

The Landscape Industries Association of WA – The Early Days 1979 to 2003

Prelude:

When I was asked to prepare the presentation on the early history of LIAWA I quickly faced a brick wall with the lack of information available. Association records had been passed on to successive secretaries in storage boxes that were stacked in garages and sheds. These deteriorating records being the worst for wear with silver fish, water damage and other guests, were sadly culled over the years and forgotten.

We tend to forget that 40 years ago we lived in an age of no mobile phones and no computers. If you were lucky you had a thermal fax machine and thermal photocopier...and those records now are nothing more than brown streaky paper.

Computer file formats, floppy disks and storage devices have come and gone over the years, along with their records with the change in new technology formats... Early reports were typed with carbon paper duplicates to distribute by snail mail and filed as hard copies in filing folders now long gone to landfill along with their metal filing cabinets. Today, we live in a paperless world.

It would almost have been easier to write a report from 100 years ago when technology was consistent, I therefore apologize if I have missed out anything and would welcome your input to expand upon this report of the LIAWA early days.

Presentation by Larry Lucas OAM, Life Member, at the 2018 LIAWA Awards Presentation dinner.

On a hot Sunday afternoon in the summer of 1979, Greg Baldock, Alan Greenshaw, Bob Knapp, Larry Lucas, Dirk van Nellestyn and Graeme Stacey met to discuss starting up an association for landscape contractors. A carton of beer later...Bob Knapp was elected president and the Landscape Contractors Association of WA was born. The various "gang members" all took up committee position – this ensured the success of the start-up.

Money was always in short supply. To kick-start the association, members had to resort to selling raffle tickets at Garden Week. Members toiled for several days to construct state of the art gardens complete with miniature lakes and waterfalls, sumptuous pergola and super advanced trees. These early displays involved a 100% input from all members and created a bond of 'mateship' that enabled the association to establish and grow.

To achieve a more professional position for the industry, we became affiliated to the Nursery Industry Association of WA (now the Nursery & Garden Industry of WA). However, due to the expense of each member required to

be a full member of both associations, joint membership was discontinued after a two-year trial.

Contact was made with similar organisations in the eastern states to form the Landscape Contractors Association of Australia (now the Landscape Industries Association of Australia). Grateful assistance in the early years flowed from the national association with special thanks to David Hosking of NSW and Max Thomas of Victoria

In 1984 under the leadership of Max Hewitt, WA hosted the Landscape Contractors Association of Australia Conference "Professionalism in Landscaping". Using the Americas Cup Challenge as a draw card, the conference was widely attended by interstate and overseas contractors.

In 1991, the Landscape Industries Association Awards of Excellence commenced. These bi-annual awards offered an opportunity to showcase and publicize the high industry standards that our members achieve.

Presidents that followed Bob Knapp through to 2003 were Greg Baldock, Max Hewitt, Dirk van Nellestyn, Larry Lucas, Tim Davies, Frank O'Brien, Mike Jones, Francis Burke, and Angela Charlesworth. Larry Lucas went on to be president of the Landscape Industries Association of Australia in the year 2000.

Special mention needs to be made of Lee Wishart (Hibiscus Garden Centre) who took it upon herself to be our 'social co-ordinator' and came up with some fantastic social events that helped to band our members together in fellowship. Lee was also an active member of the Nursery Industry Association and was involved in arranging the fabulous interior presentations for our early award dinners. Sadly, Lee has since passed away.

I would ask that anyone with relevant early history such as newsletters, brochures, and photographs pass these onto our secretary before they are lost to living memory.