

# ENVIRONMENT

The Newsletter of the Environment Centre NT  
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Dec 2000/Jan 2001

## 'Livid Lizzie' leads the Way On Darwin Harbour

### 'Livid Lizzie' leads community in opposition to Elizabeth River Dam

On November 17<sup>th</sup>, the Darwin Harbour Alliance, of which ECNT is an active member, launched the next phase of the campaign to protect the values of Darwin Harbour. The Alliance's current focus is on preventing the dam proposed for the Elizabeth River. To this end, a very successful media launch was held at

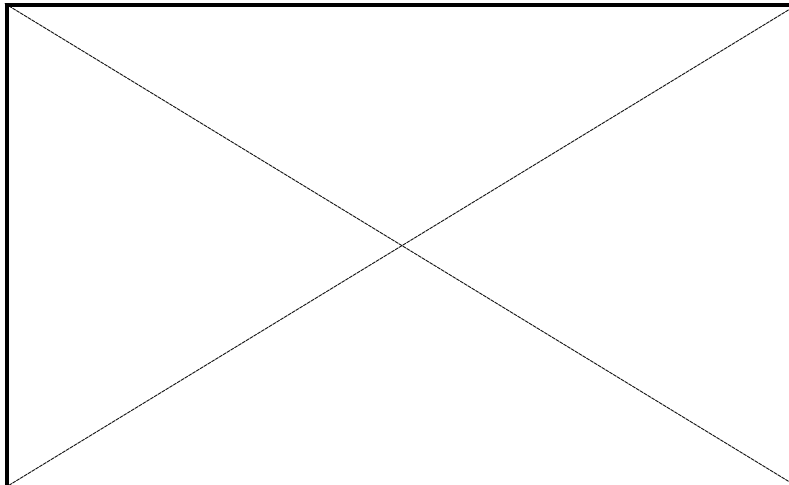
which the latest materials: stickers and postcards featuring the Alliance's new mascot 'Livid Lizzie' (named after the threatened river) were presented. The materials, along with petitions, have since been distributed throughout Darwin and the rural area. The postcards addressed to NT Chief Minister Denis Burke along with the petition and stickers, give members of the community an opportunity to express their opposition to dams in Darwin Harbour. All the signed postcards will be publicly presented to the Chief Minister in the New Year.

The response from the community in just the first two weeks of this initiative has been overwhelming with an average of 30 postcards being returned to ECNT each day. There are currently more than 1500 signatures on petitions held at ECNT.

Evidence of community opposition to this ridiculous proposal continues to grow. The Government's

conducting market research into this issue. Having announced that no decision will be made before

2003, information is now being gathered on how best to sell the idea to the public. Judging by the community response to date, not even a well-funded advertising campaign will be able to push the idea of a dam on Elizabeth River. This is not something that people are going to come around to. It is time for the Government to make three commitments for the future of Darwin Har-



Margaret Clinch, from PLAN, Gerry Woods, President of the Litchfield Shire Council and Kirsten Blair of ECNT at the launch

bour: no dams, redesign Weddell, and legislate for protection of the mangroves. Inside you will find copies of the Livid Lizzie sticker. NT residents also have and postcard and copy of the petition. Please send the postcard in, or pass it on if you've already sent one. You may want to pass the petition round to your friends, family and workmates, please return the completed petition to us at ECNT.

own polling found that 70% of people polled had heard about the proposal and 50% of people polled were opposed to a dam on Elizabeth River. 25% of people surveyed support the dam and 25% are undecided. The questions asked in the poll were 'leading' to say the least. The NT Government report on the research says the poll "asked if people were more likely to agree with the proposal if it could be shown that there would be no measurable reduction in fish numbers or other aquatic life". You will remember from last month's Environment NT that the proposal involves flooding and clearing nearly 800 hectares of mangroves, so will inevitably reduce fish numbers and impact on aquatic life in some way. It is clear that the Government is

bour: no dams, redesign Weddell, and legislate for protection of the mangroves.

Inside you will find copies of the Livid Lizzie sticker. NT residents also have and postcard and copy of the petition. Please send the postcard in, or pass it on if you've already sent one. You may want to pass the petition round to your friends, family and workmates, please return the completed petition to us at ECNT.

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# Jabiluka Update

## Report on World Heritage Committee meeting on Kakadu Cairns Nov 28, 2000

*The World Heritage Committee met in Cairns, from November 27th - December 2nd 2000.*

*Friends of the Earth Australia, Environment Centre Northern Territory and the Australian Conservation Foundation jointly submitted recommendations to the World Heritage. The report as well as current media releases about the meeting can be viewed on the ECNT website: [www1.octa4.net.au/ecnt](http://www1.octa4.net.au/ecnt)*

### **The World Heritage Committee has made its latest recommendation on 29 November on the impacts of Jabiluka and the threats that this poses to Kakadu.**

The Committee approached the issue in two parts – natural / science issues and cultural concerns.

On the area of natural issues the Committee's decision is disappointing. It acknowledged that there is a need for greater transparency and monitoring and more information on the project but failed to put this in a continuing international process. The Committee has decided that a revised Australian science panel be established drawing on members of the "most appropriate" scientific bodies. This is clearly very vague and very open to Government manipulation.

This situation is made more problematic because there is no requirement for this body to report back to the World Heritage Centre or Committee (WHC) Over the past 18 months

the Australian Government has successfully boxed the World Heritage bodies into scrutiny of very specific scientific issues without overall regard for the impacts on Kakadu's natural values of another uranium mine.

Regarding cultural matters the Committee was very concerned about the pressure on Mirrar and Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation. The Australian Government vehemently opposed any international intervention in the issue stating that it was an Australian issue. Other delegates did not agree. Ultimately the Committee's decision was an each way bet. It urges the Government and the Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation to resume dialogue aimed at addressing outstanding cultural issues. It states that if this fails both groups are to try and agree on an independent facilitator to get things back on track. If this fails the issue comes before the Committee again next year.

On the positive side there is a new level of (potentially) independent observers, an acknowledgement of the importance of Mirrar in cultural matters and a continuing line in to the WHC.

We have been pushing the view that this decision is a direct result of Australia's politicisation of the WHC and preparedness to sacrifice international treaties and goodwill in pursuit of a politically driven agenda. We are also reinforcing that this decision is by no means the end of the story. We will be focusing on Rio Tinto and there are many procedural, political and legal obstacles facing the development of Jabiluka. The biggest of these is the continuing opposition of the majority of the Australian community and the Mirrar traditional owners. This decision in no way affects this. The fact remains that uranium

mining is not compatible with the World Heritage values of Kakadu National Park. The project is stalled years behind schedule and looks increasingly unlikely to ever proceed.

### **Other Matters relating to Kakadu are:**

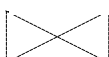
#### **Possible sale of Energy Resources of Australia (ERA) to Cogema**

Rio Tinto is considering selling its recently acquired majority stake in ERA. Leading potential buyers include French nuclear utility Cogema and Canadian-based Cameco Resources, both of which are already minority shareholders in ERA. Cogema subsidiaries also own the Koongarra deposit south of the Ranger mine. The future of the Koongarra deposit was thrown into doubt last year when traditional landowners vetoed access. The sale of ERA to a foreign company requires Federal Government approval via the Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB). Although the Federal Government dropped special treatment of foreign investment in the uranium industry in 1996, it is yet to be tested in the face of a likely community backlash. The possibility of a sale to the French is of particular concern due to France's history of nuclear testing in the South Pacific.

***If you want to express your concerns to the Federal Government, we suggest this Sample letter to Peter Costello***

The Hon. Peter Costello Room MG47  
Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600  
Phone 02 6277 7340 Fax 02 6273 3420  
Email [ministerial@treasury.gov.au](mailto:ministerial@treasury.gov.au)

Dear Mr Costello,  
I am writing to express my deep concern at the possibility that control of the Ranger and Jabiluka uranium mines could be passed to French nuclear utility Cogema. Cogema pres



# Australia's Day of Shame on Climate Change

The Australian Government played an extremely disappointing role at the United Nations Climate Change Summit in The Hague in late November. ECNT was represented at the Summit by members of CANA (Climate Action Network Australia).

The crucial climate negotiations failed on the last day of the conference with the only agreement being to resume special discussions in May 2001, to again attempt to set the rules for reducing global greenhouse gas pollution via the targets set in Kyoto in 1997. The Australian Government must take a certain amount of responsibility for the failure of the discussions. Australia, with the United States, Japan and Canada, under the banner "the Umbrella Group" were pushing for rules to allow for pollution increases above the targets set in 1997. Their persistent efforts to weaken the Kyoto Protocol treaty are driven by the narrow self-interests of their big polluting companies, and history will remember these nations as climate vandals.

The European Union, which said that the environmental integrity of the treaty was its number one priority, had not been able to agree to the proposals put by the large polluting nations. The developing nations represented under the "G77" banner also ex-

pressed concerns with the proposals of the Umbrella Group nations.

Blame for the failure of these talks lies squarely at the feet of Australia, the United States, Canada and Japan. Their proposals for massive loopholes would have allowed global pollution to increase by up to 8% above 1990 levels rather than the 5% reduction that was set by the Kyoto Protocol agreement. Australia should have taken a much more positive and environmentally responsible stance at the Summit. Australia's special Kyoto target allows pollution to increase 25% above 1990 levels, a level well above most other nations in the world. There was no justification for Australia to push for even greater "flexibility" to allow for even greater pollution levels. It was a highly irresponsible stance and one that helped lead to the failure of the negotiations.

CANA will be seeking discussions with the Government to try and improve their stance on the key issues prior to the May gathering.

**The network is concerned that Cabinet's brief for the Environment Minister was totally driven by the interests of a small number of mining and energy companies and failed to reflect the long-term national interest or the views of the Australian community.**

*Continued from previous page...*

ide over both the military and 'civil' aspects of France's nuclear industries. Given this, I believe the effectiveness of Australia's bilateral agreements to ensure that Australian sourced uranium is not used in military nuclear technology or weapons testing activities would be fundamentally compromised. I therefore urge the Treasurer to refuse approval of the sale of ERA to Cogema. I believe that such approval would be contrary to the national interest and further endanger the cultural and natural integrity of Kakadu National Park  
Yours truly,

## **Jabiluka traditional mine owner unlikely to appeal trespass conviction**

Yvonne Margarula, senior traditional owner of the Jabiluka region, is unlikely to appeal against a trespass conviction she received for a Jabiluka protest in May 1998. Ms Margarula this week lost her appeal against the conviction in the Full Court of the Northern Territory Supreme Court.

## **Alliance between Mirrar & Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) on Kakadu**

Peter Garrett (ACF President) and Yvonne Margarula (Chairperson of Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation, GAC) issued a joint agreement between the two organisations to defend the cultural and natural integrity of Kakadu on 17/11/00.

**A copy of the charter is available at [www.acfonline.org.au](http://www.acfonline.org.au)**

# ECNT in the Year 2000

## Environment Centre NT Convenor's Report 2000 by Di Koser

This past year has been a very successful one for the Environment Centre, both in a campaign sense and organisationally.

The campaign front this past year has seen many achievements including the following:

### *Major Campaigns*

#### **DARWIN HARBOUR**

We have worked with a coalition of other community groups towards the development of "A Community Vision for Darwin Harbour" which has had huge community support. The 'Community Vision' was launched at a public meeting held at the University in May. ECNT, in collaboration with the other groups prepared the information leaflet 'Darwin Harbour: Mangroves or the Gold Coast?' and thousands of them have been distributed in the community by us as well as individuals from a variety of groups in the community. Many hundreds of people have signed up to receive Darwin Harbour Alliance information.

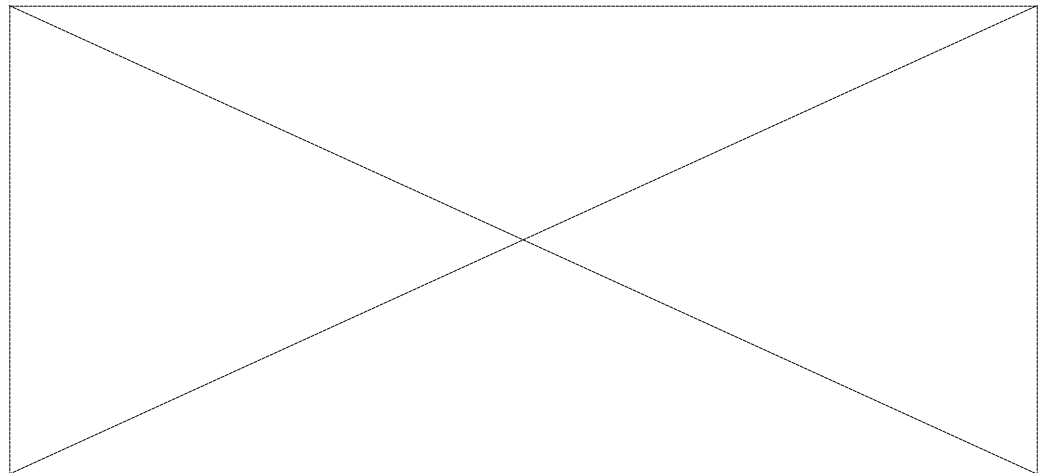
Community pressure also saw the NT Government begin to prepare a Strategic Plan for Darwin Harbour. The public consultation phase of the Strategic Plan demonstrated overwhelmingly that the public does not want further development of the mangroves or foreshore of Darwin Harbour. Recent announcements that the NT Government will pursue plans to dam the Elizabeth River signal that the Harbour will continue to be a major focus of ECNT's campaigning.

#### **KAKADU & URANIUM MINING**

**Jabiluka**- ECNT continued to play a key role in the campaign to stop Jabiluka throughout 2000. No further construction work took place at Jabiluka this year and the project looks increasingly unlikely to proceed. This year ECNT contributed to the

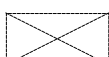
preparation of the document "Kakadu Under Threat" which was distributed to World Heritage Committee members in June and outlined our concerns about the impacts of the proposed Jabiluka mine on Kakadu. ECNT was also represented at the World Heritage Bureau meeting at the end of June. The issue of Jabiluka is firmly on the international agenda and will be addressed at the World Heritage Committee meeting in December in Cairns. ECNT will be attending the meeting and outlining our ongoing concerns. In addition to World Heritage work ECNT has responded to hundreds of information requests about Jabiluka, has lobbied both North Ltd and the mine's new owners, Rio Tinto, to abandon the project and has continued to highlight the impacts associated with the proposed mine both locally and nationally.

**Ranger**- ECNT followed up the leak of 2 million litres of contaminated water from the Ranger uranium mine early this year, putting considerable



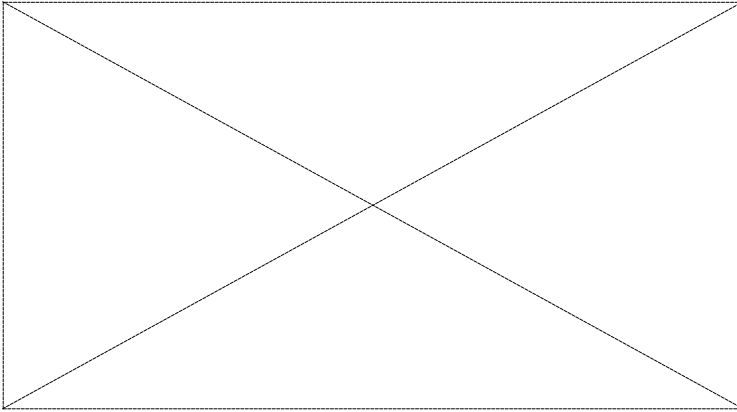
pressure on the NT and Commonwealth Governments to prosecute the mine operators ERA. Many of our longstanding concerns were vindicated by this incident, which highlighted the inadequacy of the regulatory regime for mining in the Kakadu region. Following the incident the regulatory system was tightened up slightly, addressing some of our concerns. ECNT continues to contribute to forums like the Alligator Rivers Region Advisory Committee to reduce the impacts of mining in Kakadu, despite the fact that we believe that mining is incompatible with Kakadu's values.

**South Alligator**- ECNT helped to publicise the fact that abandoned uranium mines in the South Alligator region were exposing people and the environment to contaminated tailings uncovered by burrowing animals. This situation is now being addressed by Parks Australia North.



## **Other campaigns-**

**Koongarra-** ECNT welcomed traditional owner's rejection of exploration activities at Koongarra in early 2000. ECNT continues to work to ensure that



Koongarra is never mined- in July we met with the Vice President of French nuclear subsidiary Cogema (100% owner of Koongarra Ltd) to let them know how unpopular the Koongarra proposal is. In August we also welcomed news that Koongarra Ltd had closed their Darwin office.

### **LANDCLEARING/ IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE**

This year ECNT stepped up its work on landclearing. In June ECNT engaged John Brock to prepare a detailed report on the status of landclearing in the NT which will be used to inform future campaigning. This report, "Clearing Moves North" is about to be published and will be available on the ECNT website. Additionally we have printed and are distributing 5,000 postcards asking the Chief Minister to introduce meaningful landclearing controls and to protect areas with high conservation values in the NT. On another front Sally Jacka has recently begun work on a report for us which is looking at opportunities for expanding the protected areas system across the NT.

ECNT has been closely following the Ord Stage 2 development and prepared a detailed submission to the EIS. Following initial approvals of Ord Stage 2 ECNT appealed the West Australian Government's decision under the WA Environment Protection Act and is still awaiting the outcome of our appeal. ECNT is coordinating a broad community forum of groups concerned about the expansion of irrigated agriculture, particularly cotton, in the Top End. This group has received briefings from the NT Government and industry and will continue to examine the planned expansion of agriculture and forestry across Northern Australia. This year ECNT and Environs Kimberley successfully sought 3 years funding for future work on landclearing, ensuring we will be able to run a very strong campaign on the issue.

**WEEDS** Distribution of the ECNT publication "Weeds of Natural Ecosystems" to a wide variety of groups and individuals across North Australia, from Kununurra to Cooktown, is continuing. This publication is a core text in courses at NTU and Katherine as well as being used by land managers on Aboriginal communities, employees of Lands Planning and the Environment and members of most Top End Landcare groups. The information in this publication is obviously filling a huge gap. We are now planning a second edition. As part of Weedbuster Week we arranged weed swaps, with the assistance of Greening Australia, where we swapped beautiful native local plants for weeds from people's gardens. Over 80 plants were exchanged in this way.

**WASTE MINIMISATION-** With several local government representatives, ECNT wrote to the NT Environment Minister regarding the disposal of chemical waste and the enforcement of chemical filters legislation for industry. This has led to specific regulations being drafted. ECNT has been involved in ongoing communication with Darwin City Council, particularly to persuade them to encourage residents to take up home composting as a way of reducing landfill and creating better gardens. We are still working on this matter.

As a way to cut down excessive use of plastic bags, we have sold through our office and local markets several hundred cloth shopping bags featuring our beautiful swimming turtles logo.

**CLIMATE CHANGE** ECNT has been an active member of the Climate Action Network Australia and held a forum at the Museum in July examining the implications of climate change for the NT. ECNT has also been negotiating with the Australian Greenhouse office for funds to establish a renewable energy campaign in the NT.

### **Other Matters**

Throughout the year, the coordinators have addressed a variety of environmental issues as they arose. These have included jellyfish harvesting at Borroloola, the Mt Todd gold mine closure, pesticide and herbicide use, the proposed acacia plantations on the Tiwi islands by Sylvatech, the onward march of cane toads and the proposed prawn farm at Shoal Bay.

**Organisationally some of our achievements have been as follows:**

ECNT has provided the support and meeting space for a local branch of **Gene Ethics**, a group con-

cerned about the impacts of genetic engineering, which has been meeting every two weeks as well as holding information stalls and producing newsletters.

Recently our **Web site** has been upgraded and we expect we will benefit from a huge saving in time, now that we can direct many inquiries about our work to the site. It is modelled on our great looking new membership forms which we finally had printed this year. We have also continued to publish a regular and informative newsletter 'Environment'.

ECNT had an unplanned move early this year however we find our new office very practical, affordable, comfortable AND we have signed a long term lease. We have also managed to get a much better picture of our financial situation, which is reasonably healthy, despite our annual Commonwealth grant being continually reduced. ECNT made the GST transition without too much trouble, although the GST has increased our workload considerably. We have just employed a part-time administration officer, Charlotte McCabe, which should help us keep on top of a large administrative workload.

We have had some very enjoyable social events in the past twelve months, including a very pleasant end of year get-together with members at the Night-cliff foreshore for food and drinks and a challenging and financially rewarding Quiz Night.

### **FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

2001 is set to be an exciting year for the Environment Centre. Over the next year we will:

- employ a landclearing campaigner working on landclearing issues in the Kimberley and the Top End.
- Hopefully receive funding to employ a campaigner to work on climate change issues.
- Develop our fundraising base and long term organisational strategies
- Reprint the publication 'Weeds of Natural Ecosystems'
- Continue to respond to hundreds of requests from the community for information.
- Continue to be a strong voice for the environment of the NT and beyond.

***Finally we would like to thank all our members, supporters, volunteers and Management Committee members for their contribution to our efforts this year.***

## **Draft Darwin Harbour Strategic Plan released for comment.**

You may remember the first round of community consultations on the Strategic Plan for the Harbour, back in . Well, the first draft of the report has been completed and is now available for public comment. Copies can be obtained from Lands Planning and Environment, or from their website: [www.lpe.nt.gov.au](http://www.lpe.nt.gov.au). Contact 1800 500 667 for more information.

**Public consultation sessions about the draft are being held in the first week of December, all run from 7.00- 9.30pm:**

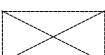
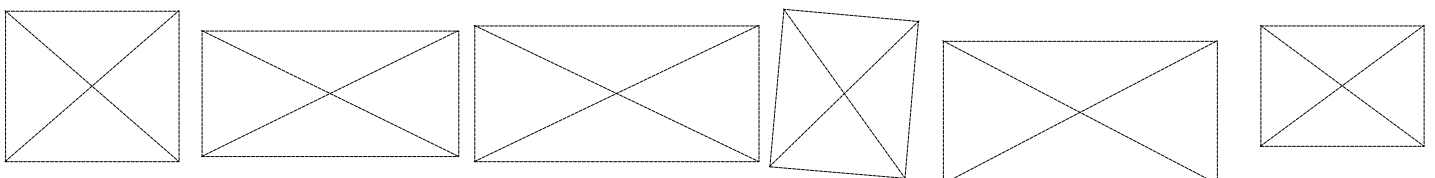
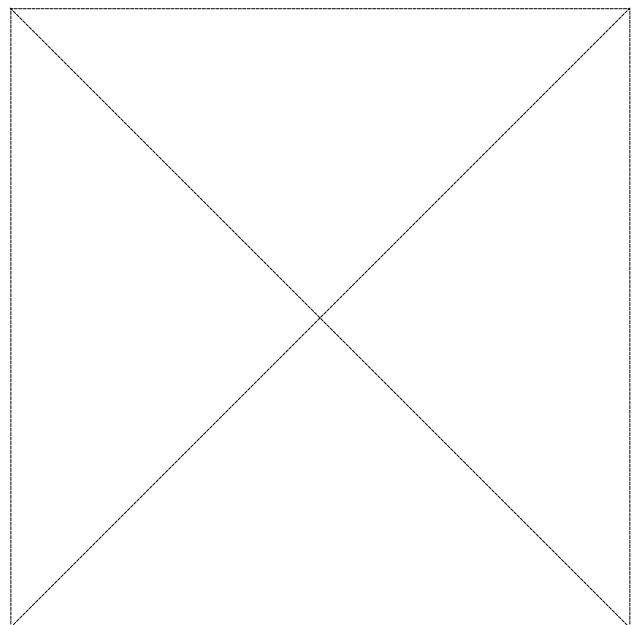
**Monday 4<sup>th</sup>, Bees Creek Primary School**

**Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup>, Palmerston City Council Chambers**

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup>, Darwin City Council Chambers**

**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup>, Mandorah Hotel**

**Please go along to have your say about the future of Darwin Harbour.**



# Bits and Pieces

## Welcome to our New Office Manager

We are very pleased to introduce our newly appointed Office Manager, Charlotte McCabe. Charlotte was chosen from a long list of applicants and has fitted very smoothly into our team and has now been introduced to most of our procedures and many of our members. We are very glad to have you Charlotte!!

## Office Opening Hours

Limited opening hours between 15 December and 2 February 2001.

During the Christmas holiday break, ECNT will be open for only limited hours. From 15 December, the office will be closed except for a few hours each week. Of course . messages can be left on the phone and they will be responded to within a few days. At this stage, we can't tell you which days we will open, but as soon as this is arranged, we will leave a message on the answering machine. The office will be attended to by Charlotte McCabe and available volunteers. Anyone who will be in town and wants to do a few hours is invited to contact us.

## New Committee

At our AGM on 16 November the following members were elected to our Committee.

Di Koser in the position of convenor, Tim Prichard (new member) is our Public Officer, the position

of treasurer is still vacant. Some other committee members are Matthew Campbell, Dana Fitzsimmons, Jane Goodrich, , Charlotte McCabe (new committee member), and Penny Wurm.

## End of Year Event

**Our final Committee Meeting for the year will be held on Friday 8 December, following which we will meet at the Nightcliff foreshore, between the pool and the boat ramp. We would love to see some of our members there, so bring your food, drinks and chairs if you like and we'll see you around sunset (from about 6.30)**

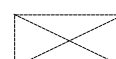
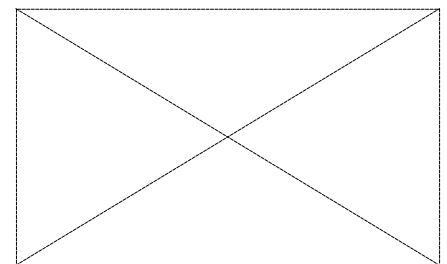
## Cane Toad Research Funds

The Federal Government has made a belated commitment of \$1million dollars to CSIRO for research to locate the growth hormone in cane toads as a way to control their reproduction. While this is welcome, it is too little and far too late. Some have reached the Southern border of Kakadu already and there are predictions that they will have colonised much of the Wetlands by the end of this season. So, enjoy the sound of the native frogs while you can. They may not be around much longer!

## Become an Acid Sulphate Detective.

Do you have an acid sulphate soil problem or do you know an area where there might be a problem? Acid sulphate soils are common around coastal mangrove areas but are also known in other areas in the NT including some floodplains. If these soils are disturbed they may release acid which is damaging to the environment and in some cases acid drainage can result in fish kills. A new booklet has been produced to inform property owners about acid sulphate soils and a kit is available for \$80 for those who want to do their own testing or you can make your own kit following guidelines set out in the booklet.

The Booklet is Acid Sulphate Soils-Keys to success and is available through the NSW Agriculture Dept on 02 66261200 The NSW Agriculture web page at [www.agric.nsw.gov.au/Arm/acidss/index.html](http://www.agric.nsw.gov.au/Arm/acidss/index.html) has more info.



# Dates to remember

Public consultation sessions about the draft Harbour Strategic Plan are being held in the first week of December, all run from 7.00- 9.30pm:

Monday 4<sup>th</sup>, Bees Creek Primary School

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup>, Palmerston City Council Chambers

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup>, Darwin City Council Chambers

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup>, Mandorah Hotel

Please go along to have your say about the future of Darwin Harbour.

Friday 8 December: End of Year get together @ Nightcliff foreshore @ sunset

Friday 15 December to 5 February 2001, limited opening hours

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Please recycle this newsletter: leave it in a waiting room or other appropriate place for someone else to read

The Newsletter of the Environment Centre NT

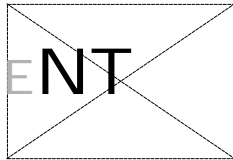
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