



# The Nursery Papers

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR AUSTRALIAN PROFESSIONAL NURSERY OPERATORS

EDITED BY IAN ATKINSON, NATIONAL IDM. ISSN:1326-1495 ISSUE NO:1998#015

## Your NIDO Network THE NATIONAL APPROACH TO INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT THAT WORKS FOR YOU!

The nursery industry and industries allied to it, like most modern enterprises, can no longer rely on the simple processes of a bygone era if they are to survive and remain profitable in the future. Technical and scientific advances have forever changed the face of these industries and will continue to do so well into the next millennium.

**M**any horticultural businesses actively pursue information and adapt it to their own circumstances, but not all operators have the time or necessary skills to embrace new ideas without assistance.

Acknowledging this difficulty some years ago, the HRDC approved funding for the employment on a project by project basis of Nursery Industry Development Officers (NIDOs) within the nursery sector. These grants, specifically for industry development, have been mainly based on voluntary contribution funds from the State associations with matching Commonwealth funds from HRDC.

### National network

The network coordinated by National Industry Development Manager, Ian Atkinson, now covers Australia from coast to coast. While it's primary role is to ensure technology transfer - that is, to pass on new technologies that will enhance performance and profitability - the scope has been broadened and now encompasses almost every aspect of professional and industry development.

The Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme, Australia (NIASA) is, at this stage, the most important tool the NIDOs have to work with in the field of overall industry development. NIASA ensures that this industry is able to deliver a consistent level of quality nationally and it's rapidly gaining recognition in the wider business community. The NIDOs also undertake:

- the organisation and conduct of training programs ranging from chemical handling, water recycling, efficient water usage, safe work practices, potting media safety and merchandising to retail improvement;
- the provision of advice and assistance to businesses working towards accreditation under NIASA; and
- the liaison with other agencies, committees and associations on issues of mutual benefit and interest to the nursery industry.

### National IDO

Ian Atkinson was appointed by the Nursery Industry Association of Australia (NIAA) as National Industry Development Officer in 1996 funded by the nursery product levy and HRDC. The position has the prime objective of addressing technology transfer issues and advancing NIASA. He has achieved this through workshop sessions at National and State industry conferences, State-wide and regional training workshops and seminars, the NIAA publications (in particular '*The Nursery Papers*'), developing a NIAA website on the Internet, formalising and publishing the NIASA Guidelines and a host of other initiatives.



He has contributed extensively to changing the industry's approach to and outlook on many issues which affect its future viability. Now based in Canberra he can observe and take part in national issues, as well as playing a pivotal coordination role in the NIDO network. He maintains close contact with State-appointed NIDOs and is always available for advice and assistance.



National: Ian Atkinson  
Ph: (02) 6260 5880

*"The nursery industry is becoming increasingly more national, with many businesses now frequently trading across State borders. The NIDO network provides the means by which commercial and retail customers Australia-wide can be assured of a consistent level of quality and professionalism.*

*"One of the tasks of the National Industry Development Manager (IDM) is to ensure that each State NIDO is undertaking a role consistent with accepted standards such as the NIASA Guidelines. Commercial organisations operating on a national level can then be assured that nursery products they purchase will be of a consistent standard regardless of where they are sourced.*

*"Ian is also the principle contact point for opportunities which may be passed on to the appropriate State NIDO for action. It's important when dealing with Federal government bodies and agencies to have a national focus of effort and to speak with one voice.*

*"The national IDM also has the formal role of reporting back to the HRDC on its \$400,000 annual investment in the NIDO program. The coordination and efficient operation of the network requires a level of management only achievable nationally and Ian fulfils that role well."*

JOLYON BURNETT, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, NURSERY INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA, SYDNEY, NSW

## New South Wales

Richard Stephens was appointed by NIAN in August 1997.

"The challenge facing me at that time was to dispel the misconception that accreditation was only feasible for profitable businesses with money to spend or for those new to the industry who could set up in accordance with the NIASA Guidelines.

"While NIASA had in-principle support from most members, some lingering vestiges of the unfortunate State v National ill-feeling had to be overcome. I'm pleased to say that, today, NIASA and other programs we've initiated are now readily accepted," Richard said.

There has been a three-fold increase in the number of NSW businesses to have achieved NIASA accreditation this year, and many more are currently working towards it.

"It's important for businesses to keep up with changes - to 'learn how to learn better' - and NIASA embraces this concept. It's important to create and improve the culture of learning in the nursery industry, and accreditation is just the first step in an ongoing process" he said.

"NIASA provides a goal that, when achieved, leads to greater professionalism where everyone from management down is proud of the standards attained and the part each has played in achieving them," he added.



NSW: Richard Stephens  
Ph: (02) 9679 1472

*"Our production manager, Geoffrey, attended an Integrated Pest and Disease Management course organised by the NIDO. He now takes greater pride in what he does; we talk more about how to run the nursery and we learn from each other."*

ROGER MARTIN  
PLANTLAND NURSERY, NOWRA, NSW

*"NIASA accreditation, and all that is involved in achieving it, has resulted in us using less resources with a more profitable result. Our nursery is now cost-efficient and we have the added benefits of increased production as well as a very pleasant working environment. Staff morale has also been given a tremendous boost."*

VAL BOMBARDIERE  
AVONDALE NURSERIES PTY LTD, GLENORIE, NSW

## Queensland

John McDonald has just completed his second year as NIDO and has faced many challenges in the position, one of which is the enormous territory he has to cover.

"We have production nurseries stretching from



Qld: John McDonald  
Ph: (07) 3277 790

the Daintree in the north to the Tweed River on the New South Wales border, and that involves a lot of travelling!

"However, I've found it rewarding and have been gratified by the acceptance shown by the entire industry - it's really made my job a lot easier.

"The role of an NIDO is extremely diverse - it involves a multitude of tasks and it takes some time to come to terms with all that is expected and involved. The sheer weight of issues was initially daunting but it's becoming easier as I settle in and become known within the industry," John said.

"Technology transfer is the principle focus of my activities - determining what is real and pertinent to industry development. I also see NIASA as the most important tool to promote industry 'Best Practice' and I'm working steadily towards seeing more businesses attain that quality standard."

#### South Australia

Anne Frodsham is currently the only part-time NIDO - the South Australian industry association / HRDC funding provides for a three-day working week. She will also be providing assistance to the Northern Territory industry.

"The NIDO appointment has presented me with many challenges, not the least of which has been juggling the many commitments associated with an NIDO position within the time available. It really is a multi-faceted position," Anne said.

"However, after two years of working with South Australian nurseries and businesses in a one-on-one capacity, probably the most rewarding aspect has been the considerable upsurge in interest within the industry in:

- moving down the NIASA path; and
- attending workshops and training sessions.

SA: Anne Frodsham  
Ph: (08) 8303 9578



"The success of our inaugural Annual Industry Technical Conference in July highlights this point," she added.

*"The South Australian NIDO has been a tremendous source of technical expertise for our business and we've gained a great deal from participation in courses and workshops she's organised. We're currently going down the quality pathway and have been greatly encouraged by the NIDO - her support on a one-to-one basis has been invaluable."*

TREVOR MARTIN  
SALISBURY NURSERY PTY LTD, SALISBURY, SA

*"Since the introduction of an NIDO in South Australia, we have seen regular technical workshops which have dealt with a wide range of topics relevant to our industry."*

NICK SMART  
SMARTS NURSERIES, BROOKLYN PARK, SA



Vic: Greg King  
Ph: (03) 9576 0599

#### Victoria

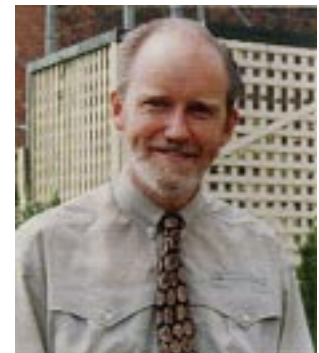
Victoria was the first State to appoint an Industry Development Officer in 1995. Hans Kosmer's contract has now expired and in another industry-first, Victoria recently appointed two NIDOs to build on the projects initiated in the preceding three years.

Alan Hollensen, working part-time has been given the specific role of retail sector development, including the setting up of a retail improvement scheme, while Greg King works full time on the production side of the industry.

Alan and Greg are still finding their way, having only been appointed last August. However, both have already been well received by industry members throughout the State and are confident of quickly settling in to their respective positions.

Since the adoption of NIASA, there has been a marked increase in the number of accredited business, due in no small way to the dedication of

Vic: Alan Hollensen  
Ph: (03) 9576 0599



Hans who was also instrumental in initiating many training programs, information seminars and visits which have been well supported by industry members.

*"The NIDOs assist the nursery industry to develop and maintain high standards at all levels of operation. In our business, this has resulted in better quality plants produced under the most hygienic conditions possible.*

*"Improving standards is extremely important and the NIDOs provide us with the information and tools we need to achieve this.*

*"The industry in general, and specifically our business, has benefited from the open exchange of information between nursery operators that has occurred at workshops and training sessions organised by the NIDO."*

ROBIN LANG

SCOBLE'S NURSERY PTY LTD, HEATHERTON, VICTORIA

## Western Australia

Sandy Pate is Australia's longest serving NIDO.

"At the time of my appointment in 1996, I was only the second Nursery IDO and fourteenth IDO in Australia across all horticultural industries. The greatest challenge I faced therefore was to overcome suspicion in relation to the IDO position.

"It has required considerable persistence to make progress as an Industry Development Officer. I consider that widespread acceptance of my commitment to the nursery industry is probably the greatest reward of the position. This is manifested by the amount and type of questions and inquiries that I receive on a daily basis," he explained.

"The nursery industry is a complex and highly technical industry with a very high reliance on the labor force in most cases. I have skills in many areas, but of course not all of these required. One of my roles is that of a catalyst, ie. speeding up a reaction without taking a major part.



WA: Sandy Pate (left)  
Ph: (08) 9325 8252

*"For the first time, NIAWA has an annual program of seminars and workshops. Notification is circulated on a yearly planner to all members and we can plan around them accordingly."*

MICHAEL REIDY-CROFTS

AZALEA GARDENS NURSERY, WA

*"We feel one of the most valuable assets of our NIDO has been his attendance at other horticultural industry field days, associated workshops and allied trade meetings, which has enabled him to provide us with valuable information as to how to co-ordinate structured programs for our members and this industry generally."*

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD,

NURSERY INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

*"The provision of an NIDO for the nursery industry in WA has provided educational institutions like ours with a better link and understanding of what is needed to achieve well trained and worthwhile employees for companies who might employ our students in the future. It also gives us a direct point of call and instant feedback."*

CHRISTINE COOPER, PRINCIPAL LECTURER,

SOUTH METROPOLITAN TAFE, MURDOCH, WA

## The bottom line

The national NIDO network, while working on a day-to-day basis with individual businesses within the nursery industry, has as its focus the development of the industry as a whole. Using tools like NIASA, WaterWork workshops and similar training and information programs, the Nursery Industry Development Officers are actively promoting the introduction of new principles and technologies to guide the industry profitably and efficiently into the new millennium. Their objective, however, can only be met when they are whole-heartedly supported by the members of the industry - that means you!

## Acknowledgements

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## Further information

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