

## Industry to promote 'the good in green'

**With only 15 per cent of its workforce under 40 years old, the Australian nursery industry must highlight its comparative strengths and promote itself as an attractive career choice to the next generation.**

That's according to the 'Review of nursery industry career pathways' conducted by agribusiness firm, RM Consulting Group (RMCG), a project funded by Hort Innovation using nursery industry levies and funds from the Australian Government.

RMCG, together with project partner Nursery & Garden Industry Australia (NGIA), conducted the review to develop a strategy that would help to build and sustain the interest of those working, or looking to work, in Australia's nursery industry across various levels.

Project lead and RMCG Senior Consultant Mr Clinton Muller said the project put a spotlight on the challenges Australian nurseries faced in terms of staff attraction and retention, as well as professional development.

"The Australian nursery industry has so many strengths, which is evident in the investment we've seen across the production side of businesses, as well as the growing value of the industry as a whole," Clinton said.



Pictured: Clinton Muller from RMCG has been investigating nursery industry career pathways.

"However, when we looked at career development, it hasn't received the same level of attention from industry. It's what we call a 'sleeping issue' and is one that will become more prevalent in years to come.

"With 85 per cent of the workforce above 40, it gives way to a very narrow talent pipeline for the future of the nursery industry. The good news is that there are steps the industry can take to help address the issue, and our strategy is part of that process."

To develop the strategy, RMCG conducted a desktop review to understand the state of play of employment in the industry. The team spoke with growers across the country to assess what the pressing issues were, before validating these findings through an industry-wide survey.

One of RMCG's key activities was the delivery of an industry workshop, which HR, Marketing and Sales Director of Fleming's Nursery, Paige Fleming, believed was a valuable exercise.

"As a business that employs 220 people across four sites in Victoria and Queensland, we really need to start selling the career possibilities of our industry, from roles in propagation right through to production, marketing and sales," Paige said.

"Attending the RMCG workshop was invaluable to me. I realised that many in our industry are facing similar hardships, especially in terms of finding the right staff for the work we do.

"Equally, the workshop reassured me that we were all passionate about overcoming these issues, and promoting the nursery industry as a diverse and meaningful career path full of opportunities.

"To be a part of the workshop and this process of change was a great experience."

Clinton believes the nursery industry can take several steps to help address employment issues, such as greater industry promotion and awareness

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especially among the younger generations who represent a new way of thinking about the environment and their employment.

“The industry needs to have some self-appreciation and leverage its comparative strengths, such as a business’s close proximity to urban areas and the benefits of working with a clean, green and positive product,” Clinton said.

“This needs to be supported by promoting the value of the nursery industry, through incentives to undertake training placements, courses and apprenticeships. Additionally, we need to upskill the existing workforce through well-designed courses across several career levels.”

As part of its HR strategy, Paige said Fleming’s had recently honed its focus on finding the right people for the business, by undertaking a consistent approach to induction and providing feedback during probation periods.

“For any new employee, we ensure that for the first six months, we are regularly checking in to see how they are enjoying the role and whether it’s a good fit for their skills and experience,” said Paige.

“This means we can identify and highlight strengths, as well as any areas that may require improvement or a different focus. We want people to be here for the long term and feel part of the Fleming’s family.”

Clinton states that human resource management forms a key pillar of the newly developed strategy and reiterated the importance of templates for businesses to adopt, which outline best practice procedures when attracting, retaining and developing staff.

“A career in the nursery industry has a plethora of possibilities. By demonstrating the dynamic career opportunities within the industry, whether it be through case studies or mentorship, it can encourage others to make their mark in the Australian nursery industry.”

To watch the video, please click [here](#).

For more information on the Review of Nursery Industry Career Pathways strategy (NY17002) please visit: [www.horticulture.com.au](http://www.horticulture.com.au)



Pictured: Paige Fleming, the HR, Marketing and Sales Director at Fleming’s Nursery, Victoria.