

Growing local support for Canberra region plant nurseries as the industry calls for long term change in consumer behaviour



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Off the back of increasing political scrutiny of the market monopolisation and market control tactics of big box retailers within the Australian retail plant growing industry, smaller growers including a long-standing collective at the Capital Region Farmers Market in Canberra have spoken out lobbying for positive change in local consumer buying behaviour.

Market Manager and spokesperson Sarah Power said “It’s been pretty revealing to hear the stories coming out of the senate enquiries around the tactics and treatment of plant growers who are supplying the larger retailers. Many stories from growers have focused on the poor treatment, below cost deals and stand over tactics that many growers have suffered from when choosing to do business with the big guys in the retail industry. It’s been quite shocking and disappointing to hear these stories come out.”

“Plant growers are some of the most important farming families in our region. At Market, our plant growers have been some of the most loved since the markets started more than 20 years ago. Many of our shoppers rely on their local knowledge, insights and plant quality to fill their yards and homes with everything from cut flowers to rare trees and Canberra’s environment and ecosystem has benefited as a result.

“We are using this increased scrutiny and focus on the plant growing industry to challenge more Canberrans to stop buying from large chain, stock market listed, hardware store retail giants and

shop locally for their plants. Knowing that their money goes back toward supporting local families and their local community is just one small part of the ripple effect of shopping locally.”

Paul Dejong, local grower and owner of Canberra Colour based in Bungendore supported Mr Power’s sentiment. “I’ve been a wholesale grower for 30 years and I’ve seen the horticulture industry completely change during that time. Bunnings use their market power to dominate the industry and have forced nursery retailers and wholesale growers out of business using a range of tactics which in general isn’t consistent with the ethics of the nursery industry. The public misses out by losing diversity,” Mr Dejong said.

“A good example is shown by a centralised system supplying frost tender plants into a frost prone area like Canberra. As a local grower I grow plants which are suited to the local conditions and grown to be available when the public should be planting them.

“When it comes to the cost question, most of my product is half price to the big guys because I grow it myself, don’t have to ship it interstate and I grow it efficiently from years of experience. I made a decision years ago not to supply Bunnings and to supply directly to the public through markets as I believe that is a good experience for myself and the market customers.

“It’s bordering on commercial irresponsibility for these big stores to sell plants that clearly shouldn’t be sold in our region. It wastes people’s time and money trying to make things grow and leads to poor environmental outcomes. The sooner we change the way people shop for plants the better we will all be.”

Megan Dixon from Canberra Native Nursery, based in Carwoola, grows 'Canberra tough' natives and is another long-term stallholder at Market. She says she is always happy to help with expert, tailored advice for your garden and your growing conditions.

"The plants Canberra Native Nursery grows are climate appropriate for our very cold winters, and semi-arid summers, and hardened up to our conditions over a very long period before planting. They are also all grown locally, and don't come from wholesalers out of other states. This acclimatisation process and the nuanced advice about planting for success in our climate, that we other local nurseries can offer, is something that's hard to find in 'big box' stores." Ms Dixon said.

Supporting video (YOUTUBE)

[Plant growers lobby for change at the capital region farmers market in Canberra - YouTube](#)

Downloadable unbranded version (VIMEO)

<https://vimeo.com/user60196428/crfm-plantgrowers>

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