

Nominate your Hero of the Flower Industry today.

Send us your nominations!

Do you know someone who has volunteered numerous hours of their time to progressing the Flower Industry for us all, perhaps over many years, or even decades?

My sponsorship of this regular 'award' is to showcase our under-recognised Industry Heroes, and provide the contact details which will allow you to support them, so that they can afford to continue to support us. **I'd like this to be an Industry member driven award.**

Please send a letter to the editor, giving a brief description of your Hero and their efforts. They will then be consulted on how they'd like to be described/promoted within a half page or so. editor@flowersmagazine.com.au

As we all benefit from their efforts, it's my belief we should all be supporting these Heroes' businesses whenever we can, but to do this we need to know who they are!

I hope that better recognition and support of people's contributions might also motivate others to do their bit for the wider Industry as well. Sponsorship of Industry events, promotions and part of the magazine are a great place to start. Continually getting your name out there over time does work, but sometimes lending a helping hand to assist your Industry body run is essential to their continuation. Many hands make light work.

Ben McInnes, Brushtop Farm Pty Ltd.
Chair of WildFlowers Australia Ltd
& Australian Flower Council.



HEROES of the industry

Adrian Parsons - Helix Australia

I took on Dad's advice "choose a job you like" and over 40 years later I am very grateful to still be working in an industry that I absolutely love. I'm also thankful for the many friendships and business relationships I have established around the world.

My early days in the industry were spent working for McGain's Nursery/Bloomer's Florist in Chadstone Shopping Centre. This high volume outlet taught me some valuable lessons in retail marketing. I then completed a Horticultural degree, providing me with a strong technical background in plant biology and nursery production systems. Whilst at University I wrote for the Victoria fruit and vegetable newspaper, my monthly column was called "Flowers for Profit".

My first full time job in 1987 was Sales Manager at Impulse Flowers, specialising in servicing Melbourne's florists and event specialists. Every year we supplied flowers for the massive David Jones display as well high society events, including Kerry Packer's daughter's wedding and Christopher Skase's extravagant parties in Port Douglas.

From there I spent two years working overseas in a variety of flower industry jobs in USA, Canada, United Kingdom, The Netherlands and harvesting gypsophila in Israel. I started my first business Man of Flowers in 1990 selling corsages at the 1990 VFL Grand Final. This business then started wholesaling specialising in native flowers, roses and chrysanthemums from Zimbabwe.

I built up a very close connection with Perth based Westralian Flora Exports (now WAFEX) and in 1994 I merged my business and became WAFEX Eastern State's Director. My focus was on growing the market share for native flowers as well as developing export sales for Australian native flowers into USA & South East Asia.

My 20 year tenure at WAFEX was a very rewarding experience and with business partner Craig Musson and our fantastic staff



we enjoyed strong growth exporting and importing from over 15 countries. What Craig and I lacked in business experience we made up for with sheer hard work, long hours, travel and a relentless drive to build a global client and supplier base.

I have always taken an active role in flower industry bodies including President Australian Flower Export Council as well as holding committee positions with R.I.R.D.C. Wildflower committee and Flowers Victoria. During my WAFEX period I initiated and forged a strong relationship with Cystic Fibrosis and we donated roses for their annual 65 Roses Day fundraising and campaign. WAFEX has continued its strong support for 65 Roses Day and they have raised over \$500,000 for Cystic Fibrosis bodies across Australia. A WAFEX donation of pink roses enabled me to organise an annual fund raising campaign at the local cricket club for the McGrath Foundation.

After exiting WAFEX in 2015, I concentrated on developing Helix Australia – a breeding, licensing and marketing business specialising in Waxflower and Boronia. Helix Australia now has over 30 registered hybrids with a licensed global grower network in Australia, South Africa, Israel, Portugal, Spain, Italy and USA.

I have always been passionate about minimising waste and the environmental impacts of horticulture. I have recently started assisting Garden City Plastics to establish a national flower sleeve recycling system to capture and re-use over 500m tonnes of plastics per annum. The programme is still in its infancy but the florist feedback has been very positive.

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