</u>
		<u>May</u>		<u>The secrets to delegation</u>
Industry website	Date:	<u>various</u>	Topic:	<u>Administration of NGIQ website</u>
Any other journal	Date:	<u>?</u>	Topic:	<u>NextGen</u>
		<u>June</u>		<u>NGIQ Conference</u>
Which Journal:		<u>Greenworld & Aust Hort</u>		<u>magazine</u>

Note any other factsheets, email broadcasts or similar issued on environmental or technical issues, for example, biosecurity alerts etc.

Various e-newsletters to members on a variety of issues eg. if I come across interesting articles or governemnt issues, grants, etc

Training

Environmental/Technical/Horticultural/Business Improvement training undertaken or arranged during per Include workshops such as Garden Design, EMS for Retailers and indicate dates run.

	Workshop	Date	Participants	Funding Support
NIDO	Drawing Professional Planting Designs - Brisbane	20/02/2008	14	NGIA
	Design for Council Approval	5/03/2008	8	NGIA
	WaterWork	29/02/2008	9	NGIA
	WaterWork	17/04/2008		NGIA
	WaterWork	8/05/2008		NGIA
	FMS Field Day	28/02/2008	21	NGIA
	ChemCert	13/02/2008	15	NGIA
	ChemCert	21/01/2008	9	NGIA
	ChemCert	3/04/2008		NGIA
	ChemCert	30/04/2008		NGIA
	ChemCert	22/05/2008		NGIA
	ChemCert	24/06/2008		NGIA
	ChemCert	15/04/2008		NGIA

For the next 6 months, there are 14 workshops planned relating to my area.
Details are as follows:

Workshop	Date	Funding Support
Managing Plant Costs	24/07/2008	NGIA
Customer Service - Mareeba	11/08/2008	NGIA
Garden Design - Drawing Skills	15/08/2008	NGIA
Photography - Composition	28/08/2008	NGIA
Business on Auto-pilot	23/10/2008	NGIA
Beyond Survival 1 - Financials	9/09/2008	NGIA
Beyond Survival 2 - Financials	6/11/2008	NGIA
Beyond Survival 3 - Financials	4/12/2008	NGIA
Managing Staff Performance	12/11/2008	NGIA
Recruiting & Selecting Staff	12/11/2008	NGIA
EMS For Retail	19/11/2008	NGIA
Managing Plant Costs	27/11/2008	NGIA
Garden Design - Drawing Skills	3/12/2008	NGIA
Business Planning	11/12/2008	NGIA
WHS - Manual Handling (GC)	4/02/2009	WHSQ
WHS - Manual Handling (Bund)	11/02/2009	WHSQ
WHS - Manual Handling (Toow)	25/02/2009	WHSQ
WHS - Manual Handling (SC)	4/03/2009	WHSQ
WHS - Manual Handling (Bris)	11/03/2009	WHSQ
WHS - Manual Handling (Nth QL)	18/03/2009	WHSQ
WHS - Manual Handling (Far Ntl)	25/03/2009	WHSQ

Has a state training program for the next 6 months been submitted to NGIA YES
If No - Reasons:

In addition to workshops other training related activities may include field days, site visits, conference or regional presentations. Please include details of these:

Event	Date
SE Qld Water - Opportunities in new Water Restrictions	#####
Sunshine Coast Branch Meeting - BSDO overview of services	#####
Autumn Green Expo	18 - 19/03/08
NGIA Conference	26 - 29/03/08
ABC Gardening Expo - KidsGrow Display	18 - 20/04/08
FarmBis Presentation - Final Report on Smart Mgt Project	#####
Rural Discovery Day - KidsGrow Presentation	#####
NGIQ State Conference	12 - 13/06/08

Please comment on any other issues related to training, including any praise or concerns you may have about workshop material or suggested improvements

We had a number of workshops scheduled through the six months that were cancelled - unfortunately the current issues and shortage of staff impacted in the number of registrations. A couple of times where we did not have enough participants, the day after we cancelled the workshop we received a number of registrations (too late to reschedule with venues) Businesses are leaving it later and later to register and are hesitant to spend money on training.

Extending Other National Promotions to Whole of Industry

Awards Provide a summary of activity undertaken to promote participation in the awards categories.
(double click on the box to open up word document format)
Advertising in Leaflet magazine, website, e-newsletters / emails, face-to-face presentations to businesses, conference, workshops and formally nominated a number of businesses who should enter.

NextGen Provide a summary of activity undertaken to support the NextGen special interest group in your state.
(double click on the box to open up word document format)
We have tried to promote NextGen through Branch meetings and Leaflet magazine. An article was written for Greenworld magazine as well.

Our NextGen organiser has stepped down from the role. Don & I have, through the board, tried to encourage one of the NGIQ Board Member to take up this mantle, without success. Other attempts to form an organising committee have been unsuccessful. Most comment they are involved in Branch meetings and events and don't want the additional responsibility.
NGIQ plan to organise from our offices another event in next few months in another attempt to get a group to work together.

CNP Provide a summary of activity undertaken to support the CNP program in your state.
(double click on the box to open up word document format)
Promotion of CNP on website, Leaflet magazine, training workshops, conference, face-to-face with members, telephone enquiries, new member packs, branch meeting presentations.

Environmental Extensions Provide a summary of activity undertaken to support the extension of environmental programs in your state (e.g. Wise about Water, Flora for Fauna, World Environment Day)
(double click on the box to open up word document format)
I co-presented at the NGIA Conference a presentation on Environmental Marketing. I also presented an enhanced version of this presentation at the NGIQ conference.

I promote the "Life is a Garden" website to members during meetings and heavily promoted the World Environment Day package to members through Leaflet and email.

Other Relevant Activities

Regional trips and retail outlet visits during 6 month reporting period	2
Retail outlets visited (not including formal audits for AGCAS)	<u>23</u>
	80-90 contacts
Production or allied industry operators visited	<u>3</u>
	25 contacts

Trade Day participation (funding relates to promotion of projects and industry development activities)
(double click on the box to open up word document format)

Promotion of World Environment Day, Wise About Water & NGIA Awards.

Promotion of World Environment Day, Wise About Water & NGIA Awards.

Conference

Provide a summary of activity undertaken to assist in organisation and promotion of State and National Conferences

(double click on the box to open up word document format)

Presentations at both NGIA and NGIQ conferences.

Co-organiser of NGIQ Conference – sourcing and negotiation with Key-note and Con-current Presenters.

Promotion of events to members and non-members through Leaflet articles and face-to-face meetings and telephone contact.

Other relevant activities.

(double click on the box to open up word document format)

- Project Management of WHS Project Grant for the 2007 / 2008 financial year – set up “Safety Website Portal” to help industry to set up their WHS systems & procedures.
- Successful in obtaining another WHS grant of \$60k for the 2008 / 2009 financial year.
- Project management of the ACLH Smart Management Training Project – closing of this project in this period. Involved Final Report and evaluation meetings and presentations to FarmBis.
- Participant on the Queensland Sustainable Lifestyle Horticulture project (DPI).



**Northern Territory
AGCAS Technical Officers Six Monthly Report
Australian Garden Centre Accreditation Scheme**

The purpose of this report is to communicate the AGCAS activities of a State Association to the National AGCAS Advisory Committee and to share AGCAS information with Technical Officers from other States. Please limit your report to two (2) pages.

Author: Jane Dellow Role: Business Skills Development Officer NT Date: 11.07.08
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NT AGCAS Committee Representatives

Name	Business
Estelle Cornell	Allora Gardens Nursery
Geoff Miers	Geoff Miers Garden Solutions

Number of AGCAS Businesses

There are currently 2 AGCAS Businesses in the NT.

Current Fees

AGCAS Membership Annual Fee	\$400.00
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AGCAS Workshops

OH&S Induction for Nurseries x 2 (1 in Alice Springs & 1 in Darwin)
Garden Design Insights (Darwin)

Outline of promotional success

Promotion of AGCAS in the Sunday Territorian NGINT 'Life is a garden' fortnightly column – on-going (articles attached)

NGINT Association Profile detailing all industry initiatives and policies – up-dated and delivered (annually) to key partners and industry stakeholders including NT Govt (Chief Ministers Dept), Dept Primary Industries, Fisheries and Mines, Power & Water Corporation, Darwin City Council, Charles Darwin University, ABC Local Radio, Southern Cross television NT Orchid Spectacular – Industry Display Sponsored by Allora Gardens Nursery
Fred's Pass Rural Show – Industry display with focus on AGCAS, NIASA, CNP, Wise about Water, Flora for Fauna & Our Environment, Your Backyard.

World Environment Day Expo – Industry display with focus on AGCAS, NIASA, CNP, Wise about Water, Flora for Fauna & Our Environment, Your Backyard.

Geoff Miers Garden Solutions AGCAS feature page Centralian Advocate (Alice Springs)

Details of potential opportunities for AGCAS

Still limited due to Bunnings having become the dominant retail outlet in Darwin with the exception of Allora Gardens Nursery. Other retailers are static in growth or only open on weekends in the rural areas however one of these has made inquiries re the scheme.

There is one new garden centre in development and is working with the AGCAS manual as a guide.

Palmerston Garden Supplies has changed hands and the new owners are considering re-establishing the garden centre.

Alice Springs now has an AGCAS Member which should inspire others to adopt the scheme. Several new manuals have been sold since the re-launch in March.

AGCAS will continue to be promoted to industry and public through various communications and promotional events.

Other current issues (including management of any complaints)

Same as previously and as follows:

Many NT industry businesses find it difficult to attract and maintain staff. This is due to both the transient nature of the Territory and the weather extremes and working in hot and humid conditions. There is a significant lack of appropriately trained people in horticulture.

This is inhibiting the opportunities for industry businesses to grow and develop.

Due to the development boom in the NT, there is plenty of alternative work available. Many businesses throughout the Territory are finding it difficult to find adequate numbers of appropriate staff.

AGCAS-6 Monthly report January 1st – June 30th 2008

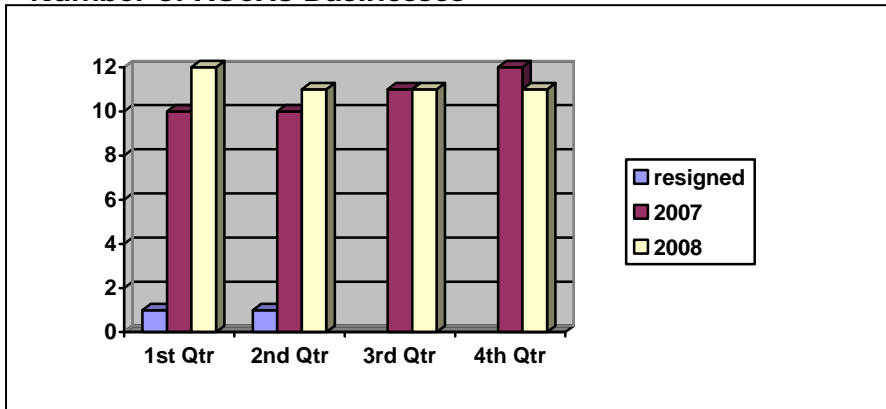
South Australia

Author:	Geoffrey Fuller-Sue Jarvis
Role:	BDO
Date:	July 2008

South Australian AGCAS Committee Representatives

Name	Business
Peter Little-Chair IDC	Van Schaiks Bio-Gro
Steve Neale-Chair AGCAS	Garden Grove Supplies
Robyn Powell	Tupelo Grove Nursery
David Eaton	Ball Australia
Grant Dalwood	NIDO
Geoffrey Fuller	CEO NGISA

Number of AGCAS Businesses



AGCAS Workshops.

No dedicated AGCAS workshops but the following were delivered during the 6 months period.

Responsible Officer	18
Retail Chemical Training	5
Sustainable Landscaping	30
Garden Design	20

Outline of promotional success

Successful promotion to Retail Garden Centres inc some AGCAS members with KidsGrow.

Promotion of the AGCAS at Gardening Australia (Adelaide March 08), NGISA Trade Day (May 2008)

SA Museum (Feb 08)

Monthly interviews with AGCAS Garden Centres on radio 5AA gardening program.

Details of potential opportunities for AGCAS.

The renewed AGCAS has been well received, but I think we should be more proactive in environmental issues and biosecurity. eg weeds etc This is critical to meet the impact SGA is having on our members.



Tasmania
AGCAS Technical Officers Six Monthly Report
Australian Garden Centre Accreditation Scheme

The purpose of this report is to communicate the AGCAS activities of a State Association to the National AGCAS Advisory Committee and to share AGCAS information with Technical Officers from other States. Please limit your report to two (2) pages.

Author :Greg Belbin Role: AGCAS Representative TAS Date: 8/08/08

Tasmania AGCAS Committee Representatives

Name	Business
Greg Belbin Graehm Stoneman	Grow Master Howrah Stonemans Plants Plus

Number of AGCAS Businesses

14

AGCAS Workshops

2 x SGA Training workshops (not funded) 27 attendees

3 x Manual Handling workshops (Funded) 34 attendees

Outline of promotional success

Had 25000 reusable shopping bags produced and distributed around southern Tas with Council logos /AGCAS logo and SGA logo. Very well received and we will endeavor to continue this in conjunction with the Tasmanian councils

Gail and Peter had a NGIT/Accreditation stand at the Waratah Launceston trade day. A lot of interest with 2 new members and several potential accreditation centers interested.

Since Gail started employment in early June she has been around and visited around 40 Garden Centers and Production Nurseries introducing herself and seeing how and what the Tasmanian Industry can offer.

Details of potential opportunities for AGCAS

There is potential for 3 to 5 new Accreditation in Tas. Since we haven,t had anyone employed until June it has been hard to encourage new participants in the schemes. Since Gail Budge starting employment in early June this has certainly created some interest back into the association and what it can offer.

Other current issues (including management of any complaints)

When Wayne Cole left in Feb 07 NGIT went through a review process with Ian McMahon and associates to find the correct path and to better utilize what assets we had in the best and most cost effective way.

Since this review we have employed Gail Budge as office manager and events coordinator and have also just employed David Roberts who will start mid August on all Audits and training programs. This review is available in full if requested.

During this time we have still been operating with Peter bobbie and have put out 3 NGIT newsletters (every 2 months).

NGIV - AGCAS Progress Report:

The Scheme is now progressing well in this state, with all existing members having been re-audited and with four businesses working towards gaining Accreditation.

Part of this is due to the success of the new offer which provides better value for money and part of this is to do with better resourcing of Accreditation generally within the NGIV office. The re-accreditation process has been given more prominence and is now running to a time-table that is of a fixed twelve month cycle with follow-up visits at least twice a year. While this has always been the expectation, resourcing issues in the past have not always seen these goals being met in a timely manner.

There is every reason to expect that AGCAS will continue to prosper in Victoria and the aim is to have 30 members in the scheme by the time of the next report.

AGCAS Manuals:

We have been very proactive in this area. While we have only sold four of the new AGCAS Manuals we have distributed over 30 of the old ones free of charge to any retailer who have expressed interest in the scheme. We have also sent out copies of the old manual free of charge to retailers or companies who we thought would benefit from more exposure to AGCAS and this has included groups like Mitre 10.

In other words, we are using the old manual as a direct marketing too which we can provide at no cost to the interested parties and overcoming any 'value for money' objections.

We then follow this up with sales of the new manual as the retailer signs up for the scheme. This is generating great interest and is the most effective marketing of AGCAS we have ever undertaken.

I don't think any other state has used the old manuals in this way.

AGCAS Committee:

We are re-shaping our committee and this is causing us some considerable problems.

In particular we are having trouble finding a Chair-person willing [or able] to attend the National AGCAS Meetings and this has been made harder again by their falling out of step with the Gift Fairs in Melbourne and Sydney.

Informal meetings of the Committee are typically held at Trade Day and these usually happen every three months. They are not minuted.

I have good lines of informal communication with committee members by way of visits and for regional members, more often simply by phone.

We have approached James Wall recently to both join the committee as chair and to become the Victorian retail representative on the National Committee. We are awaiting a response, but in any case James will not be able to attend the Brisbane meeting.

Key Influencers:

Interestingly, AGCAS seems to have been generating it's own head of steam in the industry in that we have been approached directly by a number of businesses who wish to sign up. Donville Garden Centre is an example. This business is essentially a sand and soil yard supplying to the building trade. They were told they needed to become accredited by Burdett's who are one of their biggest suppliers. We are finding this is becoming something of a pattern of late and it does provide an interesting new direction for us.

Promotion:

Trade Day and our training events still provide us with excellent promotional opportunities. We are also continuing to promote AGCAS at the Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show. I have been invited to judge the upcoming New Zealand Flower & Garden Show and will make use of the opportunity to promote an Accreditation scheme to their industry. They have tried this before but failed to get it going.

Communications Report:

I write the fortnightly E-Newsletters. I am the office co-coordinator of the NGIV Website which has just undergone a major re-vamp and update.

A summary of Communication issues addressed since the last report:

Four state roundup articles for Australian Horticulture. [4 rather than 6 because this is a new service, it will be monthly from now on]

E-Newsletters: At the time of writing I have produced eight of these. They are now a fortnightly publication of one page dealing with current and topical issues with web-links.

Article for Greenworld on the NGIV State Conference.

Updating and co-ordination of NGIV Website in its entirety.

I have been interviewed by the following publications since the last report: The Age newspaper, three times, The Financial Times, The Mildura Times and have been interviewed on radio twice.

Groundswell: To cover just a few of the main issues dealt with in this magazine: NGIV State Conference; a feature article on Jenö Kapitány; The Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show; 2008 A Year Of Challenges, Gross Margin Return on Investment, Climate Change and its Impact on Garden Centre Retailing, Trade Marks and Brand Law, Town & Country Gardens: A Sense of Homely Flair; It's Time for Annual Inspiration.

In Groundswell I also manage 'outside of industry' contributions and these have included articles on Super, on the ACCC's position regarding 'Green Credentials' legal issues surrounding items offered at 'Sale or discount' prices and Succession /Exit Planning.

And there is also a monthly Buyers Page in Groundswell detailing the experiences of retail customers from right across the industry. This last point is important, the majority of customers are not members of NGIA.

Communication to industry is a high priority and this is generally well managed with a good reach into the wider industry, as opposed to member specific channels.

Industry Snapshots:

I have been heavily involved in the formulation and writing of the various Industry Snapshots NGIV has produced. These are aimed at Government and policy makers and seek to explain the position of the industry in relation to issues like climate change, water and MIFGS. They have been instrumental in gaining an increased level of engagement and recognition with government and are viewed as important parts of our advocacy strategy.

I have just concluded a revision of two of the most important of these.

Training:

The schedule for training for retailers for the remainder of 2008 is as follows:

Working with Swinburne Technical University we will be running the following programs.

- Diploma of Business: Commencement date, October.

- Advanced Diploma of Business: Commencement date, October.

Both of these have attracted Federal Government funding which has reduced costs to about 1/5th the normal amount. NGIV is the promoter of these courses and Swinburne is the provider.

- Business Skills Development:

Run through the Office of Small Business this is the third time NGIV, which is the auspicing body, has run this program of 5 workshops and 4 mentoring sessions.

- Succession Planning:

Funded through the Office of Small Business NGIV is able to offer 20 businesses the chance to access specialist advice regarding succession planning. This will consist of 2 workshops and 'in the business' mentoring. If demand is great enough we will run the workshops in regional centres too.

- Skills Store: This is a State Government initiative aimed at gaining formal recognition/qualifications for experienced staff.

The Skills Store will address and sponsor the August Industry Update and the September Tree & Shrub Growers meeting.

- Garden Design Insights and Planting and Garden Design for Garden Centres.

NGIV will offer these in August and September.

Plant Costing Workshop for Retailers scheduled for September.

- Waterworks for Retailers delivered by Chris Rolf. This will be the second time we have run this course.

It has direct sustainability applications and ties in to the AGCAS Environmental program.

- Industry Update: August 12th dealing with Robert Chin's recent trip to the US and Canada and his impressions of the retail scene in these two countries.

Other Events Etc:

A great deal of work is being done in regard to site visits and these continue to be seen as a valuable service by the industry. Indeed the point is often made that owners/managers would like to see development officers more often. In my own case these visits now often revolve around specific commercial issues ranging from cafe management to stock-turn ratios and merchandise management.

I have been very involved in the running of the Bi-annual NGIV State Conference and it's facilitation including speaker selection.

I continue my extensive dealings with Government and these relationships have provided the wider industry with access to continued training opportunities and even discounted formal education benefits.

MIFGS:

I coordinate the Avenue of Achievable Gardens which is the largest display site at the Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show [by far!] This year we show-cased 14 gardens designed and installed by students from 4 different TAFE colleges, along with a number of sponsor sites and all signage and marketing. This was a spectacular success and is seen as an important and integral part of MIFGS. It generate enormous media interest. This year 42,000 recipe cards were handed out to MIFGS visitors, the entire print run. Plans are already underway for 2009 and all of the colleges have signed up and we have competition among potential sponsors. Some sponsors have worked with us on this for 8 years.

Garden centre accreditation is always promoted on the Avenue of Achievable Gardens bringing it's message directly to well over 100,000 people.

As a member of the Horticultural Media Association I attend a number of industry functions where I am able to address industry issues. These include the Scott's media launch and the Yates media event. I also attend the AGM of the Hort Media Association.

Other Training Issues:

The preceding six months is a relatively quiet time for training for NGIV, typically there will be more offered over the later half of the year.

There continues to be problems access suitable trainers and the case of Debra Templar illustrates this. We have used Debra a lot over the last four years and she is suffering a bit from simply being over exposed. This issue is very apparent in regard to merchandising and marketing although it is true across a number of other areas.

WE are also finding take-up of training opportunities has been less this year and a number had to be cancelled/postponed due to poor take-up.

I continue to work closely with Garden Centres Australia which provides good access to businesses which are not NGIA members. Groundswell also serves the wider industry well here.

Funding Applications:

I have written funding applications for a State Audit Program for Water Use in Nurseries.

An application to the National Packaging Covenant for recycling polypropylene pots.

A separate application for funding to the Victorian Save Water trust for water use monitoring in nurseries.



Western Australia
AGCAS Technical Officers Six Monthly Report
Australian Garden Centre Accreditation Scheme

The purpose of this report is to communicate the AGCAS activities of a State Association to the National AGCAS Advisory Committee and to share AGCAS information with Technical Officers from other States. Please limit your report to two (2) pages.

Author: Emma Iddison Role: Business Development Officer Date: 29/7/08
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WA AGCAS Committee Representatives

Name	Business
Joanne Harris (Chair)	Guildford Town Garden Centre - Guildford
Jackie Hooper	Zanthorrea Nursery – Maida Vale
Bruce Wright	Miaflora Garden Centre - Inglewood

Number of AGCAS Businesses

- There are currently sixteen AGCAS businesses.
- One large garden centre is currently still operating, but is on the market at present. This is due to increase in land prices and the development of land around the garden centre for housing.
- There are four garden centres that are I am currently working with to gain accreditation.

AGCAS Workshops

- ❑ Garden Design Insights – 5th March 2008 (11 attendees)
- ❑ Water Management and Irrigation Workshop for Garden Centres – 8th May 2008 (9 attendees)
- ❑ Local Area Marketing - Debra Templar
2nd April 2008 (18 attendees)
- ❑ Waterwise Training for the Watercorporations Waterwise Garden Centres and Nurseries - 28th May 2008
- ❑ Waterwise Garden Assessment Training for the Water Corporations Waterwise Garden Centres and nurseries – 4th June 2008.
- ❑ Retailers night – John Stanley – 18th June 2008. Retailing opportunities in a changing market. (30 attendees)

Outline of promotional success

- ❑ Successfully organised and coordinated a promotional AGCAS stand at Garden Week 2008 to market the benefits of shopping at an AGCAS centre to the public. This site was designed primarily to give exposure to and marketing support to the AGCAS centres. The site at Garden Week was a great success. We collected approx. 800 names to be used as a database for the AGCAS centres to use in their marketing. The site attracted lots of visitors and we talked to many people regarding the benefits of shopping at an accredited garden centre. Approx. 25,000 visitors to Garden Week.
- ❑ Strong consumer links developed with **Waterwise Garden Centres** via the Water Corporations advertising and marketing support of the Waterwise Garden Centre Program.

Details of potential opportunities for AGCAS

- ❑ Investigating funding opportunities in relation to AGCAS to enhance and promote the scheme at a state level with a project entitled “Hygiene Protocols for Retail Garden Centres”
- ❑ Potential for environmental carrier bags and boot liners is being determined for support at a state level

Other current issues (including management of any complaints)

- ❑ Most reaccreditations have been completed for 2008, with a few remaining to complete by the end of August 2008.
- ❑ One of the biggest issues for Garden centres in WA is the shortage of staff. There are so many employment opportunities in WA. This together with the booming resources sector means that potential staff are seeking employment in better paid industries elsewhere. Staff turnover is also high.
- ❑ The cost of living in WA is also reaching an all time high. Garden centres are just starting to report that their turnover is down over the past few months. Perhaps this is an indication of consumers having less disposable income as the cost of living rises. This may have an impact on AGCAS, as businesses start to count every cent.
- ❑ The member garden centres received the relaunch of AGCAS very well. However, most of them have not taken up the benefits of the new scheme (Benchmarking and CNP).
- ❑ Water Licensing. NGIWA has conducted a Water Licensing survey to find out if any businesses are experiencing difficulties in relation to:
 - i). Existing licenses/allocation
 - ii). Metering/recording
 - iii). Monitoring
 - iv). Usage vs. licensed amounts

Many garden centres will have attention directed to the monitoring of licensed allocations, an important consideration for current and future needs. An implication that may well affect their future trading.

