

Horticulture Innovation Australia

Final Report

Management of Technical, Research and Market Development projects for the Nursery Industry 2013-2016

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NY12014

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Contents

Summary	3
Keywords	5
Introduction	6
Methodology	8
Outputs	11
Outcomes	12
Evaluation and Discussion	14
Recommendations	16
Scientific Refereed Publications	17
Intellectual Property/Commercialisation	17
References	17
Acknowledgements	17
Appendices	17

Summary

The Nursery Industry Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) 2012-2016 was developed to prioritise levy investment. The SIP identified the following three areas as priority areas to address:

1. Grow the market for plants and greenlife in the urban environment
2. Communicate the benefit of plants to all industry sectors, influences at all levels of government and consumers
3. Ensure industry has processes in place re governance and biosecurity to enable businesses to operate effectively.

This project funded a position in Nursery and Garden Industry Australia (NGIA) to deliver on the above priority areas and to address the following activities:

1. Develop, influence and negotiate with stakeholders on current and emerging issues including biosecurity, climate change and urban forestry
2. Communicate and manage stakeholders with regards to industry research and market development projects including advocacy and policy positions
3. Manage the development, analysis and execution of policy on current and emerging issues
4. Oversee and manage technical and environmental issues that impact the sustainability of the industry
5. Industry environmental, technical and issues management.

This project also directly addressed several key industry issues detailed within the Nursery and Garden Industry 2010-2015 Strategic Plan to ensure the Australian nursery and garden industry (NGI) has the capacity to respond to growth opportunities and challenges that impact on its sustainable development.

Outputs from this project included:

- Project management and governance framework across the nursery levy funded research and development portfolio
- Technical communications through industry representation on relevant committees and attendance at meetings, forums and conferences in Australia and overseas
- The development of strategy and governance/administration documents
- The development of industry policy and position papers
- Discussion papers for public release and briefing papers for industry
- Targeted and relevant communications developed and delivered using a number of communication channels;
- Implementation of research activities on priority technical and market development issues;
- Secured funding as required for key projects from non-levy funding sources
- Twice yearly meetings held for both national accreditation and certification and environment committees
- Oversight of the nursery Industry Development Officer (IDO) Network providing extension services

to the whole of industry

The key outcomes from this project have been:

- Ongoing representation of the nursery sector as the signatory to the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD) managed by Plant Health Australia (PHA).
- Providing technical input, links to industry and oversight and contribution to governance of the 2020 Vision Program
- Meeting with State Nursery and Garden Industry Boards and attend member and stakeholder meetings to provide updates on nursery levy funded issues
- Worked with Hort Innovation on the development and commissioning of a new biosecurity program for the Australian nursery industry.
- Continued management of a number of nursery levy funded projects

This project commenced in June 2013 and was scheduled to finish in May 2016. However, given the transition of Horticulture Australia Limited to Horticulture Innovation Australia, a variation was negotiated on the research agreement and it was amended to complete the project in December 2015. Overall the project did deliver against the stated outputs and outcomes but it did encounter a number of challenges, disruptions and changes to the project resources and operating environment due to:

1. Horticulture Australia Limited transitioning to Horticulture Innovation Australia during the period of the project, resulting in the variation of the term of the project.
2. The Nursery and Garden Industry Australia (NGIA) project leader changed three times during the course of the project which effected the knowledge, understanding, continuity and operation of the project.

The recommendations from this project are:

1. Allocate a proportion of levy funds to support a resource to provide oversight of the R&D portfolio for nursery levy funded projects.
2. Endeavour to maintain continuity in management of project portfolios. If management is to change ensure the mechanisms are in place to capture and retain project information, knowledge and history.
3. Ensure there is a mechanism to develop the project portfolio to ensure priority projects are commissioned to delivery maximum benefit and value to levy payers.

Having oversight of the nursery industry levy funded R&D and marketing portfolio, through the project leader at NGIA, has overall been beneficial to the nursery industry and HAL/Hort Innovation. The importance of having a resource to manage a project portfolio should not be underestimated or underfunded.

Keywords

Project management; Communication; Biosecurity; Policy; Greenlife; Industry Development; Urban; Coordination; Portfolio; Strategy

Introduction

This project built on the three year project NY10001 Management of Technical, Research and Environmental projects for the Nursery Industry 2010-2013. Project NY10001 enabled the appointment of a National Environmental & Technical Policy Manager (NETPM) at NGIA, who undertook the following key activities:

- Review of quarantine requirements and their impact on market access and intra- and inter-state plant movements
- Industry biosecurity preparedness to exotic plant pest incursions and implications on import and export
- Addressing rising costs and access to inputs, namely water, energy and fertiliser inefficiencies within the nursery industry supply chain and drafting submissions as appropriate
- Transitioning industry to a carbon economy with the introduction of the carbon tax
- Environmental compliance in relation to maintaining a sustainable business footprint.

Key outputs from NY10001 included:

- New nursery industry policy positions on Climate Change, Quarantine and Biosecurity and Environmental Sustainability
- Representation of industry on several issues including The Future of Post Entry Quarantine Arrangements and the Review on the draft Australian's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010-2020
- Development of nursery industry stakeholder relations across levy payers and government, research and academic institutions
- Involvement in the formation of the National Urban Forest Alliance (NUFA). NUFA is a coalition of key not for profit associations, councils, research bodies and private companies involved with management and development of the Australian Urban Forest.

Following the completion of NY10001 and the development of the Nursery Industry SIP 2012-2016, this project was developed to realign the NETPM role to address the following threats that had been identified by industry:

- Government policy can either help or hinder increased expenditure in horticultural activities and greenlife purchasing in all sectors
- Ongoing drought and water restrictions and regulation
- Lack of accurate industry data to measure impacts and values of investment activities
- Limitations on key resources - particularly water, skilled labour and efficient transport
- Biosecurity policies of states can severely impact plant movement
- A redefinition of the Industry Development Officer Network role to deliver greater focus on developing the industry and increasing the links with accreditation and technical schemes and investments.

In order to address these threats and achieve the objectives of this project – NY12014, the following outcomes and activities were identified as being need to be achieved and undertaken:

SIP Outcome	Vehicle for delivery – through NY12014
Better targeting of IDOs resulting in on-ground implementation of activities relevant to all Industry Strategic Plan objectives.	New administration and governance framework under NY12006 (Industry Development Network for the Nursery Industry).
Strengthened government relationships resulting in strong support for industry initiatives.	Development and coordination of targeted policy positions for industry issues through the provision of technical knowledge and working collaboratively with all levels of government.
Enhanced extension and training effort resulting in enhanced adoption of Best Management Practice.	National management of the Nursery Production Farm Management System and extension of key tools and resources that are develop through levy and externally funded research programs.
Strengthened industry R&D capacity resulting in greater productivity.	Management of the industry research and development program as well as business development through external stakeholders.
Increase greenlife in urban landscapes.	Manage all activities relating to the National Urban Forest Alliance (NUFA) including business development, research, development and communication activities.
Enhancement of capacity to prepare and manage pest and exotic pests (biosecurity).	Sound policy, representation with government's and investment in support tools and resources for the nursery industry.

Methodology

To address the objectives and priority investment areas identified in the Nursery Industry SIP 2012-2016, this project was endorsed to fund the National Research and Market Development Manager (NRMDM) at NGIA, which was a redefined position to more accurately represent the role from the NETPM of NY10001. The position reported to the NGIA CEO on a formal basis monthly and the NGIA Board via progress reporting quarterly. The NGIA CEO and NGIA Board served as the Project Reference Group. The Project Reference Group provided input to activities and key performance indicators and feedback to the NRMDM.

The NRMDM addressed the following key strategies:

1. Develop, influence and negotiate with stakeholders on current and emerging issues including biosecurity, climate change and urban forestry
2. Communicate and manage stakeholders with regards to industry research and market development projects including advocacy and policy positions
3. Manage the development, analysis and execution of policy on current and emerging issues
4. Oversee and manage technical and environmental issues that impact the sustainability of the industry
5. Industry environmental, technical and issues management.

The activities identified to address the five strategies were:

1. Develop, influence and negotiate with stakeholders on current and emerging issues including biosecurity, climate change and urban forestry
 - Develop and manage relationships with Local, State and Federal Government and non-government stakeholders.
 - Develop and promote NUFA with key stakeholder groups of influence
 - Brief the nursery industry on issues for increased awareness and growth opportunities, utilising industry communication channels (NY12011) and the IDO Network (NY12006)
 - Oversee and manage the drafting of submissions on a variety of technical issues (the project provided technical input (R&D) and did not undertake advocacy/agripolitical activities) covering legislative, market access, environmental, research and development to Local, State and Federal Government, discussion papers for public release and briefing papers for industry
 - Represent the nursery industry at a technical expertise level at public forums and other meetings on key industry issues
2. Communicate and manage stakeholders with regards to industry research and market

development projects including advocacy and policy position documents

- Provide support and information to key stakeholders with regard to raising the awareness of the environmental credentials and urban forest positioning of the industry with key external bodies and the community
 - Establish and maintain relationships with key stakeholder groups including not for profits, other industry associations and governments
 - Establish and maintain effective communication networks with levy payers with regards to levy programs and the environmental credentials and urban forest positioning of the industry; this will be achieved through NY12012 (Technical Communications and Policy Development for the Australian Nursery Industry) and NY12011 (Nursery and Garden Industry Communications 2013-2015)
 - Oversee and develop communications, written and oral, with key stakeholders, government bodies, peak industry bodies and green industry groups
 - Communicate the industry's policy positions to key stakeholders
 - Manage the Industry Crisis Management Plan which is funded by NGIA
 - Manage and oversee the development of the NGIA national website (NY12011) with research, development, extension and market development activity outcomes
 - Write articles, undertake conference and workshop presentations and participate in other relevant forums which inform, educate and motivate industry on key issues
 - Be the primary point of contact, and participate in relevant forums relating to the environment, industry research and market development programs for other horticultural and agricultural bodies, media agencies and key stakeholder groups only in accordance with established relevant industry procedures
 - Assist in informing industry and the general community on achievements and issues of the nursery industry's policies & objectives
3. Manage the development, analysis and execution of policy on current and emerging issues
- Manage the following key policy areas:
 - Environmental Sustainability
 - Water Management
 - Invasive Plants
 - Climate Change and Variability
 - Quarantine and Biosecurity
 - Plant Labelling
 - Urban Forestry and Liveable Communities
 - Develop relationships and seek input from key stakeholders, including other peak industry bodies, Hort Innovation, state and territory nursery and garden associations during the development, review and updating of policy positions
 - Provide technical policy advice to CEO and stakeholder groups including not for profits, other industry associations and governments as required to represent the nursery industry's interests on key issues
 - Provide technical policy advice to the Board of Directors, NGIA CEO, state and territory Associations on policy issues for decision or information
 - Provide technical policy advice to key stakeholders including media only in accordance with established relevant industry procedure

- Provide technical policy advice on areas the industry needs to respond
 - Act as the spokesperson on industry policy positions as appropriate
4. Oversee and manage technical and environmental issues that impact the sustainability of the industry
- Initiate research on priority technical and environmental issues and other potential or emerging issues in accordance with the Nursery Industry Strategic Plan
 - Develop relationships with researchers interested in programs focused on the benefits of greenlife as well as research that address industry needs
 - Identify critical programs of industry in alignment with existing strategies and industry expectations
 - Manage all research and development activities for the nursery industry from project conceptualisation through to communication of results
 - Look for and where available take up opportunities to extend funding through leveraging with other funding bodies
5. Industry environmental, technical and issues management
- Service the national accreditation and certification and environment committees including agendas and minutes and manage NY13001 (Industry Development and Capacity Building using the Nursery Production Farm Management System 2013 - 2015)
 - Manage industry development officer activity (NY12006) and ensure the network remain up to date on relevant environmental, technical and policy issues
 - Complete all relevant reports to Hort Innovation and other funding bodies in a timely manner including initial project proposals as well as milestone and final reports

During the period June 2013 - August 2014 the NRMDM was a 1 FTE position. Dr Anthony Kachenko was in the role during this period. Dr Kachenko resigned from NGIA in August 2014 and from August 2014 - June 2015 the project was managed by the NGIA CEO Mr Robert Prince. Mr Prince had tendered his resignation in November 2015 but had agreed to stay with NGIA until June 2015 or until a replaced CEO had been recruited. Mr Peter Vaughan started with NGIA in April 2015 and following a handover period with Mr Prince assumed the management responsibilities for the project in July 2015.

Outputs

This project included the management of the following nursery levy funded projects:

- NY13029 Research and Development Program 2014/2015 for the Production Nursery Industry
- NY12011 Nursery and Garden Industry Communications 2013-2015
- NY12012 Technical Communications and Policy Development for the Australian Nursery Industry
- NY12006 Industry Development Network for the Nursery Industry 2012-2016
- NY13702 Nursery Industry National Conference and Regional Technical Conferences
- NY13002 Market Development through National Urban Forest Alliance (NUFA)

The outputs from this project as a result of the management of the above projects included:

- Meeting reports developed and circulated to industry representatives (e.g. State Associations, NGIA Board and the IDO network) following industry and Local, State and Federal Government and non-government stakeholder meetings;
- The development of strategy and governance/administration documents, resources and tools through NUFA activities
- The development of industry policy and position papers covering legislative, market access, environmental, research and development issues for presentation to Local, State and Federal Government
- Discussion papers for public release and briefing papers for industry
- Targeted and relevant communications developed and delivered using a number of communication channels;
- Implementation of research activities on priority technical and market development issues;
- Secured funding as required for key projects from non-levy funding sources
- Twice yearly meetings held for both national accreditation and certification and environment committees
- Industry provided with Crisis Management facilities through the NGIA funded 24 hour Crisis Management hotline – it provides a framework in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from a domestic or international crisis situation that could possibly affect the Australian Nursery Industry.
- Industry Development Officer Network providing extension services to the whole of industry
- Sound governance framework exercised and administered for all projects managed through this project

Outcomes

Despite the transition of the leadership of this project twice and shortening of its terms, NGIA staff have continued to deliver the objectives, outputs and outcomes identified in the project proposal.

The key activities and outcomes from this project have been:

- Ongoing representation of the nursery sector as the signatory to the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD) managed by Plant Health Australia (PHA). Representation included on the National Management Group and management of representation on the Consultative Committee of Emergency Plant Pests. Representation of the nursery industry at the PHA EPPRD signatories meeting and PHA annual general meeting. The key outcomes from this activity is to ensure the industry's awareness and preparedness for any plant pest incursions.
- Management of NGIA's continued partnership in the Cooperative Research Centre for Low Carbon Living with a watching brief on the research being conducted as it relates to green infrastructure being used to mitigate the impacts of climate change and to ensure any opportunities are captured and disseminated for the nursery industry levy payers. Four PhD students have been funded with support from the nursery levy within the CRC. Their research is on-going beyond the life of this project but will be monitored to ensure any outputs that benefit industry are captured.
- Working on the development and then attendance of work in progress meetings for the 2020 Vision Program and providing funding oversight, governance through the NGIA Board, technical input, strategic direction and advice on aspects of this nursery marketing levy funded program. The key outcome from the 2020 Vision Program is the increased awareness of the importance of green space in urban areas which will hopefully deliver increased sales of green life in the future. The key metrics for the program have been around communication reach with further assessment on sales and community impacts being conducted later in the program.
- Meeting with State Nursery and Garden Industry Boards and attend member and stakeholder meetings to provide updates on industry issues, in particular the operation of Horticulture Innovation Australia (Hort Innovation) and the management of the nursery levy for R&D and marketing activities. The key outcome is the State NGI Associations having a greater understanding of levy funded activities, understanding the outputs from projects and communicating details on the R&D projects.
- Based on the administrative and management work in projects NY12011 and NY12012 (refer below for project titles), NGIA worked with Hort Innovation on the development and commissioning of a new communications program for the Australian nursery industry. The outcome has a partnership arrangement between NGIA and Cox Inall Communications to combine the communications networks and channels of NGIA with the technical writing abilities of Cox Inall.
- Worked with Hort Innovation on the development and commissioning of a new biosecurity program for the Australian nursery industry. This will deliver key outcomes for industry through continued awareness and preparedness of biosecurity risk areas and the continued development of BioSecure HACCP for intra- and inter- state movement of plant material through harmonization of quarantine protocols with the state jurisdictions.
- Continued management of nursery levy funded projects including:

- NY13029 Research and Development Program 2014/2015 for the Production Nursery Industry
- NY12011 Nursery and Garden Industry Communications 2013-2015
- NY12012 Technical Communications and Policy Development for the Australian Nursery Industry
- NY12006 Industry Development Network for the Nursery Industry 2012-2016
- NY13702 Nursery Industry National Conference and Regional Technical Conferences
- NY13002 Market Development through National Urban Forest Alliance

This project provided overall management and oversight for the projects listed above and their final reports will provide the evidence and details for the activities completed, outputs developed and outcomes delivered.

Evaluation and Discussion

The Nursery Industry SIP 2012-2016 identified that greater emphasis on technology transfer and adoption capabilities, resulting in on-ground implementation of activities relevant to all Nursery Industry SIP 2012-2016 objectives is required for all levy funded activities. This project endeavoured to maximise the adoption of outputs from levy funded activities through the coordinated management and integration of relevant industry programs, which encompassed all research, development and extension activities as well as key external stakeholder and market development activities.

The target audience for the outputs of this project were primarily production nurseries and nursery industry associations. Secondary target audiences were stakeholders including all levels of Government, other peak industry bodies and non-government organisations, such as academic and research institutions.

This project created opportunities for nursery industry levy payers, in particular production nurseries, to improve productivity and profitability by reducing costs of production or increasing demand for greenlife. This occurred through a range of mechanisms including:

- Strengthened government relationships resulting in strong support for industry initiatives, programs and policy positions, in particular for plant biosecurity
- Strengthened relationships with key stakeholder groups and state/territory industry associations through groups such as NUFA
- Technical input, industry linkages and governance for the 2020 Vision Program marketing initiative
- Oversight to all NGIA delivered R&D projects.
- Providing the resources to administer the industry development officer network to promote the outputs of levy funded R&D that contribute to achieve best management practices through the nursery production farm management system – Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme, Australia.

As noted in the Nursery Industry SIP 2012-2016, the need to incorporate good communication mechanisms into all industry activities is the modus operandi by which the industry can make better informed decisions through engagement of industry members, while also building constructive relationships with the industry's diverse stakeholders and partners. Consequently, a variety of communication mechanisms were utilised including:

- Technical Nursery Papers
- Web blog (www.yourlevyatwork.com.au)
- Facebook (www.facebook.com/nurseryandgardenindustry)
- Twitter (https://twitter.com/NGI_NEWS)
- You Tube (www.youtube.com/user/ausngi)
- NGIA web site
- NGIA communications to members and levy payers

Other approaches to engage with levy payers and the broader industry stakeholders included forums, workshops and conferences (National and Regional Technical). A range of approaches and communication channels are used to engage levy payers to make them aware of levy funded activities. The use of social media for the nursery is an emerging method of communication, but given the demography of the industry it appears written information (eg nursery papers), the telephone and face to face interaction are the best ways to make contact on technical and extension issues. It will be interesting to see how the industry requests for information to be provided going forward with the changing communications environment and the gradual changing demographics of business owners.

The project leader managed the National Technical and Policy Officer (NY12012) and had oversight of the delivery of Nursery and Garden Industry Communications (NY12011). This was an important interaction to assist with the delivery of outputs from this project NY12014. A key component of this project was to oversee the role of the Technical and Policy Officer and the development of policies, submissions and technical communications and extension material.

Adoption of some activities managed by this project may also occur through external regulation and or incentive, particularly in relation to Industry accreditation programs. The areas of activity most covered by this have been biosecurity and the Nursery Production Farm Management System (NPFMS). Outputs have contributed to the development of the new NY15004 Nursery Industry Biosecurity Program and its links to BioSecure HACCP as a module in the NPFMS.

This project commenced in June 2013 and was scheduled to finish in May 2016. However, given the transition of Horticulture Australia Limited to Horticulture Innovation Australia, a variation was negotiated on the research agreement and it was amended to complete the project in December 2015. Overall the project did deliver against the stated outputs and outcomes but it did encounter a number of challenges, disruptions and changes to the project resources and operating environment due to:

1. Horticulture Australia Limited transitioning to Horticulture Innovation Australia during the period of the project, resulting in the variation of the term of the project.
2. The Nursery and Garden Industry Australia (NGIA) project leader changed three times during the course of the project which effected the knowledge, understanding, continuity and operation of the project.

Having oversight of the nursery industry levy funded R&D and marketing portfolio, through the project leader at NGIA, has overall been beneficial to the nursery industry and HAL/Hort Innovation. The importance of having a resource to manage a project portfolio should not be underestimated or underfunded. The role should be managed with appropriate governance and oversight. The development of the levy funded project portfolio needs to be managed carefully to ensure the highest priority projects are conducted that will deliver maximum benefit and value to industry. Given the changing management and early completion of this project there has not been any formal evaluation undertaken.

Recommendations

The recommendations from this project are:

1. Allocate a proportion of levy funds to support a resource to oversight the R&D and marketing portfolio for nursery levy funded project.
2. Endeavour to maintain continuity in management of project portfolios. If management is to change ensure the mechanisms are in place to capture and retain project information, knowledge and history
3. Ensure there is a mechanism to develop the project portfolio to ensure priority projects are commissioned to delivery maximum benefit and value to levy payers

Scientific Refereed Publications

None to report.

Intellectual Property/Commercialisation

No commercial IP has been generated from this project.

References

Nil.

Acknowledgements

The input and support from levy payers and nursery industry stakeholders needs to be acknowledged.

Appendices

Nil.