

Final Report

Australian nursery industry communications program

Project leader:

Sam Cox

Delivery partner:

Cox Inall Communications

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NY18001

Project:

Australian nursery industry communications program (NY18001)

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Level 7

141 Walker Street

North Sydney NSW 2060

Telephone: (02) 8295 2300

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Public summary

The Australian Nursery Industry Communications Program (NY18001) commenced in November 2018 and was originally scheduled to finish in November 2021, however, several extensions were introduced, and the project finished in November 2022. The project was led by Cox Inall Communications, with strong partnership and support from Greenlife Industry Australia (GIA).

This was a project of significant importance to the nursery industry, which is one of the largest contributors to the Australian horticulture sector, generating \$2.8 billion in sales during the 2020-21 financial year and employing 23,000 staff across all corners of Australia.

The project effectively communicated levy-funded research and development (R&D) information using relevant channels to increase industry awareness of levy investment activities and stimulate adoption of R&D by growers to promote a more profitable and productive industry.

At commencement of this program, a refresh of all existing communications activities was undertaken to give the levy investment a wider appeal and ensure greatest exposure for created materials. This refresh was applied across the Your Levy @ Work microsite as well as content templates and the Your Levy @ Work Newsletter.

An initial communications strategy was also developed at the inception of the program which outlined the assets, tools and channels that would be developed and included guidance on the types of topics that would be explored throughout the program.

This strategy was updated on a yearly basis, using the results of an annual communications survey to help guide the future of the program.

This project followed on from the previous project, NY15006, which saw the communications program evolve into a pivotal channel to connect growers with the latest R&D and marketing insights. NY18001 continued the successful activities of the previous project as well as introducing new focus areas, such as the quarterly podcast series, The Plant Pod, which were received well by growers.

A wide range of high value content was created across the four-year project, with print, audio, video and online assets created and distributed across a range of channels including the Hort Journal, GIA channels, YouTube, social media and traditional media.

The following outputs were developed through this project:

- A monthly eNewsletter
- Regular blogs (approximately weekly)
- Monthly nursery papers
- 38 written case studies
- 22 video case studies
- 23 media releases
- 16 podcasts
- 4 Facts at a Glance documents
- 3 Levy Payer Kits
- Recurring Work-In-Progress meetings with GIA
- Ongoing stakeholder engagement and event attendance relating to the Australian nursery industry.

The overarching purpose of this program was to supply stakeholders with timely, relevant, and comprehensive information on levy funded R&D outcomes and opportunities for adoption to increase levy payers' understanding of the projects being undertaken by the industry and enable practice change.

Based on results from regular surveys undertaken, these outcomes have been achieved, evidenced by both the high level of engagement with outputs which indicates interest, but more importantly that growers are making changes on-farm, as a direct result of levy communications, including 28% of respondents in 2021 and 29% in 2020. This is quite a high conversion rate of close to a third of the audience making direct changes on-farm as a result of the communications program.

Keywords

Greenlife, Nursery industry, Cox Inall Communications, Greenlife Industry Australia, GIA, Communication, Research and Development, Marketing, Nursery production, Landscaping

Introduction

The Australian Nursery Industry Communications Program (NY18001) commenced in November 2018 and was originally scheduled to finish in November 2021, however, several extensions were introduced, and the project finished in November 2022. The project was led by Cox Inall Communications, with strong partnership and support from Greenlife Industry Australia (GIA).

All outputs for this program have been developed and implemented by Cox Inall in collaboration with Hort Innovation, and GIA, enabling the development of high-quality communications outputs around nursery industry research and development (R&D) outcomes for the benefit of levy payers.

The main aim of the project was to raise awareness and encourage uptake of nursery levy funded R&D and marketing. More specifically, it sought to equip the nursery industry with the latest R&D and marketing findings, best practice resources, as well as identify emerging opportunities and risks.

The key objectives of the communications program were to:

- Increase industry understanding, awareness and adoption of production best practice, emerging production information and relevant outcomes related to R&D and marketing projects
- Create a better-informed industry to increase farm productivity
- Promote Hort Innovation membership and engagement with the national R&D program to all nursery levy payers.

Each of these objectives was considered throughout the lifetime of the project and results from our regular communications surveys indicate both an increased awareness and understanding, as evidenced by high readership and engagement of materials, and the consistent growth of GIA social media outputs, among other key results.

The communications program also ensured alignment with the Nursery Industry Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) 2017 – 2021. It's important to note that a new SIP was launched midway through the final year of the project extension.

The key outcomes from the SIP (2017-21) were:

SIP Outcome	Strategies to support
Increased demand and sales of green life products by four per cent per annum plus CPI	Support marketing projects such as Greener Spaces Better Places by producing content to amplify amongst growers (video case studies, blogs, podcasts etc.)
Increased marketing effectiveness and efficiency and better decision making based on increased industry knowledge	Highlight key projects such as the <i>Nursery Industry Statistics Project</i> (NY17008/NY21000) to showcase market opportunities to growers. Development of yearly Facts at a Glance output which further outlined market opportunities.
Improved industry protection from exotic, emerging and endemic pests and diseases	Significant engagement with projects such as <i>Resourcing, supporting, and assessing biosecurity in nursery production</i> (NY20000). This project was supported by cross promoting webinars, developing related case studies, and running regular features on managing pests.
Improved productivity, profitability and professionalism through the creation and adoption of innovation and industry BMPs	The communications project worked very closely with John McDonald, project lead for the <i>National biosecurity and sustainable plant production program</i> (NY20001), which maintains the nursery industry best practice guidelines. Content from this project was a major focus.
Better career development	Develop case studies which showcased nursery industry career pathways.

Over the past four years, Cox Inall has developed a wide range of high value content, leveraged across multiple channels to ensure maximum reach and effectiveness. This includes monthly newsletters, weekly blogs, monthly Nursery Papers,

38 written case studies, 22 videos, 23 media releases, quarterly podcasts, four Facts at a Glance documents, and three Levy Payer Kits.

The program has remained a pivotal channel to connect growers with the latest R&D and marketing updates. Using a diverse mix of communication outputs, which have been tailored to the needs of the grower (as determined through both the SIP and our own annual surveys), the program has been successful.

Methodology

The following methodology guided the delivery of the Australian nursery industry communications program:

Inception Meeting: Cox Inall held an inception meeting with GIA to agree on the project activities being undertaken to deliver the next iteration of the Australian nursery industry communications program. This ensured a seamless transition between projects.

Communications Strategy: Cox Inall developed the initial communications strategy which included results from an initial grower survey (20 participants). This initial survey was conducted online to confirm key target audiences, channels, topics, and frequency of outputs.

The strategy included key learnings from the previous communications program (NY15006) and set the strategic direction for the next four years, and incorporated fresh insights from the survey and new requirements under NY18001. The strategy included a SWOT analysis, program logic, stakeholder engagement matrix, as well as a monitoring and evaluation plan, to ensure the strategy aligned with the nursery SIP and that KPIs were met.

This strategy was then updated on a yearly basis, following the commencement of an annual survey, and was also informed by industry knowledge and anecdotal feedback and advice from GIA.

Levy Payer Surveys: Priority topic areas were largely guided by feedback from growers in the form of levy payer surveys. These surveys also provided a useful pulse for the engagement and sentiment towards the outputs Cox Inall produced, so tweaks could be made throughout the project accordingly.

R&D and Marketing Project Portfolio: The project team built an excellent understanding of the levy funded R&D and marketing projects across the complete portfolio. This included building a good working relationship with other project providers through activities such as monthly calls with Republic of Everyone; attending project information sessions, events, and webinars; and building a strong understanding of the levy investment process and the role of Hort Innovation.

Work in Progress (WIP) Meetings: A comprehensive WIP meeting document guided activity, determined outputs, assessed progress, and assisted in the day-to-day management of the project. WIP meetings between GIA and Cox Inall were held via teleconference every fortnight with face-to-face meetings also held throughout the project.

Communications Outputs and Channels: Each of the above activities led to development of outputs that were professionally delivered across appropriate channels that were fit for industry. Importantly, outputs that Cox Inall delivered each had a targeted purpose that ladder back to grower demands and the SIP.

More details on the outputs delivered is covered in the Outputs section of this report.

Results and discussion

The key objectives of this project were to:

- Increase industry understanding, awareness and adoption of production best practice, emerging production information and relevant outcomes related to R&D and marketing projects
- Create a better-informed industry to increase farm productivity
- Promote Hort Innovation membership and engagement with the national R&D program to all nursery levy payers.

It should be noted that people consume content and learn in different ways. The variety of outputs, mediums and channels helps maximise effectiveness and ensure that growers are able to get the information they want, in the format they prefer.

The results of the work indicate that these objectives have been achieved. This is demonstrated through several factors outlined below including:

- High levels of awareness with outputs, measured through open rates, web traffic, video views, podcast listens and more
- High levels of engagement and understanding measured through downloads, click throughs and survey results
- High levels of adoption as reflected in the results of regular communications surveys.

Results of work undertaken

eNewsletters: Industry awareness based on the open rates of the Your Levy @ Work newsletter is a strong indicator of engagement.

The eNewsletter contains all of the content that is produced through this project and is distributed to 1,629 levy payers and other industry stakeholders.

One of the key measures of industry engagement is click through and open rates for the monthly eNewsletter. The eNewsletter has consistently performed at a very high level with results far exceeding industry benchmarks. For the lifetime of the project, the monthly eNewsletter's open rate was 28.68%, which is significantly higher than an industry (agriculture) benchmark of 18.39% (source: <https://mailchimp.com/en-au/resources/email-marketing-benchmarks/>).

Whilst open rates typically measure awareness, we can get a strong understanding of engagement by measuring our click through rate.

The eNewsletter also had extremely high click through rate, with an average of 5.44 % across the project, against an industry benchmark of 2.1% (2019). These consistently strong results indicate that the Australian nursery industry saw value in the content developed from this project.

The Your Levy @ Work website, which houses the blogs that are fed into the eNewsletter, received a total of 38,443 page views across the lifetime of this project. In this milestone period, there were 6,562 page views, an approximately 57% increase from the previous milestone period.

The Your Levy @ Work eNewsletter is developed and built by Cox Inall with planning support and feedback from GIA. Each edition is distributed by GIA.

Table 1. MS190 eNewsletters

The achievements of the eNewsletter from this milestone are as follows:

Newsletter (2022)	Open rate (%)	Click Rate (%)
March	34.2%	6.5%
April	33.2%	7.6%
May	31.2%	5.7%
June	31.7%	4.3%

July	31.4%	3.8%
August	31.8%	4.0%
September	34.3%	6.2%
October	29.9%	4.2%

Table 2. NY18001 eNewsletters

When looking at the project as a whole, it achieved consistently high rates of opens and clicks throughout the life of the project as evidenced below.

Milestone	Average Open rate (%)	Average Click Rate (%)
102	28%	5.2%
103	28%	6.1%
104	26.22%	5.76%
105	26.6%	5.5%
106	29.22%	5.74%
108	29.01%	5.06%
110	30.2%	4.9%
190	32.21%	5.28%

Podcasts: This project saw the launch of a new output, The Plant Pod, a quarterly podcast aimed at highlighting the most exciting innovations within the nursery industry. A Stop/Go milestone was included within the project and the decision was made to continue with the podcasts.

The Plant Pod has 28 followers at this point and its most popular episodes have over 200 individual plays, which indicates a high level of engagement with this output. Episodes are promoted through grower channels such as eNewsletters and on the Your Levy @ Work website, instead of SoundCloud which hosts the episode. This encourages the audience to listen through owned channels rather than subscribe.

We can also determine that this output has helped achieve the outcomes of the project through analysis of annual surveys. In 2020 and 2021 surveys, an average of 69% of growers said the podcasts were relevant to their business.

Video case studies: Anecdotally, our video case study series has been incredibly well received by industry and the growers who participate. Each video is produced to directly work towards an objective of this program and/or the objectives of the industry SIP.

Industry surveys indicate that video case studies are seen as relevant for 73% of growers – demonstrating a high level of value and engagement.

This is reinforced by the statistics from GIA's YouTube channel. The strongest performing videos include:

- Benara Nurseries' use of the marketing programs – over 1,000 views and aligned to SIP Objective 1
- Oasis Horticulture is implementing risk mitigation strategies to build resilience and ensure business continuity – 792 views, aligned to project Objective 1 (Increase industry understanding, awareness and adoption of production best practice, emerging production information and relevant outcomes related to R&D and marketing projects)
- Touchwood Nursery, demonstrating the value of adhering to best practice plant protection programs such as NIASA, and providing practical guidance for how this could enhance customer confidence and drive greater business outcomes – 512 views, with a strong alignment to SIP Objective 4.

Written Case Studies: As with video case studies, written case studies are well-regarded by industry and seen as a vital tool to help build awareness, engagement and adoption of levy funded outcomes.

Growers value the written case studies, with an average of 81% saying they are relevant for them and their business.

Over the life of the project, the 'News' sections on the GIA website, where written case studies are housed, achieved over 62,500 page views. It is important to note that GIA underwent a major website refresh in 2021, which resulted in the loss of data from the pre-existing site, so this is an indicative total based off results from the current reporting period and previous milestone reports.

Nursery Papers: Nursery Papers are distributed to core audiences via several channels and are assessed in part by the annual survey, as well as page visits on each Nursery Paper.

Nursery Papers are well regarded among industry, especially for technical information on biosecurity and production issues. Survey results showed on average, 86% of growers identified Nursery Papers as either 'very relevant' or 'somewhat relevant'.

Ongoing reporting attributes 3,990 of views and downloads on the 'News' section of the GIA website to Nursery Papers.

Social Media: Levy-funded content for the GIA Facebook and Twitter communities is provided on a weekly basis, including a written plan and suggestions for sharing or re-tweeting from other industry stakeholders.

The project has used Facebook and Twitter as a posting board for all content produced by the program to broaden reach, as well as provide updates on the latest events, news, tools, and happenings in the industry. It is visually engaging with a more casual tone to ensure posts are shareable and easy to digest.

Selected posts such as case studies and videos are boosted via Facebook paid advertising, which puts them in front of users who may not otherwise see them.

Throughout the lifetime of the project, in collaboration with GIA, the project has been able to significantly grow its reach, moving the needle for awareness and engagement for levy-funded activity. When the project commenced, the Facebook account had 5,973 followers and by November 2022, the account had 8,878 followers, a significant 49% growth.

Table 3. Facebook analytics

Weekly social media plans have been instrumental in driving engagement. The following analytics are based on metrics for Facebook:

Milestone	Total Facebook Posts	Total Reach
102	147	166,017
103	152	163,490
104	136	88,626
105	109	52,651
106	103	30,830
108	168	132,353
110	31	12,739
190	153	55,383

Table 4. Twitter analytics

Twitter has been a useful corporate communications tool to disseminate information about nursery levy updates. The achievements from across this project are:

Milestone	Tweets	Engagements	Impressions
102	88	600	56,273
103	111	1024	64,336
104	83	538	34,339
105	94	584	26,571

106	70	399	22,329
108	69	388	16,698
110	29	133	5,305
190	129	460	14,256

Media releases: A regular cadence of media relations has increased awareness for levy-funded outputs beyond the core industry audience.

Across the course of the project, at least 68 media clippings were achieved – an average of almost three pieces of coverage per media release.

Examples from resultant media release coverage includes:

FAO labels 2020 as International Year of Plant Health

March 2 2019 - 10:00pm

HEALTHY: The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) has declared 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health.

HORTICULTURE'S profile is set to be given an international lift next year with the declaration of 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health.

Record-breaking year for nursery industry

INCREASED grower confidence and consumer demand saw about 1.9 billion nursery plants sold in Australia last year.

AMELIA PEPE

less than 2 min read April 11, 2020 - 12:00AM The Weekly Times

0 comments

Australians bought more plants than ever in 2020 with COVID-19 lockdowns fuelling sales

ABC Rural / By the national regional reporting team's Jeremy Story Carter

Posted Wed 31 Mar 2021 at 3:03pm

Australians bought more plants than ever last year. (ABC News: Jeremy Story Carter)

Quarantine zone for polyphagous shot-hole borer pest expands to Perth city and western suburbs

Kristie Lim | PerthNow - Canning

November 17, 2021 4:29PM

TOPICS Local News PerthNow - Fremantle South

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development has expanded its quarantine area for the polyphagous shot-hole borer from East Fremantle to the western suburbs and inner city area.

The PSHB was first detected in East Fremantle in September and has since continued to spread throughout the suburb.

The initial quarantine area was launched on September 24 and covered parts of Fremantle, East Fremantle, North Fremantle, Palmyra and Bicton.

Recap of stakeholder surveys: The annual stakeholder survey sought to provide the best opportunity to assess value placed on outputs, identify key challenges facing industry, and identify whether the content has encouraged growers to seek more information or adopt R&D findings. Results also helped inform recommendations for the next iteration of this program.

Two mid-project communications surveys were completed both with high levels of participation. The survey received 51 responses in 2020 and 40 responses in 2021. With survey participation in the agriculture and horticulture industries typically low, this was considered a strong result.

Survey results were positive and identified a series of strengths that demonstrate that this project was able to achieve its objectives as well as support those of the SIP.

Key highlights from the survey include:

1. A significant number of growers indicated that they had adopted new practices on-farm as a result of the Nursery Industry Communications program (average of 29%). It's also worth noting that in both years, 50% indicated they were 'unsure', which indicates they can't recall if there was a direct correlation, which may mean the real result was even higher
2. All outputs received strong 'relevancy' results, with Nursery Papers and case studies being most highly valued.

The results show that our outputs well received and valued by industry, with a strong proportion of the industry improving their on-farm operations as a direct result of these materials. This demonstrates the effectiveness our strategy and content development process.

This is reinforced by anecdotal feedback and shows the outputs and channels are valuable and relevant to industry.

Outputs

During the Australian nursery industry communications program, Cox Inall produced the following outputs.

Table 5. Outcome summary

Output	Description	Detail
Communications Strategy and Plan	A communications strategy was developed to guide the four-year program. It was updated annually and informed by feedback from the levy payer communication survey.	Not made publicly available.
Levy Payer Communications Survey	An annual communications survey was developed and deployed in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 across the nursery industry, which guided the communications strategy.	The annual surveys were published through social media and eNewsletters. Survey results are detailed in the Results and Discussion section of this report.
Monthly Your Levy @ Work eNewsletter and blogs	<p>This project developed regular blog content (roughly weekly) for the Your Levy @ Work website, which collectively forms the monthly Your Levy @ Work eNewsletter.</p> <p>As the curator of the content, Cox Inall liaised with GIA and delivery partners to source content ideas, write and manage approvals, as well as upload to the website.</p> <p>Content focused on the latest R&D and marketing news, updates, and events.</p> <p>Outputs from NY18001 are included/referenced in the eNewsletter, which is one of the program's most successful and popular sources of information on levy related activities.</p>	<p>All blog articles created throughout the lifetime of the project are available at: https://yourlevyatwork.com.au/</p> <p>Links to each of the eNewsletters are available below:</p> <p>2018: December/January</p> <p>2019: February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November</p> <p>2020: December/January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December/January</p> <p>2021: February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December</p> <p>2022: February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November</p>
Nursery Papers	<p>A practical and effective resource for growers, Nursery Papers are four-page technical papers available in both print and online which provide practical, advice to growers.</p> <p>They focus on providing content to growers that is directly actionable on-farm and results in adoption of best-management practices.</p>	<p>Nursery Papers are distributed to core audiences via several channels. They are included as a print lift out in the monthly Hort Journal, as well as distributed online via the Your Levy @ Work eNewsletter and social media.</p> <p>2018: Review and maintenance of irrigation</p> <p>2019: Produce Plant Life Balance; Importance Of Correct Pest And Disease Identification In Nursery Production; Roadshow unveils new Tree Stock Standard; Benchmarking Tool Enables Nurseries to 'Mean' Business; Nursery industry career path development strategy; Neonicotinoid insecticides - no replacements but there are alternatives; Global review and gap analysis of nursery industry research</p>

		<p>and development initiatives; Mastering the art of gross margins in production nurseries; Specifying tree stock for success; Creating personalised management plans for key nursery pests; War on waste</p> <p>2020: Risk mitigation for the nursery industry; Making the marketing levy work for you; Benchmarking for success; The Arrival of Fall Armyworm; Supplying Australia's green cities; International Year of Plant Health; Insecticide Mode of Action and Resistance Management in Production Nurseries; Cultivating the nursery industry's most important resource – people; Managing a virus; Water management for production nurseries; Managing a fungus</p> <p>2021: Understanding the nursery levy; NIASA Nursery Stock Specifications; Using data to build a better picture of the nursery industry; Nursery industry career pathways; Greenlife Market Analysis Report; Preparing for exotic pest incursions; Spotted lanternfly (SLF), Lycorma delicatula; Making the most of precious water resources; Nursery Tree Stock Inspection and verification procedure; Sustainability in focus; Accelerating uptake and removing barriers to green roofs in Australia; Weed management in production nurseries</p> <p>2022: Accessing levy-funded research; Fostering innovation within production nurseries; Learn more about your business with industry data; Preparing for natural disasters; Huanglongbing; Parasitoid Management; Ensuring business continuity during biosecurity incursions; Climate ready street trials; Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer; Sprinkler selection, layout and operation</p>
Written case studies (2 to be finalised)	<p>Peer-to-peer learning is highly effective, and case studies of industry participants are therefore one of the best ways to highlight practice change associated with the adoption of R&D and marketing outcomes.</p> <p>Topics for case studies are determined by industry priorities as indicated by grower surveys, the SIP and anecdotal feedback from GIA.</p>	<p>Written case studies are developed and distributed to levy payers via the Your Levy @ Work eNewsletter and social media as well as distributed via email to core industry stakeholders and media.</p> <p>Milestone 102: Diagnosing unusual or rare plant pests; New standard sets benchmark for tree quality; Communication to inspire innovation; Nursery industry to promote green careers; Global collaboration key to addressing local challenges</p> <p>Milestone 103: Strategic research initiative a launch pad for greener, healthier cities; Arborwest becomes first to pass new tree stock specification audit; Success starts with a clean source for Eyles Citrus; Data driven decisions guide growth for Living Colour Nursery; Pest free production key to success for Trandos Hydroponic Growers</p>

		<p>Milestone 104: Connecting with customers through the power of marketing; Masterclass key to continued career success at Humphris Nursery; Quality breeds success at Touchwood Nursery; Learning from the past and preparing for the future; Every tree counts at Ellenby Tree Farm</p> <p>Milestone 105: Case Study - Townsville Plant Wholesalers Forges a Path Based On Reliable Data; Integrated pest Management Driving Sustainability at Azalea Grove Nursery; Growers arm themselves with new information on DIY green wall projects; Supporting business growth through formal education; Lowes TC leaps into QBAN accreditation</p> <p>Milestone 106: Andreasens Green Wholesale Nurseries leverages market insights for strategic planning; Reducing disaster risk through strategic planning at Mt Nathan Nursery; NIASA and BioSecure HACCP accreditation helps Fleming's navigate cross-jurisdictional trade; Horticulture is an industry for all says PMA boss - Chris Sargent; Industry benchmarking tool puts Engall's nursery on track for better business management</p> <p>Milestone 108; Best management practice helps Spring Creek seedling achieve its sustainability goals; Macadamia Nursery Stock Specification enhancing customer confidence at MacQ Nursery; Hort Masterclass put more 'tools in the toolbox' for Cameron's Nursery; Pohlmans Nursery continues to reap rewards from plant protection programs; Greener Spaces Better Places prepares growers for a new phase of marketing;</p> <p>Milestone 110: Golden Grove Nursery optimizing efficiency with smart technology; Connecting with levy-funded research; NIASA helps guide the way for Penrith Council Nursery revitalisation project; How access to industry benchmarking drives Boamaroo forward</p> <p>Milestone 190: Extension Officers; Smart Farming; NIASA journey with Australian Bush Trees (<i>Please note that this case study is approved and awaiting distribution to align with approvals on the accompanying video case study and can be viewed in Appendix 2</i>); Ironwood Institute and career pathways (<i>Please note this is currently in approvals and the DRAFT version can be viewed in Appendix 1</i>)</p>
Video case studies (2 to be finalised)	<p>Cox Inall developed and distributed R&D videos, which are 3-4 minutes in length, to explore a variety of levy funded projects and R&D outcomes.</p> <p>Topics are determined by industry priorities as indicated by growers surveys,</p>	<p>Video case studies are developed and distributed to levy payers via the Your Levy @ Work and social media. All videos developed across the course of the project can be accessed via the GIA YouTube account at: https://www.youtube.com/@ausngi/featured.</p> <p>Milestone 102: Tree Stock Roadshow at Alpine</p>

	<p>the SIP, anecdotal feedback from GIA and ongoing project lead liaison.</p>	<p>Nurseries; The Australian Industry Communications Program; Nursery industry to promote green careers</p> <p>Milestone 103: Global R&D; Hort Frontiers Green Cities; IPM Workshops</p> <p>Milestone 104: Marketing for Success at Benara Nurseries; NIASA at Touchwood Nursery; Disaster Mitigation at Oasis Horticulture</p> <p>Milestone 105: IPM at Azalea Grove Nursery; Hort Masterclass; It's Time to Grow Up</p> <p>Milestone 106: Careers with Chris Sargent; Best Practice at Lowes TC; Disaster Risk with Mt Nathan Nursery</p> <p>Milestone 108: Hort Masterclass with Sonja Cameron; Nursery Industry Communications Program; Penrith City Council Nursery</p> <p>Milestone 110: Extension Officers</p> <p>Milestone 190: Smart Farming Workshop; NIASA journey with Australian Bush Trees (<i>Currently in approval, DRAFT version available here (Password: Trees)</i>); Which Plant Where with Macquarie University (<i>Currently in approval, DRAFT version available here (Password: Plant)</i>)</p>
Podcasts	<p>Cox Inall launched a quarterly podcast series called The Plant Pod. A brand-new output starting from the ground up, we were able to build a solid listener base with 28 subscribed followers and hundreds of individual plays for episodes.</p> <p>Podcasts featured interviews with 2-3 spokespeople from levy-funded projects, Hort Innovation and other stakeholders including growers.</p> <p>Cox Inall liaised with talent, drafted the scripts, and produced each podcast.</p>	<p>The podcasts are hosted on SoundCloud, a professional audio streaming platform. The podcasts are also shared to levy payers via the Your Levy @ Work eNewsletter as well as through social media.</p> <p>All podcasts were positively received by industry with the audience steadily growing over the lifetime of the project.</p> <p>All 16 episodes developed across the course of the project can be accessed via SoundCloud here.</p>
Social media	<p>Levy-funded content for the GIA Facebook and Twitter communities is provided on a weekly basis, including a written plan and suggestions for sharing or re-tweeting from other industry stakeholders.</p> <p>The project has used Facebook and Twitter as a posting board for all content produced by the program to broaden reach, as well as providing updates on the latest events, news, tools, and happenings in the industry.</p> <p>It is visually engaging with a more casual tone to ensure posts are shareable and easy to digest.</p>	<p>In order to broaden reach further, we typically tag important stakeholders in posts to ensure that they are aware of the content and so they can share content further.</p> <p>The relevant social media channels are available here: Facebook and Twitter.</p>

Media releases	<p>To further extend levy-funded outcomes, we produced a series of media releases throughout the life of the project.</p> <p>These media releases were drafted by Cox Inall and approved by key researchers. Cox Inall then pitched the media releases to key media.</p> <p>This resulted in strong coverage outside of the core Greenlife community.</p> <p>Overall, 23 media releases were drafted across the four years.</p>	<p>Once media releases are approved by Hort Innovation, Cox Inall develops a unique media strategy and media list for each announcement.</p> <p>Media releases are also shared directly to growers via usual communications channels, such as Your Levy @ Work eNewsletter and social media.</p> <p>Links to all developed media releases are here:</p> <p>Milestone 102: NGIA hails 2020 as International Year of Plant Health; Nursery industry flourishes with record breaking year</p> <p>Milestone 103: Growing Together puts green space in the spotlight; Plant health pays off for Pohlman's Nursery (<i>Feature provided to UN for International Year of Plant Health</i>); Greener spaces better places takes root; Early bird registrations for Greenlife Industry National Conference extended</p> <p>Milestone 104: International Year of Plant Health launches in Australia; Australian wholesale nurseries sell over 2 billion plants in 2018-19; Australian production nurseries remain open</p> <p>Milestone 105: Investment tool launches to drive greater adoption of urban forest and greenspace; Living turf and greenlife can play active role in bushfire management; Growers urged to remain vigilant after Serpentine leafminer detected in Sydney</p> <p>Milestone 106: \$5 million invested in nursery project over 5 years to protect Australian from plant pests and diseases; Record breaking year for Australian greenlife industry; Citrus canker eradicated</p> <p>Milestone 108: Greenlife Industry launches Careers Hub to attract new talent; Nursery industry to take stock in November; Western Australia's nursery industry on alert with detection of Polyphagous shot-hole borer</p> <p>Milestone 110: Australian nursery industry breaks new record for plants sold in a year; New tool launched to promote climate-wise urban planning</p> <p>Milestone 190: School of Thumb solving gardening guesswork; Growers urged to participate in nursery survey; New era of biosecurity protection</p>
Factsheets	<p>This project conceptualized and created two unique fact sheet series.</p> <p>Firstly, the Facts at a Glance series was created to highlight key findings from the Nursery Industry Statistics project. This factsheet was able to provide information to growers on key market trends, as well</p>	<p>Factsheets are hosted on the GIA website and are distributed to key stakeholders via Your Levy @ Work eNewsletter.</p> <p>Links to these outputs are available here:</p> <p>Levy Payer Kit: 2019, 2020, 2021</p>

	<p>as help stakeholders demonstrate the importance of the industry.</p> <p>Secondly, the annual Levy Payer Kit was produced to highlight the work undertaken through the levy each year. This output was built on the insight that many growers are aware of the outputs of certain projects without understanding they are levy funded. This directly works towards Objective 3 of this project.</p>	<p>Facts at a Glance: 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022</p>
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Outcomes

This project was guided by a twin set of objectives upon which all activity was built.

Firstly, the objectives as defined in the original communications strategy:

1. Increase industry understanding, awareness and adoption of production best practice, emerging production information and relevant outcomes related to R&D and marketing projects
2. Create a better-informed industry to increase farm productivity
3. Promote Hort Innovation membership and engagement with the national R&D program to all nursery levy payers.

Secondly, the project received direction from the Australian Nursery Industry Strategic Investment Plan (2017-2021).

The SIP is in place to show levy payers how their money is being invested, with a clear focus on growth, development, and increased profitability for the industry.

The key objectives found within the SIP (2017-21) are:

1. Increased demand and sales of green life products by four per cent per annum plus CPI
2. Increased marketing effectiveness and efficiency and better decision making based on increased industry knowledge
3. Improved industry protection from exotic, emerging and endemic pests and diseases
4. Improved productivity, profitability and professionalism through the creation and adoption of innovation and industry BMPs
5. Better career development.

Based on the evidence available via annual communications surveys, downloads, and readership and viewership statistics, we can determine that the outcomes of this project have delivered on these objectives. Namely, we increased industry understanding of best practice, created a better-informed industry and promoted Hort Innovation engagement by sharing good stories from the levy.

Key outcomes and achievements against key evaluation criteria established at the commencement of the program are outlined below in the Monitoring and Evaluation section of this report.

The communications strategy, Program Logic and Monitoring & Evaluation Plan provided a solid foundation for the project and set it up well to successfully achieve the project outcomes as well as to support the SIP, and the annual stakeholder survey helped to guide the strategy and inform content.

Communications increased growers' knowledge of the R&D and marketing levies, to help them better understand where investment was being allocated through project updates.

Project management and ongoing stakeholder engagement was a critical part of the project. Cox Inall was in regular contact with researchers and project providers as well as Hort Innovation to ensure growers had access to the latest news and resources regarding R&D and marketing.

Key program outcomes are detailed below.

Table 6. Outcome summary

Outcome	Alignment to fund outcome, strategy and KPI	Description	Evidence
Increase industry understanding, awareness and adoption of production best practice, emerging	Most closely aligned to Outcomes 3 and 4 of the SIP (2017-21). The M&E plan for this project measured against individual outputs rather	All content created through the program has been designed to increase industry awareness, adoption, and best practice. Focus areas for	High levels of engagement through open rates and downloads. eNewsletters achieved an average open rate of 28.68% and click rate

production information and relevant outcomes related to R&D and marketing projects.	than this objective, though there is clear evidence to determine success.	these closely followed what was identified in our annual communications surveys.	<p>of 5.44%.</p> <p>The highest performing videos achieved in excess of 1,000 views.</p> <p>The 2020 and 2021 surveys show that close to a third of growers adopted best practice which could at least partly be attributed to the success of the communications program.</p>
Create a better-informed industry to increase farm productivity.	Most closely aligned to Outcomes 3 and 4 of the SIP (2017-21). The M&E plan for this project measured against individual outputs rather than this objective though there is clear evidence to determine success.	This outcome measures the effectiveness and relevancy of the program for levy payers. This seeks to gather valuable insights into content and topics sought by industry participants and identify priorities for industry and their businesses to address challenges.	<p>It can be determined if a better-informed industry has been achieved by identifying whether growers find the information and outputs created and distributed relevant and/or useful.</p> <p>Industry surveys tell us that this is overwhelmingly the case, with outputs consistently seen as relevant by growers.</p>
Promote Hort Innovation membership and engagement with the national R&D program to all nursery levy payers.	Aligned to all outcomes within the SIP (2017-21), and strategic priority to 'investigate ways to drive greater industry engagement'. The M&E plan for this project measured against individual outputs rather than this objective though there is clear evidence to determine success.	Attribution and acknowledgement guidance has been followed throughout the lifecycle of this project, to ensure that as we promote R&D and marketing projects, a clear link to Hort Innovation is made.	<p>The Hort Innovation logo and correct funding acknowledgement was implemented throughout the entirety of the project, with 100% of outputs following correct guidelines.</p> <p>In addition, factsheets such as the Levy Payer Kit, which specifically aims to showcase the levy, were marked as relevant and useful throughout the annual surveys.</p>

Monitoring and evaluation

As per the M&E plan developed at project inception and updated annually, the success of the communications program is measured through engagement with key outputs via the measurement of click through rates, feedback on content developed, podcast listens and findings from surveys.

The survey assessed the sentiment of growers to the overall communications program, the value placed on outputs, and to determine whether growers have in fact implemented new processes as a result of levy funded communications.

Awareness and engagement rates for this project exceeded KPIs and greatly exceeded industry averages for similar projects, as did audience growth KPIs surrounding social media.

Key evaluation questions (KEQs) were not included as part of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process, with project KPIs set on an output basis which is included below. Additional key evaluation criteria have however been included based on project objectives.

Table 4. Key Evaluation Criteria

Set Key Evaluation Criteria	Project performance	Continuous improvement opportunities
<p>Build awareness and engagement with levy-funded projects, by achieving high open and click rates in the Your Levy @ Work eNewsletter, which includes all outputs delivered by this project.</p> <p>We set the following KPIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve a 27% open rate over a twelve-month period, well above industry* average of 17.4%. • Achieve a 5% click rate over a twelve-month period, in comparison to the industry average of 2%. 	<p>This KPI was exceeded, with the open rate over the course of the project reaching a project average 28.68% and click rate of 5.44%</p>	<p>As growers manage information overload, we would expect that the engagement with communications outputs in the future will be increased by the removal of the duplication that currently exists with levy-funded newsletters and industry association (state and national) communications.</p>
<p>Ensure broad awareness for levy-funded projects, by consistently growing the audience for Greenlife Industry Australia's Facebook and Twitter accounts.</p> <p>The project aimed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Facebook followers by 10% over a twelve-month period. • Increase Twitter followers by 5% over a twelve-month period. 	<p>The online following across both Facebook and Twitter grew, with key audiences largely consisting of growers and allied industry representatives, as well as a more general audience.</p> <p>From project inception (December 2018) to completion in November 2022, GIA Facebook page followers increased by 49% from 5,973 to 8,878, far exceeding the KPI.</p> <p>For the GIA Twitter page, the increase was 7% from 1,885 followers to 2,024, also above the KPI.</p>	<p>Although the Facebook campaign has been hugely successful, social media has evolved significantly over the past four years and the investment of time and resources to be continually successful has increased dramatically.</p> <p>In future communications projects, it will be critical that social media is considered more strategically rather than being an output driven mechanism for posting.</p>
<p>Promote major projects, such as the Nursery Industry Statistics Survey, through strategic approaches to communications including factsheets</p>	<p>In partnership with GIA, we prioritised strategically important projects. Outside of high open rates in owned channels, we can</p>	<p>Whilst input from growers was sought for key moments throughout this project, the formation of a more formal reference group and more frequent</p>

and media releases.	<p>determine success by our ability to secure broad media coverage which promotes the interests of the nursery industry.</p> <p>Throughout the project, we were able to secure media coverage in several high-profile, or strategically important media outlets, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Weekly Times – Record-breaking year for nursery industry • Good Fruit & Vegetables – FAO labels 2020 as International Year of Plant Health • ABC Rural – Australians bought more plants than even in 2020 with COVID-19 lockdowns fueling sales • Perth Now – Quarantine zone for polyphagous shot-hole borer pest expands to Perth city and Western Suburbs • 2GB – Green spaces driving nursery boom 	<p>interactions with growers and grower groups will enable the communications project to build more impactful communications pieces with greater grower representation.</p>
Increase industry understanding, awareness and adoption of production best practice, by developing content that is seen as useful and relevant for this industry.	<p>For remaining outputs which can't be as easily measured, we can evaluate performance by tracking the sentiment of our primary audience, growers.</p> <p>This was done in yearly grower surveys, which asked growers about the relevance and usefulness of outputs. Key findings from the most recent (2021) survey found that the following proportion of growers found these key outputs relevant/useful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factsheets – 92.5% • Nursery Papers – 82.5% • eNewsletters – 82.5% • Case studies – 75% • Videos – 75% • Your Levy @ Work blogs – 70% • Podcasts – 68% • Social media – 56% 	<p>A robust M&E approach would ensure that content is tailored to the audience throughout the lifetime of the project.</p> <p>Future projects should also have a level of flexibility to ensure that as audience sentiment towards specific topics and/or outputs changes, the program can adapt.</p>
Promote Hort Innovation levy-funded projects through visually engaging content such as digital case studies (videos).	<p>An average of 73% of growers said videos were relevant for them.</p> <p>This is backed up by data from GIA's YouTube channel.</p>	<p>Videos have largely been a successful output. Throughout this project the videos have been structured and followed the traditional case study</p>

	<p>The top performing videos include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benara Nurseries' use of the marketing programs – over 1,000 views and aligned to SIP Objective 1 • Oasis Horticulture is implementing risk mitigation strategies to build resilience and ensure business continuity – 792 views, aligned to project Objective 1 (Increase industry understanding, awareness and adoption of production best practice, emerging production information and relevant outcomes related to R&D and marketing projects). 	<p>format.</p> <p>In future iterations of this project, we could further capitalise on the benefits of video by producing more dynamic, fluid content beyond standard case studies.</p>
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Recommendations

The Australian nursery industry has benefitted from a communications program which has met or exceeded expectations when it comes to reach, engagement, and adoption. The program has achieved all of its milestones and established a strong foundation for future communications, however, there are several opportunities to strengthen industry communications even further.

Simplicity: Anecdotally, growers have been dealing with communications overload, with regular communications coming from GIA, Your Levy @ Work as well as state NGIs. Future iterations should look to streamline this process by reducing touchpoints with growers, in favour of more strategic content delivery.

The Your Levy @ Work banner and logo could also be brought under the GIA website, so traffic and engagement are not cannibalised, though a clear delineation between levy-funded and peak body business will obviously need to be made.

Measurement & Evaluation: The M&E Plan for this project was originally designed to track output performance rather than outcomes so it's recommended that a future project should invest in a more robust measurement program. Investment in surveying growers could also be ramped up.

Social media: Social media has evolved significantly since the launch of this project. Flexibility should be built into the next project to enable the team to react to changes in the social media landscape. Similarly, a more strategic approach to social media could be adopted with different channels prioritised for different purposes

Integration with industry: A more formal approach to integration with state NGIs could be implemented through formal and regular interactions.

Dynamic content: Content in this project typically followed rigid and structured styles, designed to promote the adoption of best practice management, and extend other levy-funded outputs. In future, content could be produced which has different purposes and hits emotional elements as much as technical. If growers have a more emotional response to the work undertaken by the levy, they may be more likely to adopt levy-funded outcomes into the future.

Intellectual property

No IP, commercialisation or confidentiality issues or development to report.

Acknowledgements

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Cox Inall would like to acknowledge Hort Innovation as a key enabler of R&D and marketing for Australia's horticultural sector. Cox Inall found it very beneficial to work closely with project providers, to equip levy payers with the latest R&D and marketing outcomes.

Finally, Cox Inall would like to thank all delivery partners. It was a privilege to help communicate and extend the results of the hard work undertaken on behalf of growers.

Appendices

1. DRAFT Ironwood Institute and career pathways case study
2. NIASA journey with Australian Bush Trees case study
3. Example Social Media Plan
4. Example Written Case Study
5. Example Nursery Paper
6. Example Media Release
7. Example Facts at a Glance
8. Example Levy Payer Kit
9. 2020 grower survey results
10. 2021 grower survey results