

ENVIRONMENT

The Newsletter of the Environment Centre NT
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Website- <http://www.ecnt.org>

Environment Centre NT Activity Report 2002

Once again the Environment Centre has had a very busy and successful year in 2002 in a challenging political environment. We've attempted to run both strong campaigns and a healthy organisation.

Some of the campaign highlights and challenges have been:

Major Campaigns

LANDCLEARING

Jann Crase led ECNT's landclearing campaign this year in her role as the Northern Woodlands and Wetlands campaigner. The year began with the good news that Wesfarmers Ord Stage 2 proposal (which involved the clearing of nearly 30,000 hectares for sugar production) was to be shelved. This is a major reprieve for the Ord, though the WA and NT Governments have signalled their intent to find new developers and try and keep the project alive. ECNT has concentrated its efforts on preventing broad-scale landclearing in the Daly region and on the introduction of legislation to regulate landclearing throughout the NT. The NT Government is set to introduce interim landclearing legislation in late 2002 or early 2003. The Daly remains under imminent threat with the proposed subdivision of Douglas station.

We've also worked on landclearing issues in the rural area, the Tiwi islands plantation project, and the introduction of genetically modified organisms (GMO's) into Northern Australia. ECNT, along with other community groups and individuals, was instrumental in the the Gene Technology Regulator's September decision to refuse Monsanto's application to grow GM cotton on a commercial basis in the north of Australia. Jann finished working for ECNT and Environs Kimberley in mid-November. Her work since April 2001 greatly improved our effort on landclear-

ing issues and we wish her all the best in the future.

HARBOUR, COASTAL AND MARINE ISSUES

Darwin Harbour- The campaign to prevent the industrialisation of Darwin Harbour has been hard fought this year. In November the NT Government issued the final development approval for the Phillips LNG plant at Wickham Point which was very disappointing. Out of 1642 submissions from the public only one supported the development approval. The debate about LNG is not going away, particularly given that the NT Government is determined to bring gas and associated industries onshore to Glyde Point as well as Wickham Point.

In more positive news ECNT continues to gather support for Heritage nomination for Darwin Harbour. The NT Government also announced its intention to develop a Plan of Management for the Harbour, something that ECNT has been calling for for many years. ECNT is now a member of the Darwin Harbour Advisory Board which is charged with developing a Plan of Management for Darwin Harbour. Additionally in March 2002 the NT Government rezoned the mangroves of Darwin Harbour to increase their level of protection.

Coastal and Marine issues- This year we have attempted to increase our work on coastal and marine issues. In particular we have been focussing on the development of a coastal policy for the NT, monitoring aquaculture developments, and lobbying the NT Government to introduce rehabilitation bonds for all aquaculture projects. A major focus over the next year or so will be inputting into the Commonwealth Regional Marine Plan for Northern waters. We hope to further increase our capacity to work on coastal and marine issues over the year.

MINING

Jabiluka- In 2002 ECNT continued to campaign with the Mirrar Traditional Owners to ensure that the Jabiluka uranium mine is never developed and the area is handed back to traditional owners. The issue stayed in the news with continuing water management problems at Jabiluka and Ranger mines and a Senate Inquiry into the regulation of uranium mining in Australia. The Senate Inquiry was a product of lobbying by ECNT and others. The Jabiluka campaign had another minor victory this year with Rio Tinto opening the door to the rehabilitation of the Jabiluka site in statements made by Rio's Chairman Sir Robert Wilson. ECNT Coordinator Mark Wakeham attended the World Summit on Sustainable Development in August representing ECNT and other groups in an effort to increase the pressure on Rio Tinto to abandon plans to develop Jabiluka.

West Arnhem Land uranium exploration- ECNT released a substantial report at the beginning of the year looking at uranium exploration in the West Arnhem area. We hope that this report, and other resources we have been compiling on the issue raises awareness about the threats posed by exploration and potentially future uranium mines in the area.

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ECNT continued its 'watchdog' role in relation to the mining industry, responding to leaks at Ranger and Jabiluka mines this year and to the dumping of cyanide in the Tanami desert. ECNT believes that the NT needs an independent Environment Protection Authority to respond to leaks and spills swiftly and strongly.

Finally ECNT was extremely disappointed at the Labor Party back-flip on its promise to ban mining in National Parks. Labor abandoned this pre-election promise on taking Government. ECNT will be releasing a report on the need to exclude mining from National Parks and Protected Areas in early 2003.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Cool Communities- ECNT's Cool Communities project has made great progress this year. Nearly 50 households in the Parap, Ludmilla, Fannie Bay and The Narrows area have already signed up to the program. Energy audits have been or will be conducted for each of these households and then the householders will implement some of the recommendations of the audits and reduce their energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions. ECNT would like to thank all those individuals and households that have been involved in this fantastic project to date.

In other climate change work, ECNT has initiated efforts by Australian environment groups to develop a consistent policy on Liquid Natural Gas exploitation. We've also continued to be an active member of the Climate Action Network Australia and campaigned for the Australian Government to change its deplorable position on the Kyoto Protocol. We are hopeful that an NT Greenhouse Strategy will be developed over the next year.

Other campaigns

Northern Australia Environment Alliance (NAEA)- ECNT hosted and helped organise the inaugural meeting of the NAEA in May. The alliance of state, regional and national environment groups has been established to coordinate our conservation efforts in northern Australia. While the NAEA is in its formative stages we're hopeful that it will be really important in achieving major conservation outcomes in northern Australia.

Weeds of the Wet/Dry Tropics

A major achievement of this year was

the publication of ECNT's weeds book 'Weeds of the Wet/Dry Tropics'. In a very short time period well over 3000 copies of the weeds book have been distributed all over Australia and internationally. As we go to press a total of 2000 copies of the book is about to be distributed to every pastoral property in northern Australia! As well as being a fantastic conservation tool, the book also makes an important contribution to ECNT's fundraising efforts.

NT Government environment policy- Over the past year ECNT has engaged with the Labor Government in an attempt to improve current environment policy. We've had many meetings with Ministers, advisers and public servants. To date the NT Government has been slow to deliver on many of its pre-election commitments, though there have been some important policy gains. For example ECNT welcomed the introduction of Freedom of Information legislation in October. Similarly approaches taken by the Labor Government on Aboriginal involvement in protected areas management and the commitment to develop landclearing legislation and a management plan for Darwin Harbour are all important gains.

Nevertheless we are hopeful that much greater progress will be made over the next couple of years and that the NT Government will implement all of the commitments that it made in response to the ECNT pre-election survey.

ECNT has also worked on a range of other issues this year including: holding a forum on wetlands management at NTU; advocating for the introduction of Container Deposit Legislation and other waste minimisation issues; organising a workshop on 'population and environment' issues; writing many submissions on a wide range of issues; and blowing the whistle on Adrail's destruction of Gouldian Finch habitat in construction of the railway.

Organisationally some of our achievements have been as follows:

-ECNT has worked to consolidate the organisation following significant growth over the past 18 months. We have successfully accomplished this and were able to employ an Office Administration Manager, Marie Munkara, in September. Marie has quickly become a really important part of the ECNT team.

-The ECNT Management Committee has spent much time in 2002 developing a strategic plan for the organisation. A by-product of the strategic plan has been the establishment of a range of sub-groups to work on

important issues like fundraising, finances, employment and ECNT's future directions.

-ECNT's finances remain in relatively good shape and our fantastic book-keeper, Penny Pretty, has continued to improve our finance systems over the year.

-ECNT has continued its involvement in the Darwin Alternative Trading Group with a regular stall at the Rapid Creek markets selling fair trade tea and coffee. ECNT also continues to support local groups like GenEthics as well as supporting many individuals working on environmental issues.

-ECNT organised a number of successful fundraising events including the great Bushdance at the Fannie Bay gaol, a dinner with Jenny Fitzgibbon performing and another spaghetti western night at the Deckchair cinema.

-ECNT organised evening briefing sessions on our 4 major campaigns for members and supporters.

-ECNT has responded to hundreds of information requests over the past year. Our website, which we have been constantly improving, has been visited over 10,000 times this year! We've also continued to publish our regular newsletter 'EnvironmentNT'.

Future activities-

Some of the things we are planning for 2003 include:

- increasing our capacity to work on marine and coastal and marine issues by seeking funding for a new position.
- increasing our fundraising base
- presenting a paper at the Landcare conference to be held in Darwin.
- engaging in detail in the NT Government's proposed Public Transport review to take place next year.
- turning the proposed destruction of the Daly basin for agricultural development into a national issue.
- continuing to be a strong voice for the environment of the NT and beyond.

Finally we would like to thank all our members, supporters, volunteers, colleagues and Management Committee members for their hard work and continued support for our efforts this year.

Di Koser Convenor

Community Concerns Ignored

As NT Government condemns Darwin Harbour to an industrial future

The Environment Centre NT is extremely disappointed by the Planning Minister's announcement in mid November that he will grant an Exceptional Development Permit to Phillips Petroleum for their proposed gas plant at Wickham Point in Darwin Harbour. This is the second approval the Martin government has granted Phillips and constitutes the final green light for the siting of the project.

Contrary to their claims that this project was approved by the previous government and it is too late to change anything, the Labor government has had two opportunities to reject this proposal- at the Public Environment Report stage earlier this year and today with the Exceptional Development Permit. The government has failed to act on both occasions and is hiding behind the bad planning decisions of the past rather than showing strong leadership and planning for the long term future of Darwin Harbour.

In granting this approval, Minister Vatskalis has truly let the public down. On the one hand, he has said he wants long term planning and that he supports the development of a Management Plan for Darwin Harbour, but on the other he is completely undermining that process by approving yet more unwanted ad hoc development that will set the scene for further industrialisation of Darwin Harbour.

It is now clear that as feared, the Minister's invita-

tion for public involvement in this approval process was a complete sham. The outcome was pre-determined and the 1642 people who made submissions to the process in good faith have had their time wasted. Only one of the public submissions supported the granting of the EDP. The planning Minister has failed a key test, the question he must now answer is: why should the public have any faith in a planning process that completely ignores public submissions?

In addition to the environmental and planning approvals the NT Government allocated at least \$16 million of public funds in August's budget to build gas-related infrastructure for Phillips at Wickham Point. As well as paying the environmental costs the NT public is also footing the bill for gas development in the Harbour

This decision will be remembered as the day the NT Government ignored community opinion and served a multinational oil company instead of the public interest

-Kirsten Blair and Mark Wakeham

STOP PRESS:

As we put this newsletter together, the news has come in that clearing for the access road has commenced in earnest at Wickham Point. Already at least three kilometres of mangroves have been flattened following the planning decision detailed above. Given the current uncertainty surrounding the Timor Gas treaty, this action is pre-emptive at best. Current NTU research shows that mangrove communities may never fully recover from such destruction.

Farewell to Stella

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Stella w i l l e o l a r o l r e e e r e a

Botanical Name	Common Name	Type / Size	Qualities
<i>Ficus platypoda</i>	Rock Fig	Tree / 6m #	*
<i>Grevillea decurrens</i>		Tree / 3-5m	
<i>Grevillea dryandri</i>	Dryander's Grevillea	Shrub / .5-2m	**
<i>Grevillea formosa</i>	Mt. Brockman Grevillea	Shrub / .5m	**
<i>Grevillea heliosperma</i>	Rock Grevillea	Tree / 5-10m	
<i>Grevillea longicuspis</i>		Shrub / .3-1m	*
<i>Grevillea parallela</i>	Silver Grevillea	Tree / 3-7m	
<i>Grevillea pteridifolia</i>	Fern-leaved Grevillea	Tree / 5-8m	**
<i>Grevillea refracta</i>	Silver-leaf Grevillea	Tree / 3-5m	
<i>Grevillea wickhamii</i>	Holly Grevillea	Shrub / 2m	*
<i>Gronophyllum ramsayii</i>	Northern Kentia Palm	Palm / 15-30m	*
<i>Hibbertia sp.</i>	Hibbertia	Herb / .3m	*
<i>Hibiscus tiliaceus</i>	Beach Hibiscus	Tree / 5-8m	** #
<i>Horsfieldia australiana</i>	Horsefieldia	Tree / 10-15m	
<i>Hydriastele wendlandiana</i>	Sour Palm	Palm / 10-15m	*
<i>Ixora tomentosa</i>	Native Ixora	Shrub / 1.5-3m	
<i>Leptospermum madidum ssp. sativum</i>	Weeping Ti-Tree	Tree / 3-5m	**
<i>Livistona benthamii</i>	Bentham's Fan Palm	Palm / 10-15m	**
<i>Melaleuca viridiflora</i>	Broad-leaved Paperbark	Tree / 3-10m	**
<i>Melastoma affine</i>	Native Lasiandra	Shrub / 1-2m	*
<i>Melicope elleryana</i>	Euodia	Tree / 10-15m	*
<i>Micromelum minutum</i>	Micromelum	Shrub / 3-7m	*
<i>Mimusops elengi</i>	Mimusops	Tree / 10-15m	**
<i>Murraya paniculate var. ovatifoliata</i>	Murraya	Shrub / 1-5m	*
<i>Myrtella phebaloides</i>	Myrtella	Shrub / 3m	*
<i>Nelumbo nucifera</i>	Lotus Lily	Aquatic Herb	*
<i>Nymphaea violacea</i>	Water Lily	Aquatic Herb	**
<i>Nymphoides hydrocharoides</i>	Yellow Snowflake Lily	Aquatic Herb	
<i>Osbeckia australiana</i>	Osbeckia	Shrub / 1.5m	*
<i>Pittosporum melanospermum</i>	Golden Pittosporum	Tree / 5-10m	*
<i>Pittosporum moluccanum</i>	Pittosporum	Tree / 3-6m	*
<i>Polymeria ambigua</i>	Creeping Polymeria	Prostrate Herb	*
<i>Pongamia pinnata</i>	Pongamia	Tree / 5-10m	**
<i>Ptychosperma bleeseri</i>	Blessers's Palm	Palm / 5-10m	*
<i>Regelia punicea</i>	Regelia	Shrub / 2-3m	*
<i>Scaevola sericea</i>	Scaevola	Shrub / 2-3m	**
<i>Schefflera actinophylla</i>	Umbrella Tree	Tree / 10-20m	** #
<i>Stenochlaena palustris</i>	Climbing Fern	Fern	*
<i>Sterculia quadrifida</i>	Peanut Tree	Tree / 5-10m	*
<i>Syzygium fibrosum</i>	"	Tree / 5-10m	*
<i>Vavaea australiana</i>	Vavaea	Tree / 5-10m	
<i>Verticordia cunninghamiana</i>	Verticordia	Shrub / 1.5-3m	*
<i>Vitex acuminata</i>	Vitex	Tree / 7-15m	

References: Top End Native Plants – J. Brock, 1993, Checklist of Preferred Common Names of Plants of the NT – B.W. Strong, 1987, Personal communication – Frank van der Sommen

FAREWELL TO JANN!!!

As many of you will have heard, our fabulous landclearing campaigner Jann Crase has decided it is time to move on. Jann has been based here, jointly employed by ECNT and Environs Kimberley for over 18 months. During her time here, Jann has done some incredible work towards the establishment of adequate landclearing legislation here in the NT as well as focusing public and government attention on the growing disaster-waiting-to-happen in the Daly basin and the threats posed by potential GM crops in the North. We are all very sorry to see Jann go and wish her all the best with whatever happens next.

-ECNT Management Committee and Staff

...going going gone!

Yup I'm outta here. I've had a fantastic (if albeit somewhat stressful) time as the Northern Woodlands and Wetlands Campaigner for ECNT and Environs Kimberley and am heading off for quieter pastures.

I'd like to think that over the last 19 months we've made the trees a wee bit safer however anyone who travels along the Arnhem Highway, near Bachelor or anywhere in Litchfield Shire will know that clearing is continuing unabated despite encouraging prosecutions from the Government.

A new campaigner will be employed early next year to continue with this vital work so please continue to support the Environment Centre's Landclearing Campaign any way you can – letters, emails, donations, organising meetings etc.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the Territory although it was brief and wish to thank all of you who I have worked with, talked to, drunk with etc. It's been fantastic. Thanks.

Jann Crase

PLASTIC BAG LEVY CAMPAIGN

ECNT member, Ann Wharton, has been keeping us informed on the issue of the plastic bag levy campaign. We have signed the mission statement below and encourage others to do so as well...and of course, keep using your cloth bags (we have plenty available with the ECNT logo.)
www.plasticbaglevy.com

Mission Statement

We believe our governments should take all possible steps to eliminate the proliferation of plastic shopping bags by the imposition of a levy, which will discourage their issue, by retailers.

The levy, so collected, should be reserved specifically for the support of community and environmental causes and projects.

Contact Us

Representatives of the plasticbaglevy.com campaign who can be contacted for more information:

Jenny Henty,

Environment Victoria jenny.henty@envict.org.au Tel: 03 9341 8100

Julie D'arcy, WHEN, Tel: 0422 154 642

Media contact: Suzie Brown Tel: 0419 002 606

Bits and Pieces

China's turning tide against GMO's

Until recently, China seemed to be positioning itself as a world leader in bio-engineered foods, spending tens of millions of dollars on new technologies and touting the benefits of genetically modified rice, soybeans, and other crops. Now, though, the nation has imposed tough restrictions on domestic planting of genetically modified (GM) crops and strict labelling rules for GM imports.

Observers say the sea-change reflects a growing concern on the part of Beijing that small-scale Chinese farmers won't be able to compete with imports from U.S. agribusiness (many of them genetically modified) and a realisation that GM restrictions could essentially serve as trade protections. They also say China's love affair with GM foods has cooled in the face of growing world-wide fears about the safety of such foods -- fears that could cause the nation's agricultural industry to suffer if it became a GM pioneer.

"The general sense is that the risks are too high and the market is too small" for most GM crops, said Wu Kongmin, who heads a panel of experts conducting safety tests for China's agriculture ministry.
-New York Times

Australia needs to get out of coal trade

A new report released this week by environmental groups working against climate threats exposes the dominance of Australia's coal trade, despite the immediate need for increasing clean renewable energy sources. The Mineral Policy Institute, Climate Action Network Australia and Greenpeace, who authored the report, have called on the government to shift away from subsidising and promoting the climate change enhancing coal industry, which earned Australia AUD\$11 billion in 2001, to promote solar and wind power and technologies.

Director of the mining watchdog, the Mineral Policy Institute, Geoff Evans, says "It's time for the government to move away from dealing in yesterday's economy and towards strategically positioning itself as a carbon-free region based on innovation, ecological sustainability and social justice".

Of great concern is the promotion of coal-fired technology to Asia. Combined energy use in China and India is expected to account for 33% of the total increase in energy consumption world-wide to 2020.

"The Australian government and coal industry are lining themselves up to promote the non-solution of 'clean coal' to this growing market," says Climate Action Network Australia's Coordinator, Danny Kennedy. "But the Asian market is trying to move towards renewable energy sources. They are focusing their climate change policies on controlling emissions of sulfur dioxide and carbon dioxide, due to the major regional and local health and environmental impacts."

In China, the government has introduced a tax on high-sulfur coal, and in five major cities, including Beijing and Shanghai, 'coal free zones' have been created. The ultimate aim is to phase out coal and introduce cleaner and more renewable alternatives. Greenpeace Australia Pacific's Renewable Energy Campaigner, Catherine Fitzpatrick, says "This current drought demonstrates we are already seeing the impacts of an altered climate, yet the government is still subsidising the coal industry, refusing to sign the Kyoto Protocol, and supporting an embarrassingly low renewable energy target. To be forcing this coal agenda on Asia is outrageous."

The report, *Up in Smoke: Australian Coal Exports to South East Asia*, can be found on the Mineral Policy Institute website, www.mpi.org.au.

Hospital Environment Action Team (HEAT)

Royal Darwin Hospital staff with an interest in environmental matters are encouraged to join HEAT (Hospital Environment Action Team). The team

meets on the last Tuesday of each month in the staff tea room at 1.30pm and is currently looking at ways to support and expand the fabulous energy saving work that is being done through the hospital's engineering department. If you're interested, please come along to the next meeting or contact Kerrie Jones: 8948 4729 for more info.

Reduce Waste

Do you want to do your bit to reduce Darwin's waste? Have a look at the insert about compost to see what YOU can do ...If you've never done it, maybe the approaching holiday season is a good time to start. You don't have to have a compost bin (but it does help keep everything in place) BE WARNED ...composting can become addictive..

ECNT's end of year thing

Come and celebrate another year of successful campaigning with us! All members and friends are invited to come along on Friday December 6th from 6pm onwards at the Nighcliff foreshore, on one of the tables between the jetty and the pool. Bring something to drink, a plate to eat your dinner off (we'll just get take away from somewhere close by), a chair or rug if you have one. Hope to see you there! Umbrellas are optional, but may be useful if this lovely rain continues.

Thanks to Volunteers

Thanks to all the volunteers we've had over the past 12 months – helping with all sorts of things from folding the newsletter, organising fundraising, keeping the office running, to keeping up the supplies of on-sided paper. We couldn't manage without you!!

Water Bed to Give Away

The daughter has move out leaving her loved Water Bed—but visitors prefer a "normal" bed. If anyone wants a single water bed, please ring me on 8985 3691 before 14 December Di.

Dates to remember in December 2002/ January 2003

Tuesday 3 December: ECNT Annual General Meeting 5.30pm at 3/98 Woods St

Friday 6 December : End of year get together for friends and supporters at Nightcliff fore-shore from 6pm BYO everything. More details Page 7 See you there!

From 14 December to 17 January: ECNT office open on occasional basis.

20 January 2003: ECNT office opens during usual office hours for 2003.

The views expressed in *EnvironmeNT* are not necessarily those of the Environment Centre NT management committee
Please recycle this newsletter: leave it in a waiting room or other appropriate place for someone else to read

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Surface Mail

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