

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

The remaining papers from the Australian Region were part of four concurrent sessions. The papers are grouped under each session.

SESSION 1: EDUCATING THE PROPAGATOR

Training the Plant Propagator—A Burnley College Perspective

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Burnley College is a specialist institution providing training and education in urban/amenity horticulture. It is currently affiliated with the University of Melbourne's faculty of Agriculture, Forestry & Horticulture as part of the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture. Burnley has been training students in horticulture for some 100 years. This long history, as well as our combination of higher education and TAFE (Technical and Further Education) programs gives us a perspective on horticultural education which is unusual.

In the 16 years since Burnley's programs were last discussed at an I.P.P.S. Conference (1980 Australian Region) much has altered. We now provide training beyond diploma level and have a much wider range of courses on offer. We have been offering a degree (B.App.Sci.[Hort]) since 1985 and a postgraduate research degree (M.App.Sci.[Hort]) since 1992. This provides the horticulture industry in Victoria and Australia with the opportunity of employing people with a training profile not available previously. We also offer a more vocationally oriented two-year course (Dip.App.Sci. [Hort]) and a range of TAFE programs.

We are not the only providers of higher education courses in horticulture in Australia, but we are one of the largest, and in fact we have a faculty of horticultural staff which is possibly one of the largest in the world.

We believe that our programs meet the current and future needs of potential employers and also the needs of our potential and actual students. Demand for places in our courses is high and this reflects both interest in careers in horticulture and Burnley's reputation. The high-calibre students on offer can contribute to change in industry. We have provided clear pathways for articulation from TAFE to higher education courses and believe we are pioneers in that field. These articulation pathways not only apply to our own students but also to people with qualifications from other TAFE colleges.

All of this sounds very promising but where does the nursery industry benefit from this? There is a possibility that the benefit might be slight. At present, students are not attracted to the nursery industry. The majority of our students are specialising in areas related to environmental and landscape management. They may see these areas as "greener" and almost certainly many of them believe that the nursery industry will not reward them for their qualifications and years of study. While industry argues that degree-trained people do not have adequate skills for employment, this is at odds with trends in many other industries where the employment

of educated professionals is seen as being desirable for the industry as a whole. Furthermore it is contrary to trends in the U.S. and Europe.

I believe that the nursery industry will have to assess its attitude to the employment of professionally trained people as the level of service provided to it by government invariably declines and as nurseries themselves become more complex. *I am also confident that collaboration in training between employers, TAFE providers, and higher education institutions can provide the range of people that a dynamic industry needs, but such collaboration requires the active support and involvement of all the players.*

Competency-Based Training—Implications for Horticultural Education

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Competency-Based Training (CBT) can be defined as an approach to learning which places primary emphasis on what the learner can actually do in the workplace as a result of training. It is focused on the outcomes or competencies rather than on the learning processes or the time spent on these processes. This reflects a major shift away from the conventional approach to education and training.

MAYER REPORT

This report identified seven key competencies; collecting, analysing and organising information, communicating ideas and information, planning and organising activities, working with others and in teams, using mathematical ideas and techniques, solving problems, and using technology. In Australia a set of National Horticulture Competency Standards have been developed. They reflect the above key competencies and will be used as a basis for developing all new courses in vocational education and training.

WORKPLACE TRAINING

All levels of vocational education and training will involve workplace experience and employers/supervisors/managers will be encouraged to become qualified workplace trainers and assessors. There is an acceptance that training will involve both 'on' and 'off' the job training. This means that providers of training will need to develop a closer relationship with the horticultural industry and negotiate training strategies which reflect true industry needs. Module delivery rather than whole course delivery is likely to become more common.

ASSESSMENT

The statement has been made that the CBT system will be made or broken by the effectiveness of its assessment processes. Fairness and validity are important. In Australia, the National Centre for CBT is of the view that the assessment 'grades' ought to be simply Competent or Not Yet Competent. The philosophical questions such as "are you creating winners/losers or promoting mediocrity" by not issuing