Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia

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A accreditation, quality assurance and total quality management in the nursery industry are still a mystery to many. The aim is to demystify these processes.

What is the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme?
• A process of managing change.
• A voluntary process available to wholesale nurseries, media suppliers and retail nurseries.

It is not a quality assurance program. It is a step towards quality assurance. It is available to both members and non-members of state nursery industry associations.

A ccreditation embraces
• Physical inputs—water, media, fertilisers.
• Nursery processes—disease and crop management.
• Nursery practices—management expertise, regulatory requirements, environmental concerns, pesticides, quarantine, storage.
• Nursery presentation—staff facilities, appearance, parking (plant quality, entrance, surrounds).

A ccreditation benefits
• Clear goals.
• Regular independent assessment.
• Support services.
• Discipline.
• Demonstration of commitment.
• Improved profits, management, consistency, quality, consumer confidence.
• Less disease, waste, requirement for reworking.
• Lower production costs, labour costs.

A ccreditation in perspective
Within the nursery industry, there is still some misunderstanding as to
• What the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA), ISO 9002 Quality Assurance (QA) and Total Quality Management (TQM) are all about.
• Their respective roles and objectives within the industry.
• How they fit on the quality path to improve credibility, profitability, scope and their relevance in the market place.

The aim of this paper is to set the record straight!
The Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA) does much more than hand out certificates. It is a process for implementing and managing change. NIASA’s aim is to give nursery members the tools to effectively manage change so they can consistently meet customers expectations at all times (and don’t they change from time to time?)

Nationally, there are about 100 accredited nurseries and many more are working towards accreditation. A significant number of these nurseries are also working towards ISO 9002.

So what is the difference? Let’s put NIASA into perspective.
The ultimate goal of nursery industry accreditation is Nursery Industry Total Quality Management. NIASA and ISO 9002 Quality Assurance are logical and appropriate objectives along the quality path towards improving the operations of a nursery business.

However, achieving ISO 9002 QA certification by a nursery cannot be regarded as an end in itself. It is only a document stating how things get done, both good and/or bad, to ensure that the products and services provided by the business more often than not, meet that firm’s specified quality standards. In itself, ISO 9002 QA certification does not ensure high quality, nor does it necessarily imply that a business is aiming for ongoing improvement (e.g. leading towards TQM). ISO 9002 standard assessors are not interested in high quality product outcomes. They merely assess the business’s ability to comply with its own documented quality standard.

For example, if a firm is aiming to produce poor quality products or wishes to operate inefficiently it can still achieve ISO 9002 certification. However, it would not achieve NIASA accreditation under these circumstances, as the aims of NIASA are heavily weighted towards high quality product and service outcomes.

It is through NIASA that the nursery industry is aiming to improve operational and management efficiencies and standards. It is through NIASA accreditation that the industry is providing a strong focus for improvement and adoption of higher standards.

NIASA provides a sensible and practical approach to management changes to meet and exceed the customers current and future expectations. Continuous small step improvements to suit the individual needs of each participating member are part of this process. Ultimately these small step improvements and processes can be incorporated into an ISO 9002 Quality Assurance System. The result of a combination of NIASA and ISO 9002 will be a TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT outcome. These small step improvements will include all ISO 9002 QA requirements and will eventually lead to TQM.

NIASA + ISO 9002 QA → TQM

The successful implementation of NIASA can only be achieved effectively by the industry association showing strong leadership, fellowship, companionship and guidance.

Leadership
Leadership is that part of an organisation that concerns itself with people—the human dimension. Most people confuse leadership with a position or role. A leader is usually thought of as the head of all or part of an organisation. But people in charge are likely to be administrators, managers, technologists or bosses rather than true leaders.

Leadership is reflected in the ability to initiate action and
move others to a shared goal. This is persuasion, not position of power. Its product will be the desire to win. Technology and management systems are critical elements. In order to capitalise on them, a firm foundation is required i.e. leadership.

**The need for balance**
What is more important, technology, management or leadership? That is like asking whether air, water or nutrients are more important to plant life. All are critical.

Organisations that demonstrate consistent high performance know that technology, management systems and leadership are needed and that the three need to be balanced.

**Key Points**
- People in charge are managers, administrators, bosses.
- Leaders need to be persuasive and deal in motivation, pride and feeling.
- Need to instil a desire to win.
- Key words are: vision, values, behaviour, environment.
- Value adding.
- Difficult to measure, perception, attitudes.

**Technology—only the first step**
- Products, e.g. plants
- Services, e.g. landscaping
- Expertise, e.g. irrigation systems
- Equipment, e.g. hardware
- High predictability
- Highly measurable output
- Control by physical laws

**Management systems**
- Accreditation, Quality Assurance and Total Quality Management.
- Make technology work.
- Uses systems—financial, production, service, administration.
- Concerned with efficiency and objectives.
- Rational assessment of situation.
- Systematic selection of goals.
- Systematic development of strategies.
- Marshalling resources.
- Rational design of practices organisation, direction and control to achieve selected activities.
- Prefers dealing in facts.
- Logical, statistical and quantitative analysis.

**Managing change**
- Create awareness of the need for change.
- Involve people to the maximum in determining what the changes should be.
- Communicate the change and rationale honestly.
- Deal forthrightly with concerns.
- Give people a role in introducing changes.
- Foster participation.
- Open up communication channels.
- Education and training.
- Flexibility and patience.
- Focus and stability.
- Reward new behaviours.