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Jongs Nursery: setting the standard in ethical plant production

Jongs Nursery began much like assembling an IKEA cabinet – one step at a time. After establishing the foundational structure, the owners meticulously tested products and identified market gaps crafting a unique and well-rounded product range.

A key element of its operation is the Ethical Nursery Stock Specification (ENSS), part of the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA) Best Management Practices Guidelines, it sets a benchmark for ethical operations within the nursery supply chain.

These guidelines provide a framework for businesses to uphold high standards in employment, safety and sustainability, promoting transparency across the supply chain.

Jong's Nursery: from the ground up

With 50 years of combined experience between them, Peter Jong and his father Nico started the nursery in 2018 after migrating to Mount Compass, South Australia from the Netherlands.

Today, Jong's Nursery thrives as a family-owned business, employing 12 staff members. Enjoying a strong local focus, 80% of its business is intrastate. However, the nursery also sends plants across Australia excluding Western Australia.

Jongs Nursery grows 500,000 plants annually, focusing on advanced potted colour varieties that are ready to make an impact the moment they're planted.

Their range includes orchids and other standout species. Peter says that they are developed to have that 'wow factor' from the moment they are planted.

"We quite literally started from scratch, assembling the nursery like an IKEA cabinet, one piece at a time," Peter said.

"Once the basic structure was in place, we began testing different products to address market gaps. We spotted opportunities for products that were missing, and from there, we developed our current product range."

Today, Peter and his wife, Chantal Jong, lead the nursery operations.

"Two years ago, my father stepped down and my wife joined the management team." said Peter. "At that time, Chantal had just completed her Cert IV in Leadership and Management. Chantal implemented new HR systems alongside ENSS, driving a transformation in workplace practices at Jong's Nursery."

Impact of ENSS certification

ENSS sets a standard for ethical practices, improving staff retention and reducing sick leave.

"Complying with the ENSS has strengthened our commitment to ethical operations, from employment standards to water management," Peter said.

"It ensures we consistently meet industry guidelines while pushing us to go beyond the basics, fostering a culture of improvement across the supply chain."

To meet ENSS requirements, Jongs Nursery updated its employee handbook, using the ENSS guidelines to make sure that all areas were covered. Many of the nursery's previous practices were already aligned with the ethical standards, but the ENSS provided a cohesive structure, streamlining processes such as staff intake and feedback

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ENNS outlines requirements for ethical certification and includes a business code of conduct, and a policies and procedures manual to help businesses meet the guidelines.

By complying with ENSS, nurseries can:

- ensure transparent, ethical, legal and sustainable operations
- increase their chances of securing high-profile contracts and achieving 'preferred supplier' status
- provide management with clear guidelines for ethical decision-making
- enhance communication between employees and management
- boost staff morale, product quality and operational efficiency
- offer a transparent conflict resolution process for internal and external complaints.

Jong's Nursery has seen tangible benefits from third-party accreditation. Having achieved NIASA accreditation, they adopted the ENSS a year ago, and the results have been clear.

"By ensuring we source products and services ethically across our entire supply chain, we've built a reputation as an employer of choice, attracting new hires who value our commitment to ethical practices.

"The implementation of the ENSS has also helped us formalise performance reviews and streamline internal processes," Peter said.

Jongs Nursery has reduced time spent onboarding new staff, providing clear expectations from the outset. This has led to faster productivity.

Being ENSS certified allows nurseries to excel in recruitment and selection, fair working conditions and workplace health and safety, creating a safe and positive environment where employees feel valued and protected.

Jong's Nursery's adoption of the ENSS has reinforced its commitment to ethical practices, improved HR processes

and enhanced operational efficiency, positioning it as a leader in ethical standards within the industry.

"The nursery has become so much more than what we started with. It's truly an extension of our home. Watching my kids step up and my father still offering advice has been invaluable," said Peter.

"Empowering our team to take on more responsibility is key. We couldn't succeed without them – that's why we are committed to programs like Ethical Nursery Stock Specification."

For more information the NIASA ENSS certification please visit:

<https://www.greenlifeindustry.com.au/static/uploads/files/cic-107955-nursery-papers-aug-24-04-web-wfmgkilhfcnr.pdf>

To download the ethical specification guidelines visit: <https://nurseryproductionfms.com.au/niasa-accreditation/>

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