

NURSERY PAPERS

APRIL
2023

SUPPORTING GREENLIFE CAREERS AND TALENT

Valued at approximately \$2.8 billion the nursery industry is one of the most important horticultural industries in Australia. The industry also generates significant intangible value from the positive green spaces it creates, reduction of urban heat islands and the mental health benefits of plants.

But despite the role greenlife plays in Australian society, the industry faces challenges in its ability to attract and retain new talent amidst an ageing workforce. In fact, the average age of employees in the nursery production industry is 54 years, with 85% of those employees aged over the age of 39.

In order to address these challenges head on, the industry is investing in supporting greenlife businesses to attract the next generation of talent, grow the skills and knowledge of the current nursery workforce and help shape the next leaders of the industry.

This nursery paper provides an overview of the industry's strategy to boost career development within the sector, and the role of levy-funded investments in building a pipeline of talent for now and the future. It provides details of the Careers Hub, job boards and educational resources available to growers. Read on for more information on how you can access resources to help build talent in your business

SUMMARY

- An injection of fresh talent, from diverse backgrounds with unique skill sets and fresh ideas will secure a productive future workforce for the greenlife industry.
- A career in the nursery industry is not just about growing plants. Employees work to provide shade, grow fruit, nuts and vegetables, reduce erosion and provide physical and mental health and well-being benefits to the broader community.
- The nursery industry has developed a suite of materials to help the industry attract, retain and grow the skills of its talent.
- Significant industry consultation has taken place to ensure impactful and relevant messaging.
- The suite of materials available to growers and job seekers includes information on scholarships and training opportunities, real-life case studies of diverse career pathways and a live jobs board.
- A Careers Hub has been launched which is accessible by employers, employees, and job seekers to share information, factsheets and brochures which showcase the benefits of a career in the nursery industry.

BACKGROUND

In 2019, a levy-funded project, 'Review of nursery industry career pathways' (NY17002), led by RMCG Consulting outlined a strategy for the industry that detailed a clear roadmap for skilled career pathway development in the nursery industry

The document articulated the key challenge, which is supported by industry surveys, that like many other agricultural industries, the nursery industry faces major challenges around high staff turnover and an ability to attract and retain qualified and experienced people. One of the key roadblocks is the perception of limited career pathways for someone starting their career in the nursery industry.

Other barriers to talent include a lack of access to specific tertiary education, low understanding of the benefits the industry delivers, as well as strong competition from other sectors like construction related trades and mining. Furthermore, until recently there has been low promotion of the industry as an employer of choice with career pathways unclear.

The industry is working to change this, and several completed levy-funded projects have addressed this issue, most recently, 'Developing Nursery Career Pathways' (NY19006), led by Greenlife Industry Australia (GIA) and RMCG Consulting.

The industry strategy and action plan can be reviewed here: <https://www.horticulture.com.au/globalassets/hort-innovation/resource-assets/ny17002-nursery-industry-career-path-development-strategy.pdf>



Why is this important?

The ongoing success of the greenlife industry relies on an injection of fresh talent, from diverse backgrounds with unique skill sets and fresh ideas.

The industry needs talented plant producers, but it also needs experts in plant biosecurity, information technology, robotics, marketing, workplace health and safety, accounting, finance, chemical management, customer relationships and environmental sustainability.

The nursery industry must do a better job at communicating all the different opportunities within this dynamic sector.



The nursery industry employs around 25,000 people



In 2021, the average age of the industry was 54, with 85% of employees being over 39, meaning a significant proportion of the industry will need to be replaced in the coming years



Whilst 63% of greenlife businesses invest in infrastructure or technology, only 33% invest in training



24% of the workforce is tertiary qualified

Source: 2020-21 Nursery Industry Statistics Survey (NY21000)

The nursery industry has a powerful story to tell. A career in the nursery industry provides entrants with the potential to:

- Provide the canopy cover and shade needed to reduce the heat island effect in urban areas
- Supply the plants for fruit, nut, vegetable production
- Help regenerate, restore, and reinvigorate sensitive environmental areas
- Produce the timber products required for housing, furniture, and other products
- Contribute to the physical and mental health and well-being of all Australians through the provision of green spaces including parks, gardens, recreational areas, and indoor plants

The nursery industry career path development strategy provided the industry with a strong framework for the industry to collaborate and address the ongoing challenges and barriers to attracting a skilled workforce. The recommendations of the project have since been actioned by future projects including the levy-funded project 'Developing Nursery Career Pathways' (NY19006), which produced a set of resources available to growers to help attract and retain talent.

With industry, for industry

Levy-funded investment into addressing the nursery industry's talent shortfall has been informed through consultation with growers, retailers, educators, and other stakeholders.

A workshop was held to identify opportunities to address gaps in certified training programs and develop a learning framework that better supports early entrants into the greenlife industry and industry employers.

The workshop brought together educators, industry representatives, and production nursery operators to join a discussion around prototype courses to further enhance professional pathways for the nursery sector.

Following the workshop, the project team sought additional feedback from the nursery industry on the specific topic areas and subjects which growers and garden retailers would find most beneficial for new entrants, ensuring that the outputs of the project provide the most value.

Industry resources

Having engaged closely with industry, a series of resources have been developed to help support greenlife businesses attract and retain talent as well as to support new nursery industry participants to find careers within the industry.

Information is available via the Careers Hub – a repository of information on the Greenlife Industry Australia website which acts as a one-stop shop for both employers and job seekers looking for information on employment, training, professional development, or further education opportunity.

The resources available include:

All about greenlife careers – up to date information for students, parents, career advisers and employers with further information on employability skills and scholarships available

Career pathways – details on the courses available to students and the specific career pathways attached to those qualifications

Education and training information – information relating to horticulture-related higher education opportunities from TAFE, universities and other vocational educational providers.

Greenlife careers guide – A series of case studies which showcase real-life examples of diverse career pathways taken, to highlight the opportunities available in the industry.

Information for career advisors – Brochures targeted at careers advisors and students contemplating post-school education or vocation.

Brite Pathways – Information on Brite Pathways, a course which helps young people with a disability transition into a job or training.

Greenlife Jobs Board – The jobs board is available to employers to submit open jobs from across the country.



Accessing the Careers Hub

The greenlife industry Careers Hub is the industry's portal to all resources relating to careers, education, and professional development. At launch it includes all the resources, fact sheets and brochures created for the levy-funded project 'Developing Nursery Career Pathways' (NY19006) but will continue to be a one-stop shop for connecting job seekers and greenlife businesses with key information about a career in the nursery industry.

Showcasing career pathways

To build a pipeline of talent, we must educate potential new entrants about the limitless pathways available to them within the greenlife industry.

There is likely a perception that a greenlife career is linear which may turn off younger talent, who tend to seek varied, flexible career choices.

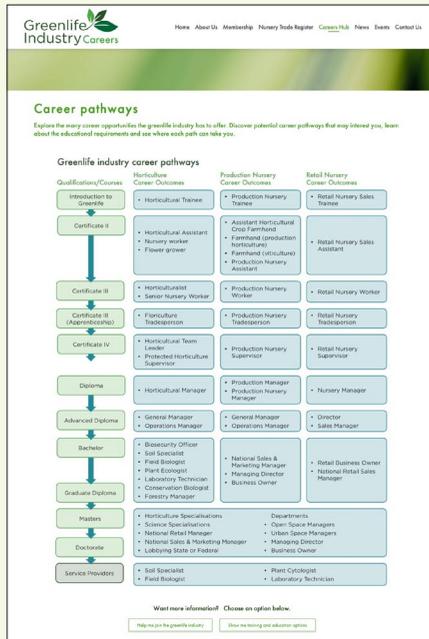
The Careers Hub highlights some greenlife industry participants that have built careers in the industry outside of the 'typical career path'. These industry stories are available to greenlife businesses, school leavers, parents, and careers advisers to advocate for the experiences that are available in the nursery industry.

Consult the Careers Hub for a full list of career pathway case studies.



Hui-Anne Tan,
Urban Forest and Ecology Project Officer
City of Melbourne

"I feel like I am making an important contribution towards creating a greener Melbourne – and that means a lot to me. I love that I can build a career around my passion for horticulture and nature, and can help foster connections amongst people, plants, and animals."



The Careers Hub has been developed for nursery industry businesses to provide information and decision support to students, 'career changers', and their advisors in making an objective decision on a career and the job opportunities in the nursery industry. The content available on the hub should be referred to in formulating human resources strategies at the individual business level.

Information regarding available scholarships, tertiary education placements will be regularly updated and will be an invaluable source of opportunities for new and current staff to further their careers.



Growers can access the Careers Hub at <https://www.greenlifeindustry.com.au/greenlife-careers-hub>



Our message to potential nursery industry participants



A career in the greenlife industry means you will meaningfully contribute to creating liveable cities, healthy environments and protecting the future of food security in Australia.

This is an industry which brings all types of seed, plant, shrub, or tree stock, including but not limited to propagation plants, seedlings, herbs, vegetables, fruit trees, nut trees, vines and all plants to indoor and outdoor residential and public spaces.

There is an entire industry embracing modern horticultural techniques, sensible science, and the latest innovation to deliver over 2 billion plants into Australia's landscapes, backyards, kitchen windows and on to our plates.

There is a career pathway for everyone.

The nursery industry created a video to showcase how the industry's tissue culture laboratories, plant

breeders, production managers, operations managers, soil scientists, growing media specialists, plant protection experts, plant nutritionists, entomologists, horticulturists, growers, garden retailers, landscapers, environmental scientists, communicators, marketers, logistics, television presenters, garden writers and radio broadcasters, automation experts, policy writers, researchers, academics and educators bring the industry to life.



Watch the video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4RL2N4BmjU>

LINKS TO RESOURCES

The Careers Hub is available here: <https://www.greenlifeindustry.com.au/greenlife-careers-hub/greenlife-careers>

The industry strategy and action plan can be reviewed here: <https://www.horticulture.com.au/globalassets/hort-innovation/resource-assets/ny17002-nursery-industry-career-path-development-strategy.pdf>

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