

PRACTICAL PEOPLE

Should pro tree workers join an industry association like the TCAA? Jim McArdle thinks so.

The relevance of being associated with a peak body like the Tree Contractors Association of Australia (TCAA) came up in discussion with a contractor, Craig. Craig only does stumps, and has been in the industry for as long as I can remember. His response was not good. I recall he suggested the NAA (now AA) and TCAA were like ‘...a dead horse being dragged around’.

There are a lot of reasons why people in the industry are connected with the TCAA. I felt as though Craig had missed the point, or hadn't been informed of the advantages of belonging to an industry association. Hopefully the information on these pages will allow Craig, and others who may not know what a professional association is all about, a new lease on life if he chooses to join up as a level-3 arborist.

Pro service and safety

For starters the TCAA membership is given too the business not the individual, this takes into account relevant insurances, business registration ASIC, ABN, ACN and qualifications at the current level.

Not just anyone can join a professional association like the TCAA. Applications are reviewed. Nobody wants rogues or ill-equipped, unqualified or unscrupulous arborists damaging the reputation of the whole industry. There are numerous tree-care horror stories circulating due to people like these, and they leave everyone feeling gutted.

Safety is another big part of the reason arborists should associate with the TCAA.

Tendering for government work also suggests the RFI or contracted job takes account of the professional membership.

Trained and competent

There are many pointers to why the TCAA should be thoroughly considered and a podcast of this interview is on the TCAA website.

In discussion with Tree Corp Life member Tony Jarvis, I found association members were licensed, referenced and fully insured, with external auditing. That's a great reason to consider joining the industry group, especially when quoting.

“We are members of the Tree Contractors Association of Australia,” said Tony, “and when they audit us you know the standards we have are good.

“It's the same with people who are on council. The council usually audits its list, so you can virtually guarantee they have \$20 million public liability, workers' compensation is up to scratch, superannuation is bonded, qualifications are relevant, they have the correct machinery, their gear is in good working order and serviced, people are highly visible with correct PPE, and the safe-work method statements and WHS material is also up to scratch.”

Safety first

The other requirement of being fit for work is being physically fit.

TCAA industry members are very fit, with two member leaders, being fitness freaks.

You can't be unfit and climb trees all day. But the other side is tree contracting can be exhausting, and fatigue is a difficult condition that must be monitored within the team by the team leader. If a climber is exhausted, they shouldn't climb.

Tony stated, “No cutting corners. If the job takes longer and we lose a job, at the end of the day we can usually do it first up in the morning. If the client doesn't understand this, then we don't want their business. We will not jeopardise safety.

“Climate conditions are important, too. If the climber says it's too wet, then it's off. We do not question that. The climber is the best team member to know if conditions are safe or not safe. He is the leading hand.

“Industry-association membership is good, and if the client wants to get other

quotes, they should compare apples with apples.” This extract is from a podcast on the TCAA website.

Best industry practice

As it's an unregulated industry, the client has the responsibility if someone without workers' comp is invited onto a property and they hurt themselves. Accidents do happen, and the best way forward is to ensure there is a policy and procedure to follow when things go wrong.

The TCAA hotline at HQ receives calls all the time regarding tree issues and accidents, but if the workers concerned are not members, police or fair trading are usually involved. With damages the client is always able to be represented if they chose an TCAA arborist.

Belonging to an industry association is like a feather in the cap. It's very important. It's about learning from other experienced and practical people. The collegiality in our work and the overlap of TCAA work



It's about learning from other experienced and practical people.

is a legacy and assists in better industry practice (BIP). This extract is from a podcast on the TCAA website.

As an example, there was an issue of access for an EWP on a job in Gosford, NSW, because the grounds were saturated. The TCAA was called up as an AQF-certified, level-5 consultant with industry experience, to ensure the methodology was suitable for the use of cranes and trucks. As good as the industry can be, it's times like that when creative problem-solving, best industry practice and utilising the hierarchy of control can make the difference. The hierarchy of controls was listed in the old Code of Practice, but now is found in SafeWork NSW's Hiring a treeworker.

Professionalism

TCAA membership is used to meet in Silverwater. Currently the TCAA meets in NSW, mainly in Sydney, but we have met in Ryde TAFE, Tuggerah, Adelaide, Brisbane and even Darwin, and our constitution, the founding platform for these many years, is very secure.

As an arboricultural industry profession, we suggest studying for the correct level of qualification at which you or your business work.

A story which brings me to the next point.

When in Cairns, sitting down at a table, a tree contractor member watched three tree blokes working and cutting. They could cut, but that was it. They could not cut to a standard, they tore branches, they didn't undercut, and they didn't have safety gear. ▶



Toolbox assessing trees affected by bushfire. AQF 5 arborists at Armidale, NSW.

“Not just anyone can join a professional association. Nobody wants rogues or ill-equipped, unqualified or unscrupulous arborists damaging the reputation of the whole industry industry.”



You can't be unfit and climb trees all day.



A feather in the cap by Nelsons Beach, Vaucluse, NSW.

businesses associated with tree works. But when I go over the TCAA membership for the area, we have several companies represented, and all have more than 20 years experience. This suggests one in 40 businesses would be audited, licensed and qualified. Again, it's an unregulated industry and conducting business with a non-TCAA member is probably the norm, but a successful TCAA arborist candidate has to score 100% as a good business manager, and even so, the tree industry is financially hard on the business owner.

As economic times get harder the experience pays off and the TCAA family supports its members. We know some members have other memberships to ISA, IACA and Arboriculture Australia, and it's certainly an important freedom. But joining the TCAA is beneficial as the association has a practical purpose and a vision to be licensed with a professional body following best industry practices. I've categorised these benefits into: The role of the TCAA; Best Industry Practices; TCAA Vision; TCAA Initiatives; Assistance; and Marketing and Documents (literature provided to our members).

The role of the TCAA

- TCAA executive and board to assist the associates in day-to-day issues. Responsibility to members in industry relations and proper conduct of business.
- Assisting consumers. Watchdog to the community and unscrupulous operators.
- Promote best industry practice.

Best Industry Practice

- As members providing skilled tree workers and arborists AQF 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8, and inhouse training to employees improve quality of work practice. Add value to employees. Now have the new Eco -Arborist that caters for sensitive sites.
- Suppliers of documentation to assist with proper and safe workplace etiquette and team performance.
- Promotion of safe practices leading to reduction of near-miss and reportable incidents.

A TCAA arborist is able to do this pruning work professionally, along with other associated works, including:

- Remedial treatments
- Tree surgery
- Estimations
- Crane work
- Bracing
- Stump grinding
- Clearing
- Chipping, and
- Assessment.

TCAA members would carry out all these tasks using sustainable practices and suitable workflow.

Industry support

Tree inspections with collegial experts in all parts of Australia are also a bonus when travelling. We have a new member from Dubbo and one from the Hunter, and they both have contracted in the tree industry for over 10 years. This month we have a colleague who has been clearing powerlines for many years around the mountains, and I encouraged him to finish his AQF level 3 and apply to the TCAA.

The other 95% of arborists in this unregulated industry are not like you and me. In my local area, the Central Coast of NSW, there are over 120 companies and

Vision

- The incorporation of indigenous peoples. The TCAA has always supported, and will continue to support ,indigenous peoples in the workplace.
- Partnership with loyalty sponsors.
- Allowing the propagation of careers for women in arboriculture. MAE programme with smart and skilled mentors.
- Pathway peoples from school. Attendance as guest speakers to assist careers for society.
- Engendered, aged and disability placement workers supported.
- Technology in the workplace.
- Sustainable businesses. Discussion on green culture.
- Design/assist/represent training packages to assist the arborist requirements for industry
- Legacy.

Initiatives

- The TCAA leads the industry with initiatives including:
- First to licencing. In 2014 the TCAA was the first industry association Australia-wide to introduce licencing and members' independent auditing by BNG Conserve.
 - EPA raw mulch order. In 2014 the TCAA assisted the EPA in the development of the current Raw Mulch Order that was workable and practicable for the movement and storage of woodchip and mulch.
 - Code-of-conduct document – later absorbed into the 'Safework'
 - Review of Safework's website on 'Hiring a tree worker' and 'Engaging a contractor'
 - The TCAA successfully assisted with having the 2005 ban on climbers attaching to the hook of a crane overturned. In 2011 assisted with the development of a Draft Code of Practice Safe Access in Tree Trimming and Arboriculture 2011 and including Regulation 221 Crane Work for Tree Trimming and Codes of Practices.
 - Department of Education NSW DET TCAA 2104 committed to development of the Tree Management Guidelines for NSW School and the TCAA Tree Management Guidelines.
 - Training programmes for arborists. Development and engagement with industry skills councils, TAFE NSW and



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- other Registered Training Organisations with development of Arboriculture Training Packages from 2003 to 2020 across the spectrum of qualification and training units within the Arboriculture fields of study.
- Career days for school leavers.
- Aerial Rescue Day and TCAA 2015 gained \$135,000 in training funds for members and partners with Active Industry Training to deliver training 20 AQF level 3 arborists, and Ryde TAFE for 10 AQF 5 arborists.
- Industry alerts with safety presentations and instruction for safe works.
- Guest speakers invited to TCAA days to allow for cross-industry initiatives to be presented.
- Providing professional advice and guest speakers for Garden Club support.
- Mentorship and traineeship to personnel. Knowledge base of experience.
- Guidelines rates (costings) for the industry.
- 2006 development and published of on-site hazard and preliminary assessment books for members maintaining OH&S and WH&S guidance material assisted by WorkCover NSW. This workbook is currently provided for TCAA members.

- The updating of the site hazard book for AQF 2, 3 and 5 arborists was also reviewed in 2020.
- Production of TCAA certificates and training days
- Recognising leadership and giving awards for leadership.

Meetings and representations

- AGM meetings
- Ministry meetings
- Meeting with industry leaders and educational heads, international and national.
- Industry celebrations and awards.
- Meetings with TAFE heads, council panels, council officials and other government officials.
- Collegiality and transfer of most information, including jobs information.
- Collegiality with other likeminded groups: Western Australian Guild, VITA, TTIA, NSW, Smart and Skilled, RYDE TAFE and Melbourne Uni
- Networking and meeting with climbers and field visits to TCAA associates.
- Profiling the arborist. How to achieve and step up.

ZOOM/Teams meetings to assist

- Introducing conduits of work through the TCAA website.
- Collegiality of business leaders.
- Industry collegiality to pass work on to TCAA members.
- Discounts on insurances.
- Advertisement page for new and used machinery and jobs profile on website.
- Profiling the TCAA members and assisting new members in the promotion of successful business leaders. Includes face-to-face discussions.
- Sponsors who allow for TCAA member discounts.
- Collegial toolbox meetings on unusual or difficult projects.



The Bear Tree at Birrong, NSW.

Marketing

- Conserve – auditing for licensing, and advertising through the Conserve dashboard to linked councils
- Newsletters Chipper Chatter.
- Interviews with ABC, Channel 7 and Channel 9

“Joining the TCAA is beneficial as the association has a practical purpose and vision.”



Hedge Legends at Elizabeth Bay did a nice job.



- Industry leads to grow business
- TCAA website and Facebook pages. Website uploads and podcasts, Facebook profiling of your company.
- HQ and helpdesk 24 hours a day with messaging service.

Documents provided to members

- Tree Management Guide (TMG)
- Tree Risk Assessment Matrix
- Tree Useful Life Expectancy (TULE)
- Hazard register books
- Pre-hazard site books
- Basic SWMS advice
- Pre-DA Advice
- Articles on tree physiology and industry news
- Proformas on tree assessment.



There are a lot of reasons why people in the industry are connected with the TCAA.

Even now we are a practical people, Craig, No 'dead' things, but a feather in the cap and front foot forward. AA



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