

ENVIRONMENT

The Newsletter of the Environment Centre NT
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September 2000

Have Your Say on Darwin Harbour

Darwin Harbour Strategic Plan public consultation- August and September.

This month's newsletter contains a 4 page lift-out on Darwin Harbour. The Environment Centre has been working to protect the Harbour for many years- the declaration of the Charles Darwin National Park was partly a result of campaigning by ECNT. We still have no masterplan for the Harbour however, the mangroves are still threatened and it seems that the NT Government is seriously considering plans to dam 4 arms of the Harbour.

The promised issue on landclearing and the postcard have been postponed till October because we wanted to give as much coverage as possible to these public consultation sessions being organised by the NT Government. We urge our readers and friends to attend and express your views

Recently the NT Government received money from the Commonwealth to prepare a Strategic Plan for the Harbour. The Environment Centre has been involved in the early stages of the development of this plan which will be discussed at a number of public meetings at the end of August and beginning of September. We are

hopeful that the plan may help to protect the integrity of Darwin Harbour, however we're very aware that the

NT Government has failed to meet public demands to protect Darwin Harbour for many years and that unless there is considerable public pressure the plan may end up being just another report gathering dust on the shelves. Therefore we need as many people as possible to attend the public consultation meetings being held in the first week of September to voice their concerns for the future of the Harbour.

The enclosed lift-out contains a 'Community Vision' for the Harbour which involves protecting the mangroves in a conservation zone and overhauling out of date and inappropriate planning documents. The 'Community Vision' has been developed by a number of local community groups and we're now asking people to register their support for the concept. One way of doing this could be to raise the 'Community Vision' at one of the public meetings scheduled as part of the Strategic Plan for the Harbour. The timetable for consultation is below:

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containing the "Community
Vision"

DATE & TIME	VENUE	CONSULTATION FOCUS
28/08 4-6pm	Darwin City Council meeting room	Workshop- Environment, Education & Scientific sector
29/08 10 am-12 pm	Development House	Regional Development Briefing and Info Session.
29/08 2-4pm	Development House	Briefing- Tourist Operators, Art Events Organisers & Recreation Users
29/08 7.30-9.30pm	Mandorah Hotel	Community meeting-West catchment
30/08 7-9pm	Darwin City Council meeting room	Workshop- Community groups
31/08 10am-12pm	Development House	Briefing-Commercial and Development sector
31/08 6-9pm	Darwin City Council meeting room	Darwin resident's forum
2/09 2-5pm	Fred's Pass reserve	Community meeting-upper Litchfield
4/09 5.50-7.30pm	Palmerston City Council Chambers	Community meeting- Palmerston community.

Rio Tinto takes over North Ltd

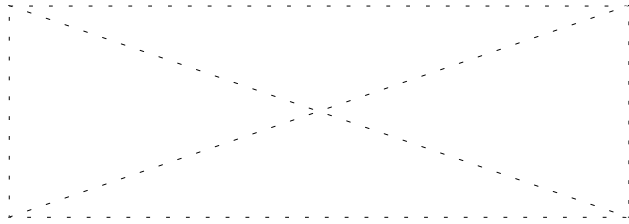
Future of Jabiluka under review

August saw Rio Tinto, the world's second largest mining company take over North Ltd. North directors resigned mid-month and a new management team was appointed.

It is unclear as yet what impact this will have on the future of ERA and in particular the Jabiluka project. However market analysts are suggesting that Rio will sell ERA as soon as possible.

In the words of market analyst Keith Goode of Bell Securities "Rio's main concern with ERA was likely to be its environmental risk. When you are that high profile...Rio doesn't want to have its name on the front of every newspaper in the world having an ecological disaster".

Seems as though our campaigning has been effective. The Environment Centre has written to Rio Tinto asking them to abandon the Jabiluka project and reincorporate



the lease into the National Park in a way that is acceptable to traditional owners. Given the difficulty North has had over the past 6 months in finding a likely buyer for ERA, this may not be as unlikely as it sounds. After all, with a terrible human rights, environmental and industrial record Rio Tinto may be looking to try and regain some much needed credibility.

Rio are currently engaged in a review of all branches of North Ltd and are expected to make a decision on which branches it retains and which ones it sells in the next month or so.

Action Alert:

Write to Rio Tinto- Mr Tim Duncan, Head of Australian External Affairs, Rio Tinto, GPO Box 384D, Melbourne Vic, 3001. Ask them what they're planning to do with ERA and the Jabiluka project. Tell them how unpopular Jabiluka is. Ask them to consider re-incorporating the lease into the National Park.

Short Term Project Officer needed.

The Ord River Irrigation Scheme past, present and future.

In June this year ECNT and Environs Kimberley were successful in attaining funding to conduct an analysis of irrigated agricultural development in the Ord Valley- both past development and potential future development. We are now seeking a short term researcher/project officer to undertake this study. It is envisaged that the project would take around 12 weeks to complete (the project officer's payment is \$8,000) The study will address the environmental, social and economic aspects of the development and will map out the likely processes that would ensue if Ord Stage 2 were to be pursued. The project officer will work with both ECNT and EK and also the Kimberley Land Council and Kununurra-based conservationists.

It is intended that the study will:

- 1) provide the environment movement and interested public with an analysis of the impacts and consequences of development of Ord Stage 1 that will help inform future campaign work in the Ord, and
- 2) provide a case study of some of the consequences of a major agricultural development in tropical Australia.

If you would like a job description for the project please contact ECNT on 08 8981 1984. Note: the closing date for applications is September 31.

Bits and Pieces

Another Response to Higher Petrol Prices

The current wave of petrol price rises Australia wide has captured much media attention but is almost always approached from the same angle: How can we achieve lower prices?

This evidence given before a US Senate Committee, by Andrew Hoemer on behalf of the Centre for a Sustainable Economy makes some useful observations about how to respond to high petrol prices - cut use not taxes!

He listed three approaches to dealing with the current high energy prices through the tax system:

- * first, tax incentives for energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies;
- * second, tax incentives for domestic fossil fuel production; and finally,
- * a moratorium on federal motor fuel taxes.

Of these three policies, only the incentives for energy efficiency and renewables promote long-term energy security, economic growth, and environmental quality. Subsidies to fossil fuel industries drain American (and Australian) reserves and ensure increased dependence on foreign oil, while cutting fuel taxes plays into the hands of OPEC by transferring money directly from the pockets of U.S. (and Australian) taxpayers into the hands of foreign oil producers.

In summary, incentives for energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies are good for the economy and good for the environment. They promote energy security and put us in a better

bargaining position in world energy markets. On the other hand, both subsidies to domestic fossil fuel industries and cuts in motor fuel taxes constitute expensive and unjustified giveaways to industries that are already heavily subsidised.

They would harm our national security and put us at a bargaining disadvantage with the OPEC nations.

Earth Alive Biodiversity Bash Hands on for Life

An exciting event is being planned for Saturday 9 September at Knuckey's Lagoon Recreation Reserve between 2 and 6pm . A variety of organisations will take part, including

- * Greening Australia will lead Bush Walks to learn about local plants and animals and their homes

- * Frogwatch will hold an interactive computer display, demonstrating local frogs, their calls and how to help them survive

- * Wildcare and Snakes NT- learn about some local snakes and lizards and their habitats

- * TopEnd Native Plants Society will have displays and sales of plants that attract birds and butterflies

AND much, MUCH MORE!!
Ring Sally Jacka 89885575 for

Federal ALP commits to Kakadu

At its recent conference in Hobart, the issue of the proposed Jabiluka mine in Kakadu was discussed. The decision was as follows:

"the conference noted that Jabiluka is in an area excised from, but physically within, the World Heritage listed area of Kakadu National Park and that domestic and international concern exists over the issue. A future Labor Government is committed to an action plan in order to respect the World Heritage values by;

- continued opposition to the proposed mine at Jabiluka and any application for the export of ore from the lease
- seeking a permanent outcome for the Jabiluka mineral lease which protects the outstanding natural and cultural value of both the lease areas and the surrounding National Park area, and
- reviewing the 'joint management' structures and processes for the Park."

This decision increases the uncertainty surrounding Jabiluka. It is important now that we galvanise the ALP position in the lead up to the next election- you can help by writing to your ALP member and Mr Beazley and congratulating them on their policy. Ask them if their 'action plan' is unconditional. For more

info contact
ECNT.

Dates to remember

September is Biodiversity month

Come along and express your views about the Future of Darwin Harbour

- * **Tues 29 August: Mandorah Hotel , 7.30 - 9.30pm**
- * **Thurs 31 August: Darwin Civic Centre, 6- 9pm**
- * **Sat 2 Sept: Fred's Pass Reserve, 2-5pm**
- * **Mon 4 Sept: Palmerston Council Chambers, 5.30 - 7.30pm**

Thursday 7 September: National Threatened Species Day

Saturday 9 @ Knuckey's Lagoon Reserve, "Biodiversity Bash," 2-6pm

The views expressed in *EnvironmeNT* are not necessarily those of the Environment Centre NT management committee
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