



Nursery & Garden Industry  
Queensland

## PRESS RELEASE

# LARRY DEALS ANOTHER BODY BLOW TO NURSERY AND GARDEN INDUSTRY

## **-NATURES DOUBLE WHAMMY-**

The state's third largest horticultural industry, the \$500 million a year nursery and garden industry, is also counting the cost after Cyclone Larry has delivered more than \$25 million worth of damage to Nurseries across North Queensland.

The crippling damage to the industry in the north comes on top of the industry's struggle with the South East Queensland drought that has seen a drop off in sales of over 40%.

Nursery & Garden Industry Queensland, **(NGIQ)**, President Bill Watson says the combined affect of Larry in the north with the big dry in the South East will mean the industry, overall, will face it's worst year ever.

"Our CEO Don Scotts is in North Queensland working with members to try and establish a game plan to help them get moving as quickly as possible. But there has been incredible damage done to existing stock, developing stock and many of the more unique species that come out of North Queensland and are supplied for export and into the larger markets across Australia."

"On top of the stock damage, which in some cases will take years to replenish, there's the damage to properties and business infrastructure. It is going to have a devastating effect on one of the state's largest industries, that was already doing it tough."

"The inevitable losses will be another blow to these already devastated communities. Our focus now is to establish plans that ensure that many of the valuable markets Queensland now holds, don't disappear forever to Southern competitors or overseas."

Mr Watson says nursery owners in North Queensland have been given some relief with the announcements yesterday from Prime Minister John Howard.

"Our members are pleased with the rescue package the Prime Minister has put forward. Many of them believe that without that level of assistance they'd simply have to close up. At least this is a chance for them to try and recover."

"The one off \$10,000 grants to small business are particularly welcome as they will allow nurseries to employ staff to assist with any clean up and get back to a fully operational state. Similarly the \$200,000 loan under the National Disaster Relief Arrangements and inbuilt grant will assist in replacing shade cover, structures and re stocking".

"Given the communication problems with telephones out of service in a number of areas we are still to contact some nurseries and garden centres, but it is hoped to have a firm picture of the full extent of any damage by early next week. We will then be able to provide the State and Federal Governments with exact details on the damage as well as any specific further assistance that the industry may need".

Mr Watson says Larry's legacy will mean a shortage of some varieties of plants and he is predicting losses in both export and domestic markets.

Mr Watson says the devastation of Larry coupled to the South East's big dry has left a once thriving industry in a real mess.

"In the South East business has already dropped by significant levels and we have seen massive job losses because of the drought, so to have the North crippled at this time will mean a major impact on the industry right across Queensland."

"It's business we're going to have to fight hard to get back as we come through these two natural disasters."

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