



Know-how for Horticulture™



**Nursery & Garden Industry
Australia**

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Raising the Image and Reputation of the Nursery and Garden Industry

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Introduction

As part of the 2004/2005 Annual Investment Plan a \$250,000 project was approved to raise the image and reputation of the nursery and garden industry.

The aim of the project was to achieve Improvement in the awareness, recognition and reputation of the industry by consumers, media and government/regulatory bodies. The issues to be addressed included:

- Discovering the current perceptions and knowledge of the industry and relevant issues held by consumers, the media and governments;
- protocols for dealing with the media,
- identification, training and resourcing of spokespeople; and
- need for a pro-active, targeted and message specific communications strategy.

In 2005/06 a further \$250,000 was allocated to this project, being the first of a 3 year allocation. At the end of 2005, after the review of the strategic plan, HAL was advised that this project would be adapted and broadened to not just be about image, but to encompass the new objective in the Strategic plan for 2006-8 which is as follows:

- To promote plants, gardens and landscapes to consumers.

The original project objectives concerning image and media protocols and training are still highly relevant, particularly to new Objective 4 in the Strategic Plan, being

- To influence the opinion of governments and key external bodies for the benefit of industry, and in the strategy 4.3 of Building the expertise of industry representation including people and processes.

The final phase of Raising the Image and Reputation of the Industry has been utilised to set the ground-work for the Life is a Garden marketing and public relations industry campaign to follow in 2006 through to 2008.

Summary of Progress

Research on Media/Government Attitudes to Industry

As stated in the report sent to HAL in October 2005, in 2004/5 project activity focused on measuring the media and government perceptions of industry and their issues and on media training.

Specialist public affairs firm, Inside Story, was contracted to undertake research on media and government perceptions of industry and NGIA, and their report and video were presented to HAL as part of the previous Milestone report. Also included in the report was a summary of the media training that was undertaken to upskill key potential industry spokespeople at state and national level.

Inside Story presented their research findings to a meeting of Presidents and State CEOs in Adelaide in September 2005. This workshop proved formative in establishing that the most important issue that the nursery & garden industry needed to progress was a national marketing approach to “sell more plants”. This message was profoundly reinforced by the Strategic Plan review in November 2005.

The outcomes from the September meeting, and a subsequent workshop by a marketing sub-group in November 2005, are summarised in a report prepared by Inside Story which is attached. Most significantly the activity identified a number of media themes which would form the basis of both a public relations as well as a future consumer marketing message.

The focus switch from government/media to consumer resulted in the need to establish a new consulting relationship. Inside Story, being public affairs specialists, identified a lack of experience in relation to consumer public relations. In January 2006, NGIA met with, and subsequently confirmed the appointment of Pulse Communication to undertake the Consumer PR.

Consumer Research

Given that the research undertaken as part of the project to date had concentrated on media, government and key stakeholders, the focus switch to the consumer also led to an analysis of consumer research need. Although much research had been done by industry on consumer attitudes, there was no research on what message would best resonate with consumers and result in the purchase of more green life. This research gap was particularly relevant to the suggestion by a number of stakeholders that the NGIV message “You Can” was an appropriate theme for the national marketing campaign. The Horizon Research was conducted in three stages, with the final report presented to a sub-group including HAL representatives on 3 May 2006.

Apart from the specific outcomes of identifying key themes that most resonated with consumers, the research process proved to be beneficial in engaging a range of

important industry players (via the Stage 2 industry workshop) in discussions on possible themes. This involvement will have strong long term benefits for industry.

The third, and final stage of the research, comprised consumer focus groups that looked at the messages resulting from the industry research group in phase 2. The overall resonating message that came out of the research was that *gardens are Australian for good times*. The overall attitude to gardens and gardening was an overwhelming positive one. (Appendix A)

Media Monitoring

It has been important to monitor media issues as they arise to better support the States and gauge the impact of a broad range of issues potentially affecting the industry. To this aim broadcast media monitoring was put in place to complement the print media monitoring provided by HAL.

It has been essential to look at the immediate impact of broadcast media with regard to issues such as disease, water and invasive plants as it is the most difficult form of media to manage and needs to be thought of with regard to effective media training and issues management.

Video Production

With the aim to reinforce a positive image of industry, a video was commissioned from Anvil Productions for Conference in 2005. Whilst well received it was recognised that its applicability beyond industry forums such as conference was limited as it focused on industry views. For 2006, an updated video was commissioned which will have a much more useful applicability to promoting the image of both the industry and most importantly, its products being plants and gardens.

The 2006 video incorporates views of specialists in certain areas and mirrors the themes identified via the earlier media review process. It is designed to be either shown in its entirety or by selecting one of the key themes, such as environment or health. It will be suitable for use in a range of settings including:

- Presentations to HMA
- Presentations to media houses
- For use by state and national at industry forums and in briefings with politicians and key stakeholders
- At formal and informal industry events.

The intention of the video is that it is also dynamic. Aspects can be changed to incorporate key messages and/or key people with profile who are relevant to the message.

The video will continue to be updated to address promotional needs to the industry to industry, careers markets and consumers. An amended form of the video was shown to media at the media launch of the Life is a Garden campaign, including vox pops from people such as Graham Ross, Meredith Kirton, Brendan Moar, Linda Ross and Stephen Hall from the Horticultural Therapy Association. (Appendix B)

Within the project in mid-2005 a video was also commissioned summarising the feedback arising from the media and government view about the industry so as to strongly reinforce the work the industry needs to undertake to improve these relationships.

Collaborative Relationships

Of strong relevance to project outcomes has been the formation of important strategic relationships that are in alignment with the media themes and key messages. Such collaborations include:

- FPC publications and Gardening Australia – working with them on the promotion of a “Gardening Sunday” concept, which ran from July 2006. Although the Gardening Super Sunday concept will not be significantly progressed in 2006, the target event in 2007 will emphasise strong community outcomes based around the importance of gardens.
- Horticultural Media Association (HMA), including in 2004 and 2006 the sponsorship of their Young Achiever award, now renamed the Anita Boucher Award.
- HMA – Tracey Wigg to sit on the NSW committee from 2007
- Open Gardens Scheme – Tracey Wigg to sit on the committee from 2007
- Keep Australia Beautiful – in discussion about launching a national Sustainable Garden Challenge to be sponsored by Raine & Horne Real Estate
- Brendan Moar – Landscape Architect, author and TV presenter
- Graham Ross - Horticulturalist, TV presenter and President of HMANSW
- Meredith Kirton – Horticulturalist, TV presenter and author of Plot and Dig
- Met with Gardening Gurus to look at potential for industry promotion
- Slow Food – in discussion about working together on further development of the KidsGrow project
- Tanya Ha – environmentalist, and Planet Ark representative

Strategic Plan Roll Out

To meet the original project objectives of raising the industry’s image with key stakeholder groups including Government, a package of materials is being compiled for wide circulation by national as well as state associations. (Appendix C)

The positioning pack has been sent to government, HMA members and other stakeholders and key opinion leaders. The pack comprises of the following documents presented in a NGIA folder:

- Strategic Plan
- Facts and figures
- Industry Water Policy
- Industry Invasive Plants
- Media Protocols
- Industry Contacts

The positioning pack will continue to be updated to be used by national office and states alike.

Redesign of Collateral

In achieving the objective of Raising the Industry's image, a review of the current way the industry presents information was conducted within NGIA. This resulted in a refresh of design, and is reflected in the production of documents such as the Strategic Plan, the presentation folders, PowerPoint templates, banners and posters.

Research Ammunition & Review

In order to reinforce the industry's messages, a need was identified for a comprehensive summary of recent relevant academic research including that which is currently being undertaken within Australian universities and institutions.

Dangar Research was contracted to pull together a reference library of relevant research to be leveraged as part of communications and marketing campaigns. For example, recent studies on the health benefits of gardening will be identified.

This project also aimed to identify universities and research facilities in Australia undertaking research into subjects relevant to gardens and gardening with the prospect of finding researchers with whom the industry could work to assist in the delivery of key messages to the public. Very few were identified with the bulk of the research coming from overseas.

Project Governance

In November a working group was established to concentrate on taking forward critical aspects of this project. Following the strategic plan review, and the release of NGIA's own business plan, a Marketing & Communications Committee was formed under the chairmanship of an NGIA Director. This committee has met in February and May 2006. The role of the committee is to oversee the key communications and marketing strategies and activities.

In accordance with the proposed 06/07 Industry annual investment plan, the work of this project will be continued by the Consumer PR and Consumer Marketing projects. This is a conscious strategic variation of the original intention of a three year rolling project focusing on raising the image. Image and good public relations will remain an important outcome, but it will not be the only major outcome.

The following activities are planned to be commenced as part of the current 04/05 and 05/06 Raising Image Project. However, it is important to note that the relationships and activities relating to both consumer PR and advertising will reach beyond the end of this project.

Life is a Garden Consumer PR

NGIA contracted Pulse Communications to roll-out a consumer public relations strategy to run parallel to the Life is a Garden advertising campaign.

The first phase of the Pulse Communications Life is campaign comprises three parts:

1. Newspoll consumer questions (June 2006)

On behalf of NGIA Pulse will commissioned Newspoll at the beginning of the campaign to create additional news hooks. The key findings (Appendix D) unveiled new garden trends and indicated how important gardens and gardening are in the Australians lifestyle.

The Newspoll research covered the following topics:

- i. Gardening: the trend for a new generation of Australians
- ii. Who would you most like to have gardening in your backyard?
- iii. What lives in your back garden?
- iv. Health facts and figures

2. Life is a Garden Media Launch (July 2006)

The initial plan was to organise a publishing house tour to reinvigorate interest and appetite for gardens amongst women's consumer lifestyle magazines and other media to position gardens as beneficial and relevant to modern lifestyles. Following discussion with some journalists it was decided that the messages could be delivered much more effectively, and to a wider audience, at a Spring Garden Party event. (Appendix E)

The event, the first time the industry has targeted lifestyle media, was held in a "secret garden" in Sussex Street, Sydney and journalists were invited to a Garden Party to *Unearth why gardens are not just an outside space but an extension of your home and lifestyle. The season's hot trends and new national research about the changing face of Australian gardens will be revealed.*

Garden designer, horticulturalist, TV presenter and writer Meredith Kirton joined horticultural architect, writer and TV presenter Brendan Moar to showcase the latest garden lifestyle trends to the media in attendance. The room was dressed with four garden displays to highlight present trends including:

- The outdoor room
- The romantic garden
- The indigenous garden, and
- The sustainable garden

Newspoll results were released to set the scene and relevance to the Australian lifestyle and the Life is a garden video was shown. The website went live the following day to keep up the momentum.

3. Life is a Garden Press Office (July – Nov 2006)

'Life is a garden' press office was set up to generate media coverage out of the media launch and of the six PR objectives identified in the Communications Workshop conducted in November 2005:

- Lifestyle
- Health & well-being
- Fashion & style
- Investment
- Environmental benefits
- Education & expertise

Pulse recommended preparing targeted media releases to utilise findings from the 'garden factor' newpoll. Media pick-up was so positive that the majority of media relations was spent managing media inquiries which generated 11 printed articles and 19 radio segments. (Appendix F)

The press office operated through to November promoting Life is a garden and directing consumers onto the website and into garden retailers as part of the consumer marketing and PR campaign.

Advertising Campaign

An advertising agency brief was circulated in March to finalise the company that will take forward outcomes from the AGCAS project as well as the main consumer marketing campaign. In early May, Marketing Zoo was engaged to undertake the AGCAS rebranding and marketing work. As HAL required that NGIA hold off on a commitment for the broader campaign, this role was indicated as probable but not committed.

Marketing Zoo developed the Life is a garden campaign (Appendix G) and AKA Media have developed a media schedule that was rolled out in Spring. The entire campaign has been designed to fit within a tight budget, and to work in concert with the consumer PR company for maximum exposure.

Project Expenditure

Final expenditure to project conclusion 06:

Media Training/ Monitoring	\$2,715.15
Travel related to project	\$1,315.30
Strategic Plan pack rollout	\$14,719.03
Film (x1)	\$32,692.77
Committee	\$4,845.70
Garden Party	\$24,819.12
Horizon 2 nd & 3 rd Stage	\$31,700.00
Consumer PR consultant	\$50,860.57
Marketing campaign commencement	\$41,738.50
NewsPoll PR Consumer Qns - hook	\$11,615.00

Total \$202,316.83

Total Expenditure –	planned:	\$203,000
	Spent	\$202,317

Funding received 04/05	\$250,000
Funding committed 05/06	\$250,000
Less Monies not to be taken up 05/06	(100,000)
Funds Needed	\$400,000

Funding still to be received \$80,000

Next Steps

The Image project has laid the foundation for the launch of the Consumer Marketing and PR Life is a garden campaign which was rolled out in Spring 06. The images and concepts developed will continue to form the basis of consumer marketing over the next three years.

Communications / Extension Activities

In the last six months, the NGIA has undertaken a number of activities to highlight work done under this project:

- Stories within Clippings and Nursery Papers which either comment on the project specifically or incorporate activity in the summary of work on the Strategic Plan.
- Presentations to state boards and committees.
- Written updates to state associations.

In addition, a strong view is being expressed from the industry via their state associations that the consumer marketing is the single most important national activity needed for the industry.

Appendices

To support this Milestone report detailing the outcomes of Project NY04508 Raising Industry Image, the following documents have been provided:

- A. Horizon Research reports Phase 1 and 2**
- B. Life is a Garden video – 2006 Consumer version**
- C. Strategic Plan positioning pack**
- D. Newspill garden research**
- E. Life is a garden media launch collateral**
- F. Media Report**
- G. Life is a garden advertising campaign**