

**Ongoing development
of the Nursery
Industry Accreditation
Scheme Australia**

Alison Morris
Nursery & Garden Industry
Australia (NGIA)

Project Number: NY04014 & NY04504

NY04014 & NY04504

This report is published by Horticulture Australia Ltd to pass on information concerning horticultural research and development undertaken for the nursery industry.

The research contained in this report was funded by Horticulture Australia Ltd with the financial support of the nursery industry.

All expressions of opinion are not to be regarded as expressing the opinion of Horticulture Australia Ltd or any authority of the Australian Government.

The Company and the Australian Government accept no responsibility for any of the opinions or the accuracy of the information contained in this report and readers should rely upon their own enquiries in making decisions concerning their own interests.

ISBN 0 7341 1507 5

Published and distributed by:

Horticultural Australia Ltd

Level 1

50 Carrington Street

Sydney NSW 2000

Telephone: (02) 8295 2300

Fax: (02) 8295 2399

E-Mail: horticulture@horticulture.com.au

© Copyright 2007



Know-how for Horticulture™



**Nursery & Garden Industry
Australia**

Final Report

HAL Project: NY04014 and NY04504

March 30, 2007

Introduction

This is a final report following on from the Milestone Report, dated 20 June 2006 for projects NY04014 and NY04504 (report attached) that covers initiatives in that milestone report identified as remaining incomplete. It covers both the administration of the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA) and industry and stakeholder marketing of NIASA.

The administration and development of NIASA was directed towards maintenance and enhancement, and the NIASA marketing was very focussed on both raising the profile of the accreditation scheme within the industry, and promoting the benefits of the scheme to landscape architects, local governments, developers and garden centres.

Summary of Progress

Sponsorship of Landscape Expo

NIASA were one of the major sponsors of this Sydney based exhibition, held in July 2006. The sponsorship consisted of a prominent stand, the distribution of NIASA information, acknowledgment of sponsorship on all promotional material, and the collection of a visitor data base for follow up by the IDO's. The sponsorship was a vital step in increasing NIASA's profile in the landscaping industry.

Sponsorship of IPPS Conference

NIASA was the major sponsor for this conference held in July 2006 in Brisbane, in return receiving branding on the conference satchel, signage, a stand, sponsorship of a conference lunch and free attendance for several IDO's to discuss the importance of NIASA accreditation and purchases. The outcomes of the sponsorship were generating an awareness of accreditation and the benefits that can accrue with accreditation.

Generic web pages

These were formatted and made available for all accredited NIASA businesses with the aim of helping NIASA businesses with an internet presence and a marketing opportunity

Committee meeting

The NIASA Industry Development Officers and the NIASA Committee met in June 2006 in Melbourne for a committee meeting and a mock accreditation. Minutes from those meetings have been recorded and distributed, and are attached

Promotional Mailout to Landscape Contractors

As part of a plan to engage the landscaping industry more closely with NIASA, 500 landscape gardeners were contacted at the end of 2006 via mail with targeted promotional material that included:

- A letter of introduction
- A free copy of the Trade Register
- A NIASA brochure
- A promotional notepad branded NIASA.

Ecohort

The Ecohort Manual has been designed, printed and distributed to State Associations, and is being marketed via the IDO's to accredited and non-accredited nurseries.

Ecohort is important to the growth of the NIASA accreditation scheme and to the continued championing of continuous improvement towards best practice for the nursery industry.
Costs of printing this material were shared between this project and the EMS project.

Revised accreditation check list

This was undertaken and revised accordingly after the June NIASA Committee meetings and mock accreditation. The revised checklist has been sent to all state associations for incorporation into accreditation guidelines

Annual Operating Plan

This plan was compiled, approved by the NIASA Committee, and implemented accordingly

Co-op Funding

This funding was distributed as per on-going criteria to state associations to assist with local NIASA promotion

NIASA Current and Planned Projects

Major retail buyer kits and visits

Expenditure

Generic Web site	\$ 700
Committee Meeting, travel and accomm	\$13,500
Co-op funding	\$10,000
NIASA contribution Ecohort/Criteria Reprint	\$15,371
Sponsorship of IPPS	\$ 1,500
Mail out to landscapers	\$ 9,500
Advertising	250
Database	\$ 1,500
Storage	\$ 500
Total	\$52,821

Of the \$120,000 allocated by IAC 05/06, the \$30,000 marketing fund remaining to be paid on the Final Report is not required and needs to be returned to nursery funds.

Next Steps

Outcomes and future directions

It will be important to continue highlighting NIASA's process of continuous improvement towards best practice for the nursery industry, with the long term end result of engaging major plant buying groups with the industry. These groups include all levels of government, developers, builders and landscape architects and 'big box' retail groups

Appendices

To support this Final Milestone report detailing the outcomes of Project NY04014 and NY04504 the following documents have been provided:

- Milestone Report for NY04014 and NY04504
- NIASA Committee Minutes June 2006
- NIASA TOG Meeting Minutes June 2006
- Ecohort
- Revised NIASA checklist



Know-how for Horticulture™



**Nursery & Garden Industry
Australia**

**Milestone Report
HAL Project: NY04014 & NY04504
20 June 2006**

**Nursery Industry
Accreditation Scheme
Australia (NIASA)
2005/6**

Jenny Lambert
CEO
Nursery and Garden Industry Australia

PO Box 907
EPPING NSW 1710
Ph 02 98765200
Fax 02 9876 6360

NY04014 & NY04504 NIASA

Jenny Lambert has written this report as part of the reporting requirements of Horticultural Australia Limited (HAL). Industry funding from the Nursery Products Levy and HAL, and the time and energy provided by the members of the various state and national committees, is acknowledged.

~ Disclaimer ~

Any recommendations contained in this publication do not necessarily represent current Horticulture Australia policy. No person should act on the basis of the contents of this publication, whether as to matters of fact or opinion or other content, without obtaining specific, independent professional advice in respect of the matters set out in this publication.

Introduction

In the 2005/6 Nursery Industry Investment plan, \$45,000 was allocated to the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA) for maintenance and enhancement, and \$75,000 towards promotion of the scheme.

During 2005/6, the opportunity was taken to review both the NIASA and AGCAS schemes to ensure that the structure and direction of the schemes was continuing to meet the industry's needs. The review also enabled the schemes to be realigned with the industry's revised strategic plan, issued in December 05.

2005/6 for NIASA can thus be summarised in three areas:

- Maintenance of the scheme
- Outcomes of Review
- Planned activity to complete 05/06 outcomes.

Maintenance & Marketing of NIASA

Throughout 2005/6 the following activities have been undertaken:

- Sponsorship of the inaugural Landscape Expo in Sydney. This was first step in engaging potential customers of NIASA products from outside the traditional customer base. Arrangements have been made to continue the expansion of the NIASA market.
- Promotion of the NIASA and its benefits to the landscape sector through a trade stand display at the Landscape Expo. This was a targeted promotion aimed at engaging exponents of the landscape industry with NIASA key contacts.
- The development and design of additional material for incorporation into the Best Management Practice Guidelines:
 - Water use – a new chapter 4 was included into the guidelines on Water Management and a review of the Water Management Best Practice Guidelines saw this publication form an appendix to NIASA.
 - In-ground Plant Production – a new appendix was created providing more detailed information for inground producers

The new material was circulated to all NIASA members and is available for sale on the NGIA website.

- Marketing was undertaken for the updated NIASA Best Practice Guidelines including via NGIA website, Clippings and through State Association newsletters.
- Committee Meetings were held in February and June 06. These meetings were constructive and have helped provide ongoing direction for the whole of the NIASA scheme. The next meeting is scheduled for December 06.
- The environmental management system module for NIASA, was drafted and named Ecohort. Ecohort was accepted as a voluntary module extension for the NIASA scheme.
- Major retail buyer contacts identified through key industry contact and general desk research. A plan is being constructed to approach these buyers with strong involvement from state representatives and prominent industry figures.
- Advertising space has been booked with Outdoor Design Source to promote NIASA to outdoor industries including developers, builders, architects, landscapers and the like. Universal publications has some other industry journals that will be of interest in the future promotion of NIASA including promotion of 2006 National Production Nursery Award winners.

- Sponsorship for HIA and ALIA were investigated for 2006. Unfortunately there were no availabilities and alternative opportunities are being investigated. We continue to investigate HIA and ALIA opportunities for 2007.
- NIASA Sponsorship of IPPS Conference successfully undertaken. NIASA received good exposure through signage, trade stands and delegate promotional material.
- NISAA Heads of Agreement and Terms & Conditions were approved by the National NIASA Committee and State CEO's and have been signed State Directors.
- HAL 06/07 operating plan completed, submitted and approved to continue the direction determined by the NIASA Committee in 2006.
- Market Research on share of NIASA product in the market costed and submitted to Technical Officers Group for consideration and future implementation.

Expenditure to mid June can be summarised as follows:

Committee meetings, travel	\$31,000
Marketing	\$3,650
Advertising/ coop	\$5,000
Banners, signs	\$500
Printing, design,	\$31,000
Admin, post, storage, misc etc	\$4,000
Legal fees, trade marks	\$5,000
	\$80,150

Review of Accreditation

In November 2005 deliberations at the Strategic Plan review highlighted the need to review the accreditation schemes. The business plan in part said as follows:

NGIA needs to continue to manage effectively both NIASA and AGCAS. However, in addition to ongoing management, following the review of the strategic plan and question marks over the marketability of particularly AGCAS to the consumer in its current form, it is timely that we look more fundamentally at the schemes in 2006.

Both AGCAS and NIASA were created and promoted as encouraging and then accrediting best business practice. However, to many operators, the effort and cost to reach "best practice" is not perceived as being balanced by the rewards or benefits. Arguably, in concentrating on best practice, this has resulted in both schemes currently finding it difficult to attract new participants.

As we look at adding new chapters and elements into both schemes (EMS/HACCP, etc.) we are moving the goalposts even further away from the remainder of the industry. The risk is that the best will get even better, but most of the rest will be non-participants. Given the large amount of industry resources invested in accreditation, it is essential that we re-examine how to encourage greater participation through both the strategic resetting of the schemes, and through promotion to industry and consumers.

Industry discussion in 2006 (commencing with the NIASA/AGCAS meetings in Feb/Mar 06) needs to focus on a core question – should accreditation continue to be about "best practice", or instead be seen as part of an overall business improvement journey where accreditation is one point in the journey at an

ambitious but reachable industry standard, (i.e., "best practice v industry standard").

In line with the requirements of the plan, the NGIA circulated a discussion paper which is attached. It addresses some of the fundamental issues concerning accreditation.

In February 2006 a half day of the NIASA meeting was set aside to workshop the discussion on the document and agree on a future approach. The major outcomes were:

- That the scheme was a process of continuous improvement but that the standard was seen as best practice and not an industry standard.
- To review and agree on the NIASA checklist and what is required to meet accreditation nationally.
- To consider a national position regarding the status of provisional accreditation.
- ROI and profitability for NIASA is the priority for research.
- To focus on the promotion of NIASA by approaching large scale retailers, and all tiers of government, with a strong proposal for purchasing from NIASA producers
- To provide a strategic link between the outcomes of accreditation and the industry awards
- To promote best industry standards
- To continue selective sponsorship opportunities – such as IPPS, Landscape and Architecture categories
- To continue to improve NIASA through voluntary modules
- Promote NIASA research relating to market share.

Current and Planned Activity

- Ecohort module is currently in development stage with logo concepts being considered – both stand alone and to work in conjunction with the NIASA logos. The production timetable has been developed and agreed to by the NIASA Committee.
- Major Retail Buyer visits and buyer kits developed after strong input from the NIASA Committee as to material and industry representatives. Buyer visits will be undertaken in the second half of 2006.
- Following on from the Landscape Expo and IPPS Conference sponsorship with the intention of consolidating inroads made into the outdoor industry, a direct mail campaign will be undertaken following the completion of the 2006 Landscape Expo.
- Government procurement proposal to follow along similar lines of the Major Retail Buyer kits, with the hopeful outcome of "preferred buyer" status being achieved with all tiers of government.
- NIASA banners and signage are being produced to ensure strong and consistent collateral is available for a unified industry approach in all NIASA activities including trade events, conferences and workshops etc. These will be made available to all State and available for purchase by individual NIASA operators.
- Generic website pages to be developed for NIASA businesses to enable NIASA Accredited businesses to promote directly to the whole greenlife and outdoor industry.

Project Expenditure Planned to Project Conclusion

Other expenditure which has been committed and planned as part of this project:

Expenditure:

Travel related to project	\$1,000
Buyer & Govt Visits	\$5,000
Major Buyer Kits	\$5,000
Direct mail to buyers – landscapers builders	\$2,000
Website – generic for nursery use	\$2,000
Criteria reprint – EcoHort	\$15,000
Committee June	\$12,000
Coop Funding	\$3,000
Total Expenditure – planned:	\$45,000
Spent	\$80,150
	\$125,150
Funding committed by IAC 05/06	\$120,000**

** Funds remaining from the previous NIASA funding have enabled a commitment from NGIA to cover this small projected shortfall and to not take up \$40,000 in marketing expenditure allocated to NIASA for 2005/6.

It is urgent that funds allocated to 05/06 less this \$40K are passed through to NGIA so that the project can be completed.

Appendices

To support this Milestone report detailing the outcomes of Projects NY04014 & NY04504 Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme (NIASA), the following documents have been provided:

- 1. **NGI Accreditation Schemes discussion paper – February 2006**
- 2. **Minutes of the Meeting – NIASA & TOG meeting 1 March 2006**

