



Nursery & Garden Industry  
Australia

25 November 2009

Mr Arthur Blewitt  
CEO  
AgriFood Skills Australia  
PO Box 5450  
KINGSTON ACT 2604

Dear Arthur,

Nursery & Garden Industry Australia have been working with industry stakeholders (employers, employees, students and educators) for a number of years on the merger and review of the industry's Training Package AHC10.

The most recent, detailed feedback was formally given to AFISC in July 2008 and since that date we have been working with industry and AFISC on an ongoing basis. Last month we were advised that the final Training Package documents had been loaded onto the AFISC website ready for final validation by 23 November 2009.

On review, we note that the current draft documents have not incorporated many of the areas of concern to our industry which have been previously brought to AFISC's attention. We have liaised with and have been contacted by a large number of industry stakeholders from around Australia who do not support the current draft documents and as NGIA represent these industry stakeholders, we are therefore unable to support the Package in its current draft format.

In our July 08 documentation we addressed industry concerns around the necessary inclusion of mandatory units for qualifications. Since that date we have been under the impression that our formal requests were being actioned. Our industry spent valuable time selecting these mandatory units and we repeat our request to see them included in a new draft of qualifications, along with the specialisations in Production and Retail streams for all qualifications (Certificate II, III, IV and Diploma).

Unfortunately, many of the units that are specified in the qualification structures do not actually address the needs of the amenity horticulture industry – especially in the nursery sector. The elements of competency do not adequately address the work skills. Until all units meet the above requests they can not be endorsed.

On a positive note, we appreciate the work that has been done, so far, on the Certificate III in Production and Retail Nursery specialisations and look forward to working with AFISC to complete this qualification. We believe there is still a way to go before we can endorse these qualifications as they stand.

The basic skills of nursery production provide the cradle for the entire horticulture industry. Nursery production is the source of plant material for the ornamental, fruit, landscape, vegetable, amenity, flower and forestry industries. This sector requires specific and targeted skills, many of which have been lacking in recent years.

We do not believe that the lower number of student numbers in the specialized nursery areas is a reason for the specialisations to be removed from the training package. We believe that stronger, industry endorsed qualifications, giving students useful and current skills is of much more benefit to the future of our industry - and therefore the future of the entire horticulture industry. Certainly more work needs to be done to encourage students to discover Nursery as a career option. We have been working on a career program for our industry over the past 12 months and we feel that the successes we have had to date, and the work planned for the next two years, will see an increase in student numbers. We need the training package to *'ensure that training meets the needs and requirements of industry to the standard set by industry'* - as outlined by the Australian Government's Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Also, with the expansion of 'big box' retailers such as Bunnings and Woolworths into the retail nursery sector, we believe that targeted qualifications in nursery retail are warranted.

By removing the Production and Retail qualifications and the required mandatory units, we are selling our industry short. We will be knowingly contributing to a decline in the intellectual capacity of the industry.

NGIA have worked with AFISC for over three years to fulfil the training package review requirements as advised by DEEWR ie. *'Training packages are monitored and reviewed by industry through national industry skills councils to ensure they are current and continue to meet the existing and emerging needs of industry'*.

We are happy to continue to work with AFISC to ensure that the training package meets industry needs. Once these needs have been formally addressed, with appropriate time for consultation with our industry network, we will be able to move to the next stage of endorsement. We request that AFISC reply to this correspondence, addressing all areas noted above. Your response will be disseminated to industry stakeholders for further discussion. As the industry national body we will continue to work with all parties towards an acceptable outcome.

Yours sincerely,



Fiona Kelly  
National Training & Recognition Manager

cc: David Greentree, AFISC  
Geoff Richards, AFISC & NGIA  
Robert Prince, CEO, NGIA