

PROJECT PHOENIX



JOIN THE NATIONAL SEED NETWORK!



PROJECT SUMMARY

JUNE 2021

Across all of our Project Phoenix activities and actions we pay respect to the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waters on which we work. We honour the resilience and continuing connection to country, culture and community of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia. We recognise the decisions we make today will impact the lives of generations to come.

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Project Phoenix
Greening Australia (National Office)
Level 3, 349 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
Tel: 1300 886 589
Email: phoenix@greeningaustralia.org.au
Website: www.greeningaustralia.org.au

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Author: Courtney Sullivan, Restoration Ecologist, Greening Australia
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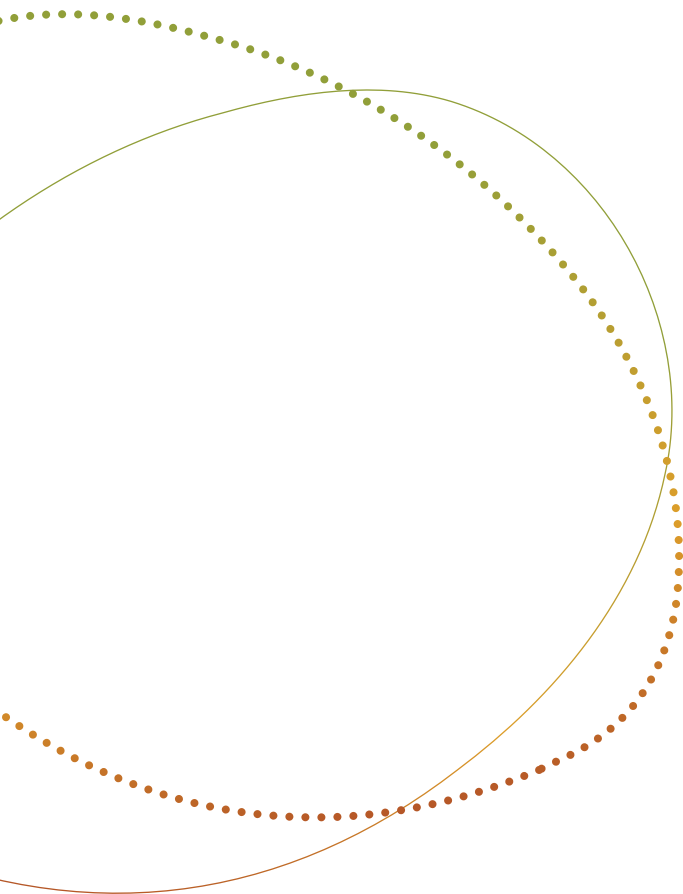


Australian Government



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About the project

The project explored mapping and quantifying industry participation incorporating conservation and community seedbanks, commercial seed collectors, Seed Production Area managers and seed infrastructure of the native seed and plant industry in all states and territories (Australia).

Scope

The scope of this project was to identify and map the national seed collector network and the national seed infrastructure network.

Introduction

The ANPC *Australian Native Seed Survey Report* highlighted that there is no single coordinating entity or agency responsible for regulating or collating data on the Australian native seed sector. It is therefore difficult to know the number, location and expertise of people working in the sector.

The ANPC *Australian Native Seed Survey Report* noted that the Australian native seed sector comprises an ad hoc group of individuals and businesses representing suppliers and primary users spanning a wide range of land managers and other users of native seed. The key to building sector capacity is the national network of native seed collectors.

However, in the current situation where anything may be found online, native seed practitioners can still usually only be located through word of mouth. A Google search for 'native seed collectors' and other variations of these words does not provide you with a list of practitioners to contact and results in very little to start with.

We also know that provenance requirements for native seeds mean that knowing the geographic location of native seed collectors is essential. Google Maps is commonly used as a visual, geographic tool for displaying businesses, which it pulls from websites and directories. From here, you can search an area for a particular type of business and easily access the business website and other contact details. Yet, because native seed businesses are not marketed and often do not have websites, searching for them in Google Maps is unsuccessful.

A practitioner directory was a function of the old FloraBank website (which ceased operation over 10 years ago). It allowed you to search for a list of native seed practitioners by state.

In addition to labour capacity, the native seed industry also requires infrastructure including native seed processing and storage facilities. No national register of industry infrastructure exists. It is therefore difficult to assess where additional resources are required and where capacity exists that could be better or more fully utilised.

In response to these findings, the purpose of this review is to identify and map where native seed collectors and infrastructure are located around Australia and to make the map publicly available, allowing practitioners to be accessible and provide a baseline of the seed sector to build from.

There were a number of issues with broader implications that related to collection of information and privacy concerns. In the current climate, people are much more aware of risks to their privacy and may not be willing to agree to their information and contact details being displayed. To mitigate or ease the issue of uploading the contacts, it was decided a registration process would be implemented to allow users to upload themselves to the map/directory.



Issues

- At the beginning of the project, surveys were set up on the Project Phoenix webpage to collect information on the types of practitioners in the seed sector. There was a low uptake of survey registrations. Approximately 20 practitioners filled out the surveys over a one-month period.
- Privacy: one of the main issues was that of privacy. A Privacy Policy statement was made available in the Project Phoenix sign up survey. The survey was originally created to build a list of interested people wanting to be involved in the ten-year Strategy.¹ Subsequently, this list could be used to find practitioners who may wish to join the National Seed Network!
- Perceived conflict of interest: there was a concern by the seed sector and broader community that if the data obtained from this project would be held by Greening Australia, there may be a perceived conflict of interest. It was therefore decided that this directory and map would be better placed on a site independent of Greening Australia.
- Permissions: There was a concern that people may not be willing to register their business details given issues they may face with licensing. This may also have been the reason for a lack of survey registrations.
- Delay: the launch of the FloraBank website was delayed meaning that it would be open for registrations at the end of June 2021 rather than end of March 2021. This resulted in participation data being accessible after the contracted Project Phoenix completion date.

Comments

Better transparency of the seed sector is required for improvements to the industry to be effective and sustainable.

There may be concerns about the consequences of making contact details public including other people finding and using the seed resources. However, the benefit would be the increase in business for practitioners.

¹ This project contributes to the evidence base for a ten-year strategy to guide the native seed and landscape sector. The document, which is untitled until endorsement in September 2021, is referred to as the Strategy in all Project Phoenix publications.



Key outputs

- A list of seed contacts from around Australia made up of Greening Australia and Project Phoenix contacts.
- A map design and database fields to be used in the refreshed FloraBank website.
 - Fields include:
 - ❖ Collector/Organisation
 - ❖ Contact person
 - ❖ Contact details
 - ❖ Location details
 - ❖ Collector profile
 - ❖ Collection range
 - ❖ Collection type (strata layer/s)
 - ❖ Storage
 - ❖ Cleaning

Outcomes

A list of 181 contacts for seed practitioners from all states and territories:

- NSW – 34
- ACT – 4
- NT – 5
- QLD - 9
- SA – 7
- TAS – 3
- VIC – 14
- WA – 105

The seed sector is very private in the way it works and it seems most business is acquired through word of mouth. People in the sector are passionate and specialised in their field, often needing to create their own specialised collection and cleaning equipment. As such, it is a big leap to move from this private way of doing business to promoting their business publicly.

To engage the seed sector in Project Phoenix, a webpage was created and promoted on the Greening Australia website. The webpage included a survey targeted at native seed practitioners interested in being informed and engaged in Project Phoenix activities. Although initial uptake was slow, to date more than 100 practitioners from across Australia have filled out the survey.



Findings

- Not applicable at this stage. Once the FloraBank website is launched and seed collector contacts are directed to the site to sign up, we can determine the level of participation.
- As previously identified in the [Issues](#) section, uptake on the website was slow. The report *Psst.. Everything you wanted to know about native seed licensing* demonstrates that it remains an issue.

Evidence

- Survey offered to people to be part of the Project Phoenix seed network
 - Out of 3,943 visits to the website, 134 people have registered to date and provided their basic info (contact details, organisation, role title, which part of the sector they're involved in)
- Survey to collect contacts for the map
 - 20 registrations were recorded in one month



RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS



1

To have further visibility in the seed market, it is recommended that additional fields be added to the attribute table of the map to include: *species offered, collection range, collection capacity, seed testing offered.*



2

In addition to above, if there are changes to seed collection licensing making it possible for experienced collectors to obtain a licence, it is recommended that this be included in the business profile for each collector.



3

For the FloraBank website (and in turn this collector map) to be useful in the future, it is important that the FloraBank consortia assigns or employs a database/website manager to maintain and oversee the use of the website and the collector directory.

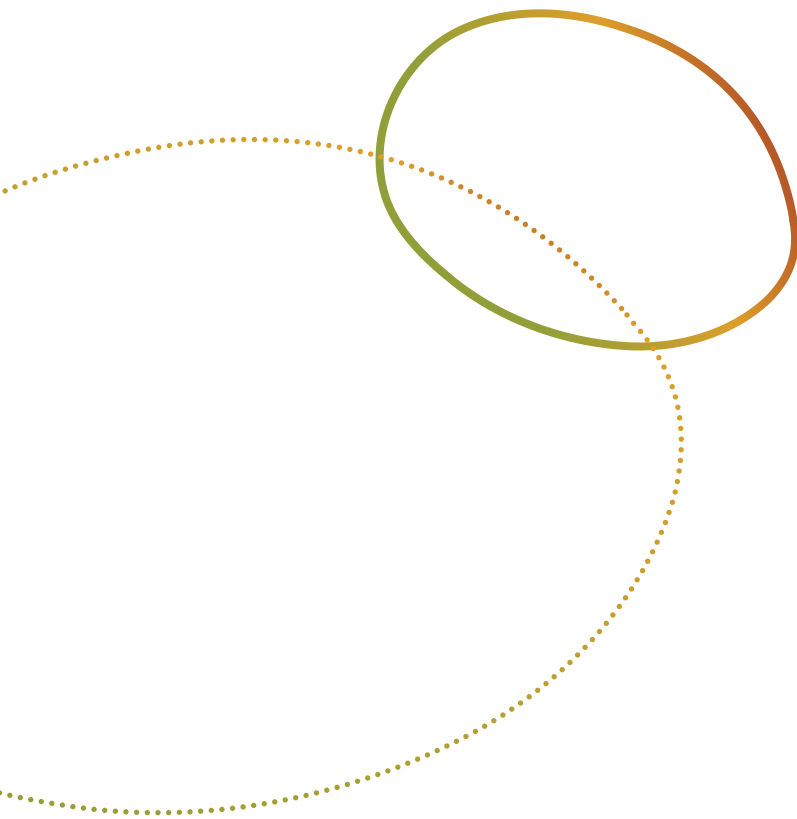


WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Related projects

- *Revealed! The National Native Nursery Network*
- *Australian native seed production in 2021*
- *New FloraBank training for the Native Seed Sector*

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