

**Development of the
Certified Nursery
Professional
Accreditation Scheme**

Candice McNamara
Nursery & Garden Industry
Australia

Project Number: NY04013

NY04013

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.

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ISBN 0 7341 1418 4

Published and distributed by:

Horticultural Australia Ltd

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**Nursery & Garden Industry
Australia**

**Final Report
HAL project: NY04013
Completion date 31 August 2006**

Development of the Certified Nursery Professional Recognition Program

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Candice McNamara 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 original CNP Advisory Committee and NGIWA is acknowledged.

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Media Summary



The Certified Nursery Professional (CNP) program is the industry's professional recognition scheme for individuals. It provides an opportunity for participants to gain formal recognition from industry for their knowledge, experience and continual learning. CNP recognition is national and applicable to all industry members including business owners, business managers, employees, trainers, facilitators and industry consultants.

Activities under this project have centred on developing a practical business plan for the program and the implementation of administrative and marketing functions to support the plan. Specific outputs of the program have been:

- ***Business plan***
- ***Program administration and membership support***
- ***Marketing the benefits of the program to industry***
- ***Link to NGI national and state-based professional development skill development activities for example workshops, field days, conferences***

The benefits of establishing an industry-managed recognition program include, but are not limited to:

1. Acknowledging an individual's ongoing commitment to improving their skills and industry knowledge, thereby enriching their personal experience of work and meeting the needs of customers.
2. Assuring the public that an individual has the knowledge and skills to provide superior services and thereby raises the image of the industry.
3. Supporting and encouraging a highly skilled industry, ensuring it remains competitive and has the ability to adapt accordingly.
4. Offering CNP members access to valuable networking opportunities and to ongoing professional development activities.

CNP is currently a fully operational recognition program and plays an integral role in the delivering the industry's strategic plan¹ outcomes, particularly with the ability for industry to "achieve business sustainability by facilitating a change in business culture and improved business practice."

¹ *Nursery & Garden Industry Strategic Plan 2006-2008: Objective 1*

Introduction

Certified Nursery Professional project has had a colourful beginning being launched as the Nursery & Garden Industry's Professional Program (NGIPP) in March 2001. The NGIPP met with mixed success primarily due to insufficient resource allocation.

During the 2004/05 funding period, NGIPP was officially re-launched as CNP by Mr Russell Higginbotham (Chair of the Industry Advisory Committee) at NGIA's National Conference held in Perth during March 2005.

The main objective of NGIPP and then later CNP has always been to improve businesses by raising the standards and skills of the people that work within those businesses. Another objective of this program is to recognise people who participate in ongoing professional development activities and encourage in industry, a commitment to lifelong learning.

Although the management and responsibility of the outcomes of this project has always rested with NGIA (2004/2005 responsibility of the National Industry Development Manager), the administration and support was initially outsourced² to Nursery & Garden Industry Western Australia (NGIWA) for a limited period during 2005. In January 2006, the board of NGIWA decided that they did not have the resources to successfully support and administer the program and the administration was moved to NGIA, Sydney NSW. All state associations were given an opportunity to apply to take over the administration and support role, with funding support, however none felt that they would be able to successfully complete the outcomes.

A Change in Plan: From Accreditation to Recognition

As part of the business planning process at the end of 2005, to refocus CNP as a recognition program, and to differentiate it from business accreditation (NIASA/AGCAS). The link between training and recognition was seen as more closely aligned. Following the lack of interest from other state associations to administer the program, the NGIA board decided to keep the management, administration and support of the program with NGIA.

² As specified in the CNP Business Plan, Warwick Scherf NGIA National Industry Development Manager - December 2004

By promoting CNP as a recognition program, it provides a focus on recognising a commitment to lifelong learning which involves marketing initiatives to emphasise values such as:

- Pride
- Commitment
- Peer recognition
- Professionalism

The refocus of CNP also enables a direct link with the marketing emphasis on the industry as "advisers".

The program and project outcomes are currently the responsibility of the National Training & Recognition Manager. With the support of a part-time CNP co-ordinator, an audit and review of the program were performed to ensure that any shortcomings within the program could be dealt with straight away.

Since the change of the program from accreditation to recognition, the program has grown from 21 members to 53. This is an increase in membership by 250% over a period in the latter part of the financial year.

Importantly, during recent research³ conducted by NGIA into current and future industry skills development requirements, the nursery and garden industry identified that a recognition scheme was an important priority, although many were not aware that one already existed. Using this industry feedback, NGIA have engaged additional resources in the areas of marketing and promotion for this project.

This link between training activities and CNP has been a positive and it is important to continue if we want to ensure continued success of the scheme.

³ NGIA National Skills Study – performed by Australian Survey Research on behalf of NGIA, March 2006

Technical Report

The technical section of this report relates primarily to the operational aspects of this project and as such lays out key areas of activity that have taken place under this project during its funding period.

Business Plan

Prior to committing to the relaunch of CNP, a full Business Plan was written for the program. The Business Plan included backgrounding the genesis of the program and outlined stakeholders, industry perceptions, potential customers, the competitive environment and a market analysis.

The Business Plan also contained as subsets a Marketing Plan, a Financial Plan and an Operational Plan and was completed in December 2004 and has been previously provided to HAL.

Due to the changes relating to this project, NGIA sought an extension for this project, which was agreed to by HAL. As a result of this extension, 2005/2006 is considered the first year of business, rather than the second.

Additional Members' Benefits

During 2006, two additional benefits were added to the list of existing benefits. A decision was made by the NGIA Board to officially create and support the use of post-nominals. The membership period was also extended from 12 months to 24 months, providing existing CNP members with a more realistic time-period to accrue their professional development points to enable them to retain their CNP status.

Program Management

The management of this program was originally the responsibility of the National Industry Development Manager, whom also managed the industry's accreditation program. A National CNP Advisory committee had been formed and incorporated the following persons:

Mr Robert Chin – NIDO NGIV

Mr Paul Rawlings – President of NGISA

Ms Chris Mines – NGIQ
Mr Ralph Groves - NGINA
Mr Warwick Scherf – NGIA
Ms Kerry Crook – NGIWA CNP Co-ordinator

The role of the committee was to guide the NIDM and CNP Co-ordinator with the directions and ideas for CNP and assist in developing additional benefits that can be provided to members.

Since the incorporation of the CNP into the Training & Recognition Portfolio, the management of the program has become the responsibility of the National Training and Recognition Manager, with the support of a part-time CNP co-ordinator, and strategic direction from the National Training & Recognition Committee.

The current structure is as follows:

Program Manager	- Ms Candice McNamara, NGIA NTRM
CNP Co-ordinator	- Mr Ken Lane, NGIA
Strategic Direction	- NGIA Board guided by National Training & Recognition Standing Committee

With the inception of a National Training & Recognition Committee, there was no further requirement for a specific CNP Advisory Committee, since CNP fits comfortably under the scope of the National Training & Recognition Committee.

Administration

Initially, as part of the CNP Business Plan, the overall day-to-day administration of the CNP program has been seconded by NGIA to NGIWA. This undertaking was established during 2003 by the NGIA Executive. Services provided by NGIWA included the provision of a Program Co-ordinator on a part-time basis. The Program Co-ordinator is responsible for the processing of all applications, including the auditing of applicant credentials; database management and record keeping relating to ongoing professional development; and direct liaison with applicants, membership and industry regarding the program.

NGIWA were also been charged with the responsibility for the collection of application and membership fees, and the management of these funds. As part of the administration responsibility, NGIWA were required to report to NGIA the status of all funds managed on its behalf.

Role of the CNP Co-ordinator

During March 2006 the administration of CNP was transferred back to NGIA. A new CNP Coordinator was employed part-time. The role is responsible for the day-to-day running of the program, including membership support and processing. Other tasks include following up applications and inquiries, ensuring that we remain focused on increasing membership targets. Communicating the status of CNP memberships (new and existing) to all state associations occurs on a monthly basis. The CNP Co-ordinator provides each state with a monthly update report regarding new CNP members registered in the state and any further updates regarding changes and promotional campaigns about to be launched.

Procedures for Quality Assurance

To assist with quality assurance and service consistency, an Administration Procedures Manual has been developed to provide the CNP co-ordinator with guidelines on how to perform some of the more common tasks. For example, how to process a new CNP member versus an existing member. The procedures manual also outlines the expected time-lines for performing tasks, ensuring that all CNP members receive quality customer service. Linked to the development of procedures manual, the CNP Coordinator has generated supporting forms and templates to assist with the administration tasks and documentation.

Membership Welcome Kits

All new members receive a Welcome Kit containing the following:

1. Welcome letter
2. Letter from NGIA National President
3. Passport for recording
4. CNP wallet for document storage
5. Framed CNP certificate
6. Personalised name badge with the CNP Logo
7. Stainless steel mug (until July 2006)

The CNP coordinator ensures that all kits are sent to new members within four weeks of joining the program.

Auditing renewal of CNP Membership status

To ensure the continued status of the CNP program, all members are required to demonstrate ongoing professional development in order to retain membership status. Professional development activities are recorded under a point-score system and audited by the co-ordinator around the biennial anniversary of a CNP's membership.

To maintain CNP status, members must accrue a total of 20 activity credits over a 24 month period.

All CNP members receive a passport in which to document their professional development activities. During every review, members are required to submit their passports and related participation certificates as proof of ongoing professional development.

Marketing

Marketing Strategy

Using the Marketing Plan as outlined in the CNP Business Plan as a guide, in March 2006 NGIA outlined a CNP Marketing strategy for 2006. The outcome of the strategy was to develop at minimum two specific campaigns for the upcoming winter and summers seasons. The strategy also reviewed current and possible future benefits of the program to members.

Strategies targeting specific audiences (industry employees, employers and consumers) were also identified.

Consumer Promotion

The NGIA consumer website – www.LifeisaGarden.com.au is a major promotion channel for CNP to the public. Setting up the “Ask an Expert” is the first instalment to raising consumers awareness of the brand “CNP” Certified Nursery Professionals.

The screenshot shows the 'Life is a Garden' website. The header includes the slogan 'life is a garden' and the tagline 'love the garden you're in'. Navigation buttons for 'find a garden centre' and 'ask the experts' are visible. The left sidebar contains a menu with items like 'home', 'latest trends', 'life is a garden', 'in your garden', 'our environment your backyard', 'wise about water', 'flora for fauna', 'let's grow', 'quality garden centres', 'media centre', 'links', and 'subscribe'. The main content area is titled 'ask the experts' and contains the following text:

Looking for professional, knowledgeable staff? Look no further than CNP.

Certified Nursery Professional (CNP) is the nursery and garden industry's professional recognition scheme for individuals. CNP members are acknowledged first and foremost for their exceptional skill and expertise.

But it's not just about skill or expertise. CNPs are 'in-the-know'.

This is because membership in the program requires CNPs to engage in ongoing learning. CNPs are not only up-to-date with industry developments in technology and training; they are also up-to-date with the latest trends.

So if you're looking for garden advice and inspiration from someone you can trust, look no further than CNP. CNP is your guarantee of superior service, knowledge, skill and expertise in all things garden and gardening.

Find your nearest Certified Nursery Professional
Search by postcode, state or alphabetically:

Postcode Search

Postcode: Search

A photo of Jane Harris, CNP, is shown with the caption 'Jane Harris, CNP'. Below the photo is a button that says 'start a quick outdoor project'.

Example of Consumer Website promotion of Certified Nursery Professionals

In relation to promoting CNP members to the public, we have given all CNP members the option of having their details listed on the consumer website.

CNP Winter Campaign Marketing Material – Make Your Mark

The CNP winter campaign was launched in late April 2006 – 31st August 2006. Marketing materials were specifically developed for promotion in Trade Magazines and industry newsletters.

Posters and information flyers were also created and distributed to target markets including:

1. 1300 industry businesses
2. 265 training providers
3. All state associations to be displayed at their offices, at Trade Days, Expos and Conferences.

As part of our overall campaign, to encourage industry to participate in the program, we have already sent A1 posters and flyers to members of each State Association and respective training providers across Australia.

In support of continued professional development, all new members who joined the CNP program during the limited CNP promotional period received a "Training voucher" that would enable them to participate in any training workshops held by the NGI State Associations up to the value of \$90.

Development of generic promotional materials

We identified that there was a need to develop some generic artwork and marketing materials that could be used by the state associations outside of any specific promotional campaign. These materials (A1 posters and A4 flyers) were printed and sent to all state associations so that they could be used at any event or trade day for raising the awareness of CNP within the industry.

The leading slogan for the generic material is "Make Your Mark" and includes a more funky, youthful appeal. The materials have recently been used to promote the CNP program at the NSW NexGen meeting, a network established for the younger generation operating in the industry.

Industry promotion

▣ *National Conference held at Fremantle WA in March 2005*

The CNP program was officially launched to the delegates of the conference by Mr Russell Higginbotham, chair of the Nursery Industry Advisory Committee. In launching the program, a range of development activities took place which included the design and production of all stationery requirements, such as application forms and an ongoing personal development 'passport'. In addition to this, a "Code of Practice" was formulated and the Terms and Conditions of accreditation and membership were constructed.

▣ *National conference held Hobart, TAS April 2006*

The CNP program continued to be promoted to industry, including opportunities from promotion at the NGIA stand and a Business Card draw competition. Over 65 interested people participated in the competition.

In support of professional development, CNP has also sponsored an Industry Training Award at the 2007 NGIA National Conference to be held in Melbourne. This sponsorship includes a full-page advertisement in the Awards brochure, which has been distributed to over 2000 industry businesses.

▣ *Specialised Groups*

In coordination with the NSW NexGen Group for under 35's, CNP was promoted at the inaugural meeting of the NexGen group on Thursday 20 July. A draw was arranged and Shane Neill, of Ramm Botanicals, was the winner of the CNP Business Card Draw and received his prize, an iPod Shuffle. Over 80 people attended the meeting and resulted in good promotion of the program.

Advertising/Editorials

Several advertising initiatives were also undertaken as part of this project. In 2005 and 2006 advertisements were placed in the NGIA's annual Trade Register.

Adverts have been run in 'Headlines' in the Greenworld and Australian Horticulture industry publications. Stories regarding the benefits of CNP to industry and the launch of specific CNP promotions have been published in the multiple editions of NGIA Clippings between 2005 and 2006.

NGIA's e-newsletter, ECommpost also included articles of information regarding CNP and more recently the CNP Winter Campaign.

Direct Mail

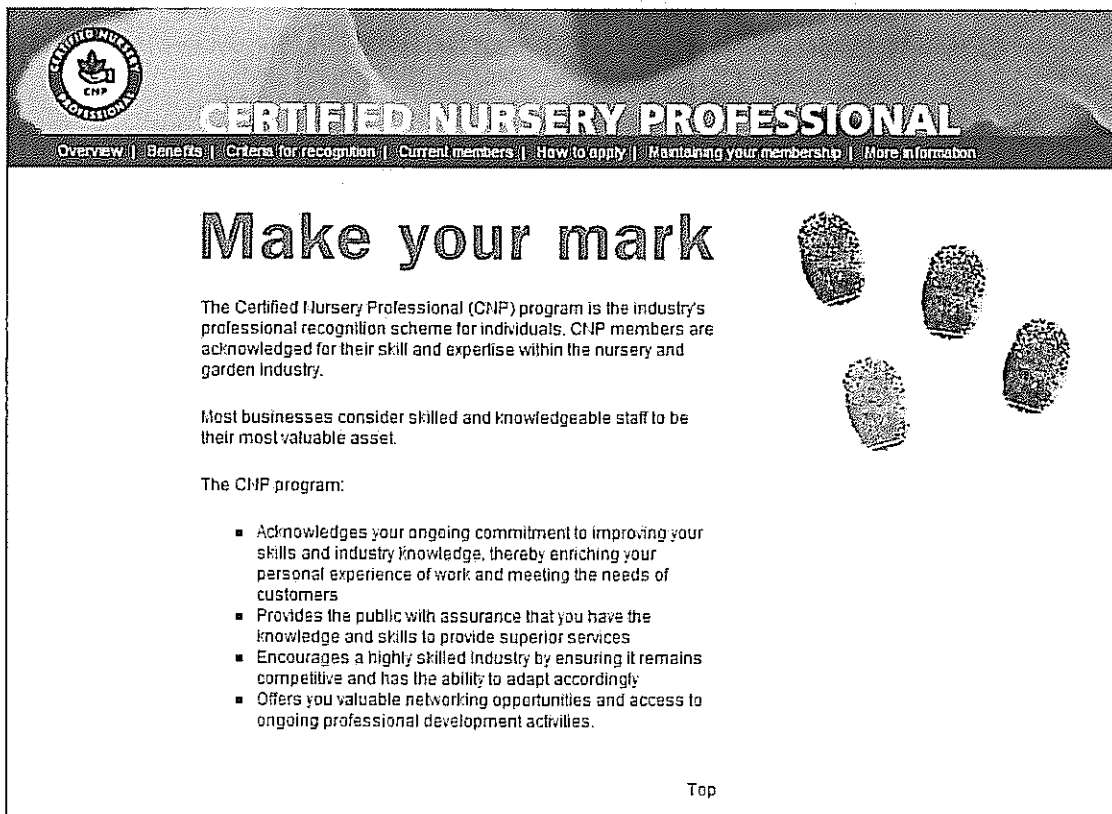
A communication 'flyer' was developed for direct mail distribution to previous members of the NGIPP scheme as well as all existing members of the various state associations.

Industry Website

Within this project a presence for CNP was also developed and implemented on the NGIA website. The CNP page includes details about the program, the key benefits to accredited members, and the means by which enquiries and applications can be made.

The CNP information page on the NGIA website is the main source of information to industry regarding CNP promotions, membership requirements etc making CNP-related information easier to find. A listing of all current members has also been included as part of industry promotion. In relation to listings we have given the CNP members the option of not being included on the industry website.

All information, CNP membership listing and documents on how to apply for CNP status can be viewed on the following web page <http://www.ngia.com.au/cnp>.



CERTIFIED NURSERY PROFESSIONAL

[Overview](#) | [Benefits](#) | [Criteria for recognition](#) | [Current members](#) | [How to apply](#) | [Maintaining your membership](#) | [More information](#)

Make your mark

The Certified Nursery Professional (CNP) program is the industry's professional recognition scheme for individuals. CNP members are acknowledged for their skill and expertise within the nursery and garden industry.

Most businesses consider skilled and knowledgeable staff to be their most valuable asset.

The CNP program:

- Acknowledges your ongoing commitment to improving your skills and industry knowledge, thereby enriching your personal experience of work and meeting the needs of customers
- Provides the public with assurance that you have the knowledge and skills to provide superior services
- Encourages a highly skilled industry by ensuring it remains competitive and has the ability to adapt accordingly
- Offers you valuable networking opportunities and access to ongoing professional development activities.

Top

CNP Home page on NGIA Industry website

Outcomes

Whilst actual membership take up was lower than originally targeted, we were please to see 53 members qualify in the first year, against the 67 projected. Enquiries and feedback have been positive considering that most of the advertising and communication to industry commenced in earnest from March 2006. NGIA anticipate that membership numbers will steadily increase over the next twelve months and we should reach the target of 167 as set out by the CNP Business Plan.

Key outcomes

- Administration overhaul to provide effective support to CNP members
- 53 new members
- Updated marketing approach
- Strategic repositioning from accreditation to recognition
- Full state association support, considering Queensland association were originally not interested in the program
- Link to consumer marketing
- Link to industry skill development activities⁴

⁴ The CNP program forms an important part of the national training plan. NGIA have communicated with all states that it is imperative that all training activities such as workshops, field days promote and include a link to the CNP program. It is such an important part of the industry's training strategy that all funding sought from state associations for workshops and other skill development activities must demonstrate (as part of the Workshop Outcome Report) how many CNP activity points have been promoted for the activities.

Summary of Expenditure

During the period of 2004 to June 2006, NGIA received a total amount of \$125 000 to support the development and implementation of the CNP recognition program.

Below is a summary of how the funds were expended.

Expense	Combined Period to June 2006
Project Administration⁵	\$ 57 000
Welcome Kit Expenses⁶	\$ 13 100
Marketing & Promotion	\$ 28 400
Total Expenses	\$ 98 500

Income	Combined Period to June 2006
Membership fees	\$5 742.24

Sale proceeds (membership fees) to be reinvested into the new members "Welcome Kit" stock replenishment.

⁵ Administration costs include Salaries, Office overhead allocation, office consumables and capital equipment

⁶ Welcome Kit expenses include postage costs to members

Recommendations

The main recommendations for the ongoing development of the CNP are to continue to implement the thrust of the Business Plan - ensuring that adequate resources are dedicated to the ongoing marketing of the program to industry. It is imperative that the structure of the program provides value to its membership regardless of the size of membership at any one time.

Furthermore, without a credible auditing regime of CNP members' renewal status and ongoing professional development activities, the program will lose credibility to the detriment of existing members.

Other recommendations include:

1. Continued link between training activities and the CNP program
2. Promotional campaign to target customers to recognise the CNP brand and identify with industry experts. We would recommend that any surplus from this project be reinvested to raise further consumer awareness of the CNP brand.
3. Investigate link to overseas programs
4. Investigate additional benefits and sponsorships
5. Review matters relating to CNP i.e. CNP activity point allocation guides, CNP badges and CNP passports to ensure that these do not "age" in the eyes of new and existing members.
6. Review the ongoing support required by the state associations for the promotion of CNP, in relation to resources provided.

Acknowledgments

This report acknowledges the input by industry and state associations with particular thanks to Nursery & Garden Industry of Western Australia. We would also like to thank the various CNP advisory committee members for their commitment of time and energy to the development of this program.

Appendices

1. Outline for CNP Marketing Strategy – March 2006
2. Expression of Interest – NGI State Association for administration of Program
3. Committee member list of members of National Training & Recognition Committee
4. CNP Administration Procedures Manual
5. Sample CNP Administration Forms
6. CNP Marketing and Promotional Material
 - 2006 National Conference material
 - Specific – Winter Campaign 2006
 - Generic promotional material – Make Your Mark
 - Sample advertorials from the 2004/2005, 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 NGIA Trade Register
 - Sample advertorials from industry communication media
 - NGIA 2007 Awards Brochure