

# NURSERY PAPERS

MAY  
2021

## Building career pathways in the nursery industry

**Valued at approximately \$2.6 billion and employing almost 25,000 people across the sector, the nursery industry is one of the largest and most valuable sectors of Australian horticulture.**

But despite its size and importance, the industry faces challenges in its ability to attract and retain both new and experienced people. In order to address these challenges head on, the industry is investing in developing greenlife career pathways to attract the next generation of talent, grow the skills and knowledge of the current nursery workforce and help shape the next leaders of the industry.

This nursery paper provides an overview of the industry's strategy to boost career development within the sector, headlined by a strategic levy-funded project *Developing Nursery Career Pathways* (NY19006), led by RMCG and Greenlife Industry Australia (GIA).

### SUMMARY

- An injection of fresh talent, from diverse backgrounds with unique skill sets and fresh ideas will secure a productive future workforce for the greenlife industry.
- Nursery employees just don't grow plants, they provide shade, grow fruit, nuts and vegetables, reduce erosion and provide physical and mental health and well-being benefits.
- The nursery industry has developed a suite of materials to help the industry attract, retain and grow the skills of its talent.
- Significant industry consultation has taken place to ensure impactful and relevant messaging.
- The suite of materials available to growers and job seekers includes information on scholarships and training opportunities, real-life case studies of diverse career pathways and a live jobs board.
- A careers hub has been launched which is accessible by employers, employees and job seekers to share information, factsheets and brochures which showcase the benefits of a career in the nursery industry.

### BACKGROUND

A key challenge for agricultural industries across Australia is attracting, developing and retaining talented staff. It is continually rated in the top issues for the nursery industry to address along with plant biosecurity, water security and sustaining demand for greenlife.

There are numerous reasons including access to specific tertiary education, an understanding of the benefits the industry delivers, as well as strong competition from other sectors including construction related trades and mining. Furthermore, until recently there has been low promotion of the industry as an employer of choice with career pathways unclear.

A strategic levy-funded project *Developing Nursery Career Pathways* (NY19006), led by RMCG and Greenlife Industry Australia (GIA) has been conducted to assist to address this challenge.

This project is focusing on the implementation of two of the recommendations delivered by a previous levy-funded project *Review of nursery industry career pathways* (NY17002), which produced a strategy that details a clear roadmap for skilled career path development in the nursery industry.

  
Greenlife  
Industry Careers



## Why is this important?

The future success of the greenlife industry relies on an injection of fresh talent, from diverse backgrounds with unique skill sets and fresh ideas. The industry needs talented plant producers – ‘innovative horticulturalists’ who can produce plants for an impacted climate and continue to support the liveability of Australia through thriving, healthy, shaded communities and by ensuring the nation’s food security. The industry also needs experts in plant biosecurity, information technology, robotics, marketing, sales, workplace health and safety, accounting, finance, chemical management, customer relationships and environmental sustainability.

Roles in all of these functions are available within the nursery industry, and a greater focus on all the opportunities is required.

Having a career in the greenlife and nursery industry just does not grow plants, it delivers so much more including:

- Providing the canopy cover and shade to reduce the heat island effect in urban areas
- Supplying the plants for fruit, nut and vegetable production
- Help regenerate, restore and reinvigorate impacted and sensitive environmental areas
- Produces the timber products required for housing, furniture and other products
- Contributes to the physical and mental health and well-being of all Australians through parks, gardens, recreational areas and indoor plants

The nursery industry career path development strategy provides a strong framework for the industry to collaborate and address the ongoing challenges and barriers to attracting a skilled workforce. It’s an opportunity for the industry to promote stories of growth and innovation to the wider community and attract the best people to create a stronger and secure workforce.


not yet entered the workforce and the careers advisers that support them to consider the industry for a purposeful career.

## Industry consultation

A workshop was held to identify opportunities for industry to address gaps in certified training programs and develop a learning framework that better supports early entrants into the greenlife industry and industry employers.

The workshop brought together educators, industry representatives, and production nursery operators to join a discussion around prototype courses to further enhance professional pathways for the nursery sector.

Following the workshop, the project team sought additional feedback from the nursery industry on the specific topic areas and subjects which growers and garden retailers would find most beneficial for new entrants, ensuring that the outputs of the project provide the most value.

	<b>Approximately 25,000 employed in nursery industry</b>
	<b>The average age of the industry is 54, with only 15% of employees being under 40, meaning a significant proportion of the industry will need to be replaced in the coming years</b>
	<b>Only 24% of the workforce are tertiary qualified with 2019 data indicating that 17% are horticulturally qualified.</b>
	<b>92% of businesses have at least one tertiary qualified employee</b>
	<b>Business with a lower turnover have a higher ratio of qualified staff.</b>
	<b>47% of employees are women</b>

## Project strategy

The project leveraged an integrated approach to attraction, training, development and retention of talent with a focus on defining, developing and showcasing jobs and career pathways. These pathways demonstrate dynamic career opportunities within the sector, and encourage young people who have

## Project deliverables

Having engaged closely with industry, a series of outputs have been developed to help achieve the project priorities as listed above. These outputs are available via the Careers Hub – a repository of information regarding nursery industry pathways. The content is available to employers as well as school leavers and counsellors.

## GIA strategic priorities

- 1. Industry Promotion and Awareness** – important for fostering a positive industry image and essential for raising awareness and interest in working in the industry
- 2. Addressing Policy Parameters** including development of a training support framework
- 3. Facilitate the targeted design and delivery of training programs** (formal and informal) that support the upskilling of people in the nursery industry at several levels (19006)
- 4. Human Resource Management Practices** to understand what the next generation workforce wants
- 5. Showcase jobs and career pathways** that demonstrate dynamic career opportunities within the nursery sectors to those in horticulture and other relevant industries (19006)



The outputs developed include:

**All about greenlife careers** – up to date information for students, parents, career advisers and employers with further information on employability skills and scholarships available

**Career pathways** – details on the courses available to students and the specific career pathways attached to those qualifications

**Education and training information** – information relating to horticulture-related higher education opportunities from TAFE, universities and other vocational educational providers.

**Greenlife careers guide** – A series of case studies which showcase real-life examples of diverse career pathways taken, to highlight the opportunities available in the industry. (see next page for more information).

**Information for career advisors** – Brochures targeted at careers advisors and students contemplating post-school education or vocation.

**Greenlife jobs board** – An interactive job board to showcase current opportunities in the greenlife industry with functionality for employers to submit vacancies.

**Greenlife NexGen** – Collection of contacts for groups and associations of young horticulture industry participants

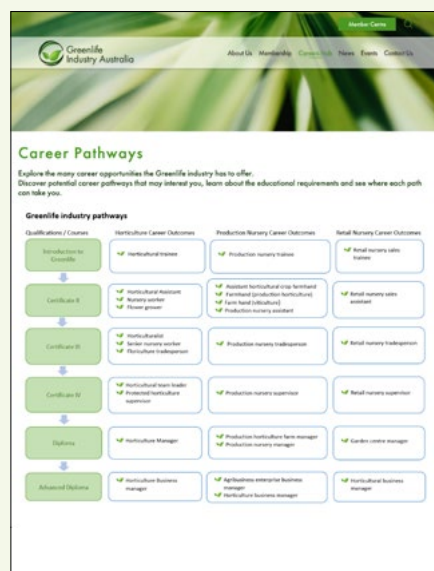
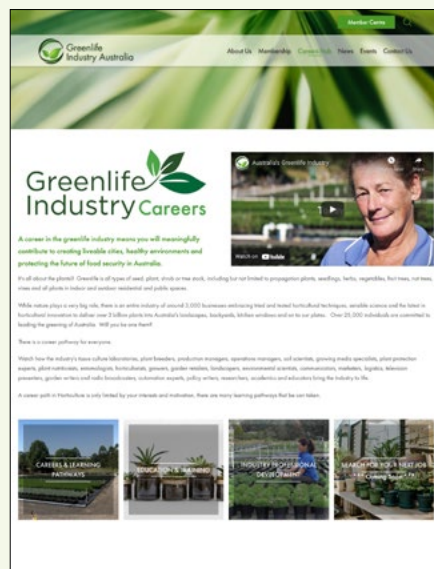
**Train the Trainer** – A guide to training for those who are new to training new employees

**Careers Hub** – The Careers Hub is the repository for all the outputs created for the project and will be regularly updated with new information. Find out more about the careers hub below

## Launching the careers hub

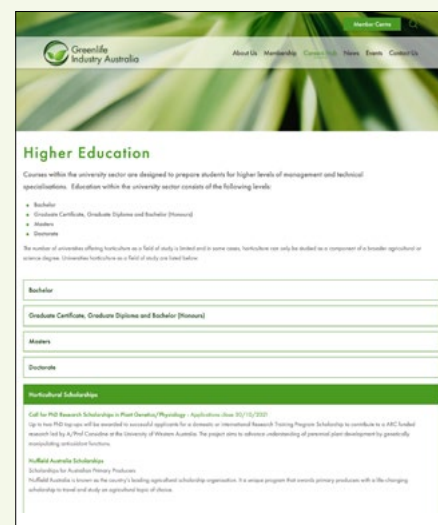
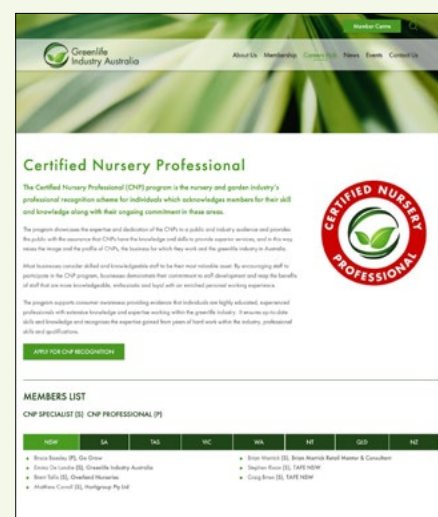
The greenlife industry careers hub is the industry's portal to all resources relating to careers, education and professional development. At launch it includes all the resources, fact sheets and brochures created for the levy-funded project *Developing Nursery Career Pathways* (NY19006), but it will continue operating beyond the scope of this project.

# Accessing the careers hub



The hub has been developed for nursery industry businesses to provide information and decision support to students, 'career changers' and their advisors in making an objective decision on a career and the job opportunities in the nursery industry. The content available on the hub should be referred to in formulating human resources strategies at the individual business level.

Information regarding available scholarships, tertiary education placements will be regularly updated and will be an invaluable source of opportunities for new and current staff to further their careers.



Growers can access the Careers Hub at  
<https://www.greenlifeindustry.com.au/greenlife-careers-hub>





# SHOWCASING CAREER PATHWAYS

One of the most important outcomes of the project will be to showcase the boundless opportunities available to new entrants into the nursery industry.

Often thought about as an industry dominated by 'family businesses' with a linear career path, the nursery and green life industry provides opportunities for diverse careers.

The project has highlighted some greenlife industry participants that have built careers in the industry outside of the 'typical career path'. These industry stories will be made available to school leavers, parents and careers advisers to advocate for the experiences that are available in the nursery industry.

Consult the careers hub for a full list of career pathway case studies.



## Chris Sargent, Managing Director, Plant Management Australia



"Horticulture has literally taken me around the world and back, time and time again. That's the power and scope our industry provides for anyone who wishes to connect with it."

## Carole Fudge, Sales and Marketing Manager, Benara Nurseries



"I quickly worked out that I thoroughly enjoyed being in the nursery and was able to balance time working in the nursery with the plants and customers, with the bookkeeping in the office".

## Daniel Ewing, General Manager, Alpine Nurseries



"My career path has seen me work in multiple sectors of horticulture and broaden my horizons by working in sales roles in allied businesses within the greenlife industry. My diverse pathway brings fresh perspectives to the day to day running of the business."

## LINKS TO RESOURCES

- The careers hub is available here: <https://www.greenlifeindustry.com.au/greenlife-careers-hub/greenlife-careers>
- PAST EDITIONS OF NURSERY PAPERS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE on the Greenlife Industry Australia website: <https://www.greenlifeindustry.com.au/communications-centre>