

# Nursery Papers

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## A good idea that blossomed

The nursery and garden industry is the envy of many other horticultural industries. Why? Because it has a national network of professional, qualified and experienced Development Officers working with retailers, wholesalers and growers to help build better businesses.

Nursery and garden industry Development Officers are jointly funded by the industry levy and the state Nursery & Garden Industry (NGI) associations. Their independent advice and business support is available to all industry participants, not just NGI members.

### • Your Levy at Work •

The production and distribution of this Nursery Paper was funded by your Nursery Industry levy



Nursery & Garden Industry  
Australia



Horticulture Australia

## Your Development Officers

The first industry Development Officer positions began in the early 1990s. Initially part-time positions, they were production or grower focused and concentrated on developing and carrying out the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme, Australia (NIASA).

Since then, this highly professional network has grown to 13 predominantly full time roles working with production nurseries, growing media suppliers and garden centres or retail nurseries. This includes a National Industry Development Manager, Richard Stephens, who coordinates national resources, support and professional development activities for the Development Officer network.

Garden Centre Development Officers, or GCDOs, focus on retailers and implementing the Australian Garden Centre Accreditation Scheme (AGCAS). Nursery Industry Development Officers, or NIDOs, focus on growers, wholesalers and growing media producers and drive the successful NIASA program, using it as a tool to demonstrate best management practices within the industry.

As Development Officers are employed by the state NGIs, they can focus on local or state needs and initiate projects that particularly help the industry in their state. This includes training, industry representation, working with industry groups and acting as a mentor for individual businesses.

At the same time, as part of a national network, they are able to benefit from ideas and expertise in other states and use resources more efficiently for national initiatives.



Fergus Higson from Faig Nurseries NT, with Angela Monks and Robert Chin at a national NIASA mock inspection.

Some key national initiatives either used and/or promoted by the Development Officers include:

- Accreditation, both NIASA and AGCAS;
- A large variety of industry training events;
- The Flora for Fauna program, which is being used by both growers and retailers to capitalise on the increasingly environmentally conscious consumer market;
- Integrated Pest and Disease Management (IPM);
- The new national communications program, featuring the flexibility of fax, email, web based or mailed communications;
- Industry statistics and consumer behaviour studies;
- Professional recognition through the Nursery & Garden Industry Professional Program (NGIPP).

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## Garden Centre Development Officers (GCDOs)

**In Victoria... Alan Hollensen** (Dip art, Grad dip Ed, Grad dip Mgt, Grad cert Prof Writ), the longest serving GCDO, Alan initiated the highly successful 'Accreditation Avenue' at the Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show (MIFGS).

With previous experience in retailing, especially merchandising, Alan has provided retailers with valuable marketing and promotional information, he's helped a number of growers and wholesalers.

**In NSW and ACT... Rudi Fabian** has had considerable experience in running a retail nursery, as owner/manger of Erina Gardenworld.

Rudi has helped 27 businesses (including 17 in regional areas) achieve AGCAS accreditation over the last three years. He has helped increase public awareness of AGCAS and industry professionalism by participating in several garden shows and through radio interviews. In addition, Rudi has worked

on behalf of the industry with local government, community and environmental groups.

**In Queensland... Sharon Ible**, has more than 22 years experience in retail marketing, merchandising, performance standards and customer service, and is our newest GCDO. Although new to the nursery and garden industry, Sharon brings a fresh set of eyes and extensive relevant experience.

**In Western Australia... James Robilliard**, recently doubled the number of AGCAS businesses in his state.

With the recent droughts James has worked with the WA Water Corporation and gain "Waterwise Garden Centre" endorsement for all AGCAS businesses in Western Australia. Garden centres now have access to government-funded promotional campaigns, and gain professional training and support.

In addition, James had a major involvement in the highly successful

'Ecotopia' display at the 'Perth Flower & Garden Show'.

**In South Australia... Ray Conlon** brings considerable corporate experience and business thinking. With a background in the leisure industry, Ray has ensured a more professional approach to marketing in the South Australian industry.

Ray has successfully negotiated significant government and private organisation support.

**In Tasmania... Hilary Haugstetter** (B Sci Soc Sci Hons, dip Ed), has been able to put her academically-trained mind into action for the Tasmanian industry. Despite still lecturing at university in marketing, Hilary was able to organise statewide television advertising for Tasmania's AGCAS garden centres.

In addition, over the past three years Hilary has organised informative annual state conferences for the industry and has run a variety of marketing and costing workshops.



Alan Hollensen (right)



Rudi Fabian in NZ



Sharon Ible



James Robilliard (left)



Ray Conlon



Hilary Haugstetter

## Nursery Industry Development Officers (NIDOs)



NIDOs from left... Angela Monks, Edda Keskula, Michael Danelon, John McDonald, Sandy Pate and Robert Chin.

**In Queensland...** Well known for his practical nature and technical knowledge, **John McDonald** (Assoc. dip PP, Adv dip Hort, Adv dip NP) has the largest number of NIASA businesses to look after.

With 72 NIASA businesses spread over tropical and subtropical regions in Queensland and the Northern Territory, John is no stranger to travel. As the Nursery & Garden Industry representative on the Red Imported Fire Ant task force, John ensured that the bureaucrats did not impose unworkable restrictions on the industry following the outbreak.

John was also responsible for the Pesticide Management CD Diary, now available nationally, and regularly runs Chem-Cert and WaterWork irrigation training courses for the industry.

**In West Australia...** The longest serving Development Officer in the network is **Sandy Pate** (dip Ag, dip Hort) from Western Australia. Sandy has driven the development of an Environmental Code of Practice for nurseries in WA and helped the industry set up the 'Ecotopia' display at the 'Perth Flower & Garden Show'.

Sandy regularly gives presentations at TAFE colleges and is constantly spreading the word about NIASA through field days, conferences and the media. A big supporter of onsite training, Sandy organises many industry training events.

**In South Australia... Edda Keskula** (B Sci-Ag.) is a highly experienced NIDO and a qualified pathologist. Edda has initiated and driven many industry development projects, including an integrated pest and disease management course.

Edda has provided professional help and assistance to many South Australian businesses, enabling them to gain NIASA accreditation. In addition, Edda has organized a variety of training events and helped SA Water understand the industry's water requirements.

**In Tasmania... Angela Monks** (B.S.C hon) fills the NIDO role for the industry. Employed by the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, Angela works with many other horticultural industries as well as the Nursery & Garden Industry.

Angela is a recognised plant pathologist who provides sound advice on

production efficiencies and disease management.

**In Victoria... Robert Chin** (B App Sci Hort) is a NIDO with a strong background in marketing and expertise in gaining maximum benefits from selling new plants. Robert brings a fresh way of looking at traditional processes.

Robert and NGI Victoria have recently announced a Diploma of Business (frontline management) course. Developed with Swinburne University of Technology specifically for nursery managers, this one to two year course formally recognises management skills and experience and enjoys a 90% FarmBis funding subsidy.

**In NSW & ACT...** The newest NIDO is **Michael Danelon** (B App Sci Hort), who has more than 10 years industry experience, especially in crop, fertiliser and growing media management.

Busy attending regional and special interest group meetings as well as visiting all NIASA businesses, Michael has a reputation for being a hard worker who offers sound advice. Michael has recently completed an intensive integrated pest management course run by NSW Agriculture.

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# Frequently Asked Questions

## Q. What can a Development Officer do for me?

A. Development Officers provide independent and professional advice on profitable and productive ways to manage nursery businesses. They are knowledgeable in best management practices for garden centres, production nurseries and growing media suppliers and can advise you about relevant resources, workshops and seminars that are available to help your business.

## Q. Who are these Development Officers and what sort of qualifications or experience do they offer?

A. Your Development Officers come from a wide variety of backgrounds. They are all qualified accreditation assessors (either AGCAS or NIASA), and have considerable experience in either marketing and/or production related fields, with direct access to national resources and key industry contacts. They are also experienced and/or qualified trainers and assessors.

## Q. Are the services of a Development Officer free?

A. Initial contact with a Development Officer and general advice based on levy funded industry development projects is usually free. There is an annual fee involved with accreditation and most workshops or seminars request a small charge. In depth business development work may incur a charge.

## Q. How do I contact a development officer?

A. Through their state NGI office. See contact details to the left.

## Summary

A national network of experienced, qualified and competent Development Officers is available to help nursery and garden businesses become more professional. With access to resources and programs that demonstrate best management practices and/or provide

marketing and promotional tools, they can provide individually tailored business development advice to help you build better businesses.

For more information, contact your state NGI office or check out the Development Officer network at [www.ngia.com.au](http://www.ngia.com.au)

