

# ENVIRONMENT

The Newsletter of the Environment Centre NT  
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## What future for the Daly?

### ECNT to hold public meeting

Large scale irrigated agriculture has the potential to create significant long term problems, such as soil erosion, loss of habitat and water pollution for the Daly River Basin.

The Environment Centre is organising a public meeting on the Daly River on Tuesday the 5<sup>th</sup> August - to highlight current proposals to expand large scale damaging irrigation schemes into the Daly River Basin. The meeting will be held at the Museum Auditorium, Museum of the Northern Territory, Conacher St, Fannie Bay. Speakers will include the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, Kon Vatskalis, John Harrison from AFANT, Dr Naomi Rea NTU, Mark Casey from Naiuyu Community and Peter McLeod representing the Daly River Community Development Association

The Northern Territory Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment appear committed to large scale agriculture on the Daly Basin despite the very real threats this poses to the Daly River. Recent figures from the Department have indicated that exploiting 20% groundwater resources will supply water for 16 000 ha of irrigated land. On top of this the Department is now proposing to exploit wet season

flows down the River to be stored in large on farm dams up to 300ha in size. **This means a massive 70 000 of land could be irrigated for broader crops such as Cotton.**

There has been limited assessment by the Northern Territory Government into the potential impacts to the Daly River from exploiting wet season flows.

A recent report by the Supervising Scientist and Environment Australia has indicated that "approximately 10 to 50% of the major wetlands would possible experience altered water regimes due to land clearance and water extraction..."

However, major information gaps exist in the current hydrological data, the frequency and depth of inundation for floodplain wetlands and there is an urgent need for a detailed analysis of water regime requirements for wetland fauna and flora. (*Supervising Scientist, Environment Australia 2001 -Inventory and risk assessment of water dependent ecosystems in the Daly basin, Northern Territory- Executive Summary*)

The NT Government has made

no assessment of threats or potential impacts on nationally listed migratory bird species, fish species or threatened species of current development plans. An entire suite of assessments are an essential first step to get a good understanding of the Daly Basin. Without these assessments the Government is merely applying the label of sustainable development to the Daly Basin, whilst potentially causing long-term irreversible damage to the entire river system.

-Henry Boer

Daly River Public meeting,  
Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> August,  
Museum Auditorium,  
Conacher St Fannie Bay  
7pm- 9pm

#### INSIDE

- P 2 Darwin Harbour Regional Marine Plan Win for Ningaloo
- P 3 Jabiluka Win close McArthur River campaign
- P 4 Renewables in NT
- P 5 Cool Communities news
- P 6 Withering on the Vine?
  
- P 7 Bits & Pieces

Inserts: Daly meeting, helpers for 20th Birthday party, Plastics poster competition.

# Hands off wheel on Darwin Harbour

In recent weeks it has become apparent that the NT Government has relinquished control over activities in Darwin Harbour. The illegal clearing that occurred at the Phillips LNG site at Wickham Point as well as the ongoing clearing and damage to mangroves at Palmerston dump and elsewhere in the Harbour raise questions about the Government's ability to manage Darwin Harbour effectively.

The Government has asked the public to have faith in its ability to manage Darwin Harbour for the future. To this end the Environment

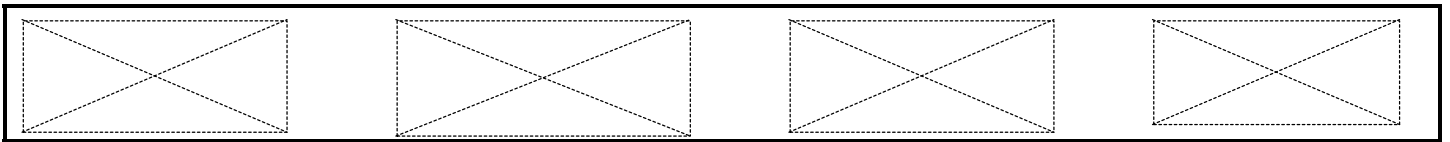
Centre has dedicated a great deal of time and energy to the process for developing a Plan of Management for Darwin Harbour. Yet, while this process is going on, the Government has let Phillips off for illegal clearing at Wickham Point and damage to mangroves at Palmerston dump is continuing unchecked.

Earlier this year Minister Vatskalis claimed the proposal to rezone the majority of mangroves in Darwin Harbour for conservation would lead to protection for the Harbour – something the public has been call-

ing for for many years. Months later that zoning is still not enacted and it is now apparent that aquaculture will be allowed under such a zoning. This is not the protection we expected for Darwin Harbour and it is simply not good enough.

The Government must come clean on what they're planning for Darwin Harbour so that we know now whether the Plan of Management will be worth the paper its written on.

- Kirsten Blair and Mark Wakeham



## Australia's first Regional Marine Plan out for comment

The Commonwealth Government has just released the South East Regional Marine Plan (SERMP) for three month's public comment (closing mid October). This is the first of 11 such plans under Australia's Oceans Policy – which aims to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of Australia's massive ocean area. It is vital that your voice be heard in this first test of the Policy, and it is particularly important that this plan delivers the goods as the next area to be assessed is the northern region including NT marine areas.

The SE Region includes the waters offshore from SA's Kangaroo Island down to and including Bass Strait, all the Commonwealth waters around Tasmania, and up to the seas off southern NSW.

Australia's southern waters host some of the world's most diverse and unique marine ecosystems with globally significant levels of marine diversity and uniqueness (85% of species are found nowhere else in the world). Yet still, very little of what is out there is known – in a recent scientific expedition over 400 new species were discovered. The region is also globally significant in conservation terms, with many threatened species, including the critically endangered blue whale and the Southern Right Whale, and new deep sea features such as extinct volcanoes (seamounts) in abundance.

But the pressure on them is increasing. The SE region hosts Australia's busiest shipping lanes (over 9000 shipping movements in Bass Strait alone), the largest fishing fleet (with most of the Commonwealth fisheries either fully fished or overfished and operating at a loss), and some of Australia's largest oil producing areas with new 'frontier' areas opening up.

The SERMP must not only provide a framework for integrating these uses, it must prescribe a new 'ecosystem' approach to marine management with strict standards and conservation measures including a network of no-take Marine National Parks, to ensure that the needs of the environment come first and underpin all decision making in the future.

**Make your voice heard.** Go to [www.ecnt.org](http://www.ecnt.org) – Current campaigns – Marine for a Guide to Making Submissions to the SE Regional Marine Plan. Go to the National Oceans Office website: [www.oceans.org.au](http://www.oceans.org.au) for a copy of the Draft Plan.

## WA Premier rules out Ningaloo development

West Australian Premier Geoff Gallop has said no to a proposal to develop a \$180 million marina and resort at Ningaloo Reef on the state's north-west coast. Dr Gallop says the project poses an unacceptable risk to the environment. He made the announcement at Coral Bay on the 4<sup>th</sup> July and also promised to campaign for the reef to be granted World Heritage listing.

Congratulations to all those involved in the campaign to protect Ningaloo Reef and well done to the WA Government for showing real environmental leadership.

-Mark Wakeham and Kirsten Blair

# Jabiluka win a big step closer

Earlier this month media reports outlined that major progress is now underway on a decision to rehabilitate the Jabiluka mine site and create a formal agreement which would give the Mirrar Traditional Owners a veto right over any future development of the mine.

In July, Energy Resources of Australia made an application to rehabilitate the Jabiluka site. This would involve putting all of the uranium ore and other earth extracted during construction back down the mine, sealing the mine opening and rehabilitating all other surface works on site except the pond (which would be left on site for a period as a contingency measure in case a water storage facility was needed). The application was approved by the Minesite Technical Committee and now awaits ap-

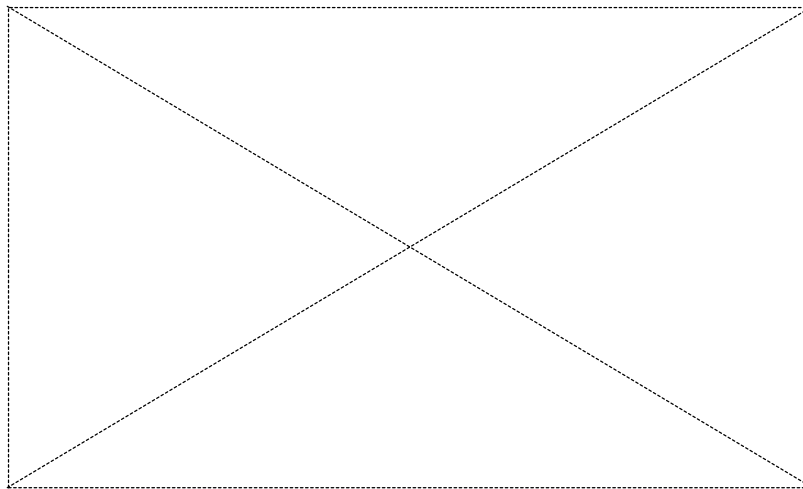
proval from the NT Minister for Business, Industry and Resource Development, Paul Henderson. A separate agreement, the Jabiluka long-term care and maintenance agreement, is being negotiated between the Mirrar, the NLC and ERA. This agreement would formalise ERA's parent company Rio Tinto's repeated verbal pledge that it would not go ahead and mine Jabiluka without the consent of traditional owners.

These are really significant developments which, when finalised, will represent a huge step forward on Jabiluka and be cause for major celebration. It is a tribute to the Mirrar people's campaign to protect country and culture and to the consistent efforts of their many supporters and environmental activists across Australia and around the world. However, as always, the

devil is in the detail and there's still work to be done on the rehabilitation and consent agreement.

Watch this space and hopefully by next newsletter we'll have a significant win to report in the campaign to stop Jabiluka from ever being mined.

-Mark Wakeham and Kirsten Blair



*The 50,000 tonne stockpile of uranium ore to be buried at Jabiluka. Photo: ECNT*

## McArthur River mine campaign gathers momentum

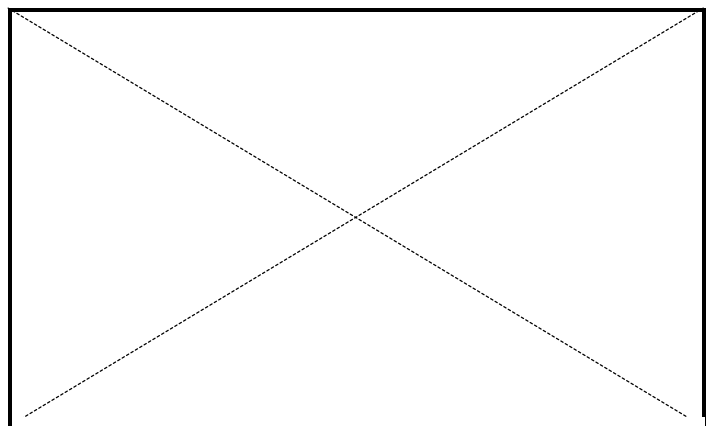
As readers of our last newsletter would know, the proposed expansion of the McArthur River mine is shaping up as a major area of concern for ECNT. The mine expansion involves moving the McArthur River, damming the Glyde River and building a huge power station (potentially coal-fired) that is larger than all the power stations for domestic production in the NT combined.

Over the past 2 months a range of national environment groups, led by ECNT, have written to Xstrata, the new owners of the McArthur River mine, to state our opposition to their current plans. The letter sent was signed on to by ECNT, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Australian Marine Conservation Society, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the Climate Action Network, WWF Australia, the Minerals Policy Institute and The Wilderness Society. We are now trying to organise a meeting with Xstrata to highlight our concerns with the project. We have also prepared briefings highlighting the environmental issues for Traditional Owners and the Federal Environment Minister. The issue has also been the subject of national media attention with the Greens and the Democrats coming out against the project. It seems as though our efforts have been successful to date. Very recently we learnt that the release of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project has been deferred until 2004. The EIS had been due for release

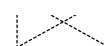
in July.

Xstrata is now reviewing all of its projects and will be assessing its level of commitment to the McArthur River expansion by the end of the year. In the meantime **why not let them know what you think of their plans to mine a river- write to the Chief Executive, Mr Mick Davis, Xstrata PLC PO Box 102 6301, Zug Switzerland.**

-Mark Wakeham and Kirsten Blair



*The McArthur River as it is today. Photo ECNT*



# Renewables should be the future in the NT

Last month, ECNT presented to the panel reviewing the Federal Mandatory Renewable Energy Target. The Target is currently at 2% by 2010, meaning that 2% of Australia's electricity must be produced from a renewable source by the year 2010. Due to higher than anticipated growth rates in electricity supply the 2% target will be effectively less than 1% by 2010. Federal Environment Minister David Kemp, recently initiated the review, which is chaired by ex-NT CLP Senator Grant Tambling.

ECNT along with climate change activists around the country have been pushing for a much higher renewable energy target of 10% by 2010 and this was the position we presented to the review panel.

Greenpeace and the Climate Action Network Australia (CANA) have done a lot of work to come up with this target and have found that it is achievable in Australia. For more detail see the Greenpeace report: "Putting Renewables on Target" which can be downloaded from <http://www.greenpeace.org.au/climate/publications.html> The report shows how Australia could meet this target by 2010.

At the panel hearing in Darwin, ECNT put the case for the NT meeting the 10% target by 2010. The three main ways we see the NT producing 10% of its power through renewable sources are:

- Solar Hot Water
- Solar electricity systems for Remote Aboriginal Communities
- On-Grid Solar PV on Rooftops

## **Solar Hot Water**

NT Households with electric hot water use about 20 percent of their electricity consumption for hot water heating. Just under 40 percent of NT households have

solar hot water so this is an area with immense opportunity for expansion. An idea that we put to the panel was to make solar hot water mandatory on all public housing buildings.

## **Stand-alone solar systems for remote Aboriginal communities.**

There are currently two NT solar power installations. These are in the remote community of Bulman and at Kings Canyon. PowerWater anticipates that as many as 20 of these solar power installations may be built in coming years. ECNT advocated that PowerWater aim to install 50 such systems by 2010 as part of the way to meet the 10% target.

## **On-Grid Solar Photo Voltaic systems on rooftops**

Photo Voltaic systems use the sun to produce electricity. On-grid systems feed this electricity into the power grid so it is just one component of the electricity supply. As an example of how this would work: at the Cool Living Demonstration House in Alice Springs it is anticipated that rooftop solar PV will provide about half of the household's electricity needs for what is already a low energy-use household.

Historically there has been a subsidy scheme for householders installing such systems but this has recently been significantly reduced. ECNT argued that such incentive schemes should be increased to help create the demand needed to take such industries to the next level and make solar electricity systems a much more common part of houses in the North. This may eventually be one source of 'Green Power' for NT consumers to purchase in preference to fossil fuel sourced electricity. (See below for more detail.)

## **Household Energy Efficiency Measures**

This is another area that has potential to contribute to the NT meeting

the 10% target. Cool Communities household energy audits have demonstrated that people can fairly easily reduce their electricity consumption by 10-15%. Widespread promotion of residential energy efficiency, particularly reducing the use of air-conditioning, would lower overall projected demand in the future. We put this information to the review panel despite the fact that it is not strictly within their terms of reference. Some panel members were very interested in energy efficiency issues and commented on the ridiculously low temperature of the air conditioned room in which the hearings were being conducted. We encouraged them to include recommendations in this area in the final report.

## **Who will pay?**

This was one of the questions raised by panel members and is often asked by people who are sceptical about the potential of renewable energy. A Newspoll conducted in June 2003 showed that 83% of Australians would pay an extra \$3.50 on their monthly bill if 10% of the electricity comes from renewable sources. This is borne out in southern states where consumers have the opportunity to choose 'Green Power' and many have chosen that option despite the fact that renewable electricity comes at a premium.

The proposals for the Territory as outlined above will obviously cost a substantial amount to implement. ECNT advocates Government support for developing the renewable energy industry and one simple way to fund this would be to redirect current subsidies supporting the continuation of fossil fuel industries such as the \$22 million of NT taxpayers money going to facilitate LNG developments here in Darwin.

-Kirsten Blair and Mark Wakeham

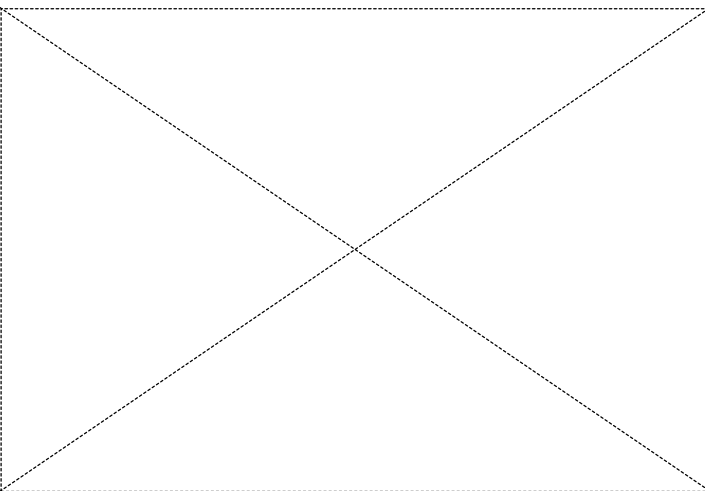


# Cool Communities First Birthday

On Saturday 5 July, 50 Cool Communities participants were picked up from their homes and taken on a 'Magical Mystery Tour' – destination Channel Island Power Station to see where Darwin generates its electricity. The idea was for householders (especially the kids on board) to better appreciate how their domestic electricity consumption results in greenhouse gas emissions. The Channel Island Power Station generates electricity from natural gas piped up from the Mereenie Gas Field west of Alice Springs.

A tour of the power station was followed by a barbeque beside Lake Alexander at East Point. An award was handed out to the household that has saved the greatest amount of greenhouse gas amongst the 100 households involved thus far. Congratulations to Tony Rossiter and the rest of his household, who are on course to save over 4 tonnes of greenhouse gas – that equates to a hefty \$750 saved on their annual power bill!

Congratulations also to the winners of the 'Extremie Greenie Awards', which went to the households that had gone to the greatest effort to reduce their emissions. Third prize went to the household where the kids are encouraged to fart in the bathwater to keep it warm. Second prize went to the householder who bought buckets of white paint to make the black roof tiles more reflective, climbed on the



*Relaxing at the Cool Communities BBQ*



*Darwin and Palmerston Cool Community Co-ordinator, Jo Kieboom and Gary at BBQ*

roof and found they were already white. And first prize went to the couple who now make love with the lights off. Somewhat appropriately they won a solar torch for their efforts!

As facilitator I would like to say a big thank you to everyone involved in the Darwin and Palmerston Cool Community - auditors, Steering Committee members and the Cool Households themselves - who have made the first year such a successful one. On average each participating household is on track to save 1.25 tonnes of greenhouse gas – that's almost twice the national average for the Cool Communities project.

Some great resources have been produced too. Please contact me if you would like a copy of our new booklet '**Greenhouse Friendly Hardware for Top End Housing**', which is full of great tips on how to save greenhouse emissions by installing hardware such as timers, whirlybirds and solar hot water heaters.

And finally, a special note of thanks must go Jo Kieboom whose unceasing enthusiasm for saving greenhouse emissions has gone a long way to ensuring the ongoing success of the project.

-Gary Scott

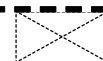
## Cool Communities facilitator position available.

The Darwin facilitator works from ECNT to implement the household based greenhouse gas savings program Cool Communities.

This position is three days per week and paid at the equivalent of Grade 5 of the SACS award.

Please contact ECNT for a duty statement, it will also be posted on our website: [www.ecnt.org](http://www.ecnt.org) after August 9<sup>th</sup>. Applications close on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> August.

As the above ad indicates and many of you already know, the fabulous Gary Scott, our current Cool Communities facilitator is planning to leave ECNT in late September. Watch this space in the next newsletter for a farewell piece.



# Withering on the vine

## Are funding cuts going to decimate land management in the NT?

In 1997 the Coalition Government launched the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) - a fund established through the sale of part of Telstra to fund environmental work around the country. Since 1997 the NHT has facilitated the growth of hundreds of land management groups around Australia, with many community

groups in the NT heavily reliant on this funding. Overall the NHT program has invested over \$1.4 billion into building up landcare networks and on the ground environment work around the country. Imagine building up these networks, funding them for a number of years and developing experienced staff and then delaying funding indefinitely to community groups to the point where these experienced land managers are unsure if they're going to have a job and move on to other areas. This is exactly what's happening in the NT (and elsewhere) right at the moment. On a weekly basis the NT is losing high quality natural resource managers as NHT funds run out across the Territory. **The Commonwealth is allowing the huge public investment to wither on the vine.**

In the 2001 Budget, the Commonwealth Government announced an additional \$1 billion for the Natural Heritage Trust, extending the funding from July 2002 to June 2007. The second stage of the trust is to be delivered through a regional process with direction in the NT being provided by the Landcare Council of the Northern Territory.

The Commonwealth Government committed to interim funding for priority projects, and facilitators and coordinators, for the

financial year June 2002 to June 2003. Community groups in the NT were invited to submit applications for priority project funding in July 2002. A year later and no decisions have yet been made on these applications – no funding for

priority projects has been received for 2002/2003. Funding was forthcoming for some facilitators and coordinators for this period, some within the NT Government and some within community groups.

**Currently mainstream Landcare groups as well as Aboriginal natural resource management programs, are fast losing their carefully built capacity as staff leave to more secure positions elsewhere.** Some groups have managed to keep important projects running using saved reserves and other resources but for most community groups projects are falling over in the absence of funding. Even if funding was made available immediately the loss of momentum and community support for the NHT initiative is profound and will be felt for some time into the future.

No process is in place for Natural Heritage Trust funding for community based projects for the year 2003 to June 2004. We suspect

that the 2002/2003 priority project funding yet to be announced will be used to fund both priority projects and community facilitators and coordinators for 2003/2004. If this occurs it will mean a vastly reduced amount of NHT funds for the Territory and no money going to priority projects

in the NT at all in 2002/2003 – it seems that smoke and mirrors are being used to mask the fact that for a year millions of dollars worth of environment funding has been withdrawn and the community based landcare movement and land management has been allowed to crumble. When will the Commonwealth announce what is happening with the 2002/2003 funding? Why has there been such a lengthy hold up? When will they announce procedures for accessing 2003/2004 funding? What is the Landcare Council of the Northern Territory doing about this debacle?

The Environment Centre would love to be proven wrong on the demise of NHT funding. We urge the Federal and NT Ministers to allocate full NHT funding for last year and this year immediately, and in future to commit to longer term funding for landcare networks throughout the NT.

Mark Wakeham and Kirsten Blair

## Wild Spaces Film Festival

On Sunday 3 August from 2 – 6pm and Monday 4 August from 7 – 10.30pm a selection of films from the Wild Spaces Environmental & Social Justice Short Film Festival will be held at the Museum Theatre.

For information ring David on 8985 1295 or check the Web on: [www.wildspaces.foe.org.au](http://www.wildspaces.foe.org.au) Please note some films have an R rating.



# Bits and Pieces

## ECNT's 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday update

The chosen date for our celebration is Sunday 28 September at Browns' Mart.

As part of our celebrations, we will hold a competition for a new ECNT 20th birthday T-shirt design. Anyone with some ideas for a design which captures a moment, an event or an idea associated with the Environment Centre during the past 20 years please get them to us by 22 August. We plan to print the winning design and will need several weeks to organise that. Of course there will be a prize (to be announced!)

We have had a couple of communications from long term members with interesting facts or items, but would love LOTS MORE!! Don't be shy – **CONTACT US!!** Inside your newsletter you will find a slip which we ask you to read, tick the appropriate part and return to us in one of the suggested ways. **DON'T DELAY!!!!**

-Di Koser

## 'Green' houses to be law

in addition to the Ningaloo decision July 4 saw another milestone announcement, this time by the Victorian Government. As The Age reported: "All new Victorian homes will have to have solar hot water or rainwater tanks under building regulation changes to be announced today. The changes are part of the State Government's mandatory five-star energy standards to come into full force in July 2005... The Government is expected to announce that the five-star standard will make new

homes in Victoria the most environmentally efficient in Australia. They would be 50 per cent more efficient than today's houses."

## One Tree exhibition in Darwin

As Darwin based members will know by now the 'One Tree' exhibition is being shown at the Supreme Court from July 28<sup>th</sup> to August 12<sup>th</sup> from 10-4 weekdays. This is an incredible exhibition of 60 artworks created from a single tree that was destined for logging in Tasmania. The opening night will have passed by the time you get this newsletter, but the exhibition is to be opened by Clare Martin on July 30<sup>th</sup>. Darwin based members please note: we supplied a single set of address labels to Artback NT so that you would receive your invitation in time to attend the opening night- they do not have a record of your details.

## NT Government closes the door on CDL

Following our front page story from last edition, in the most recent sittings of NT Parliament, Environment Minister Chris Burns stated that the Government will not be supporting Lorraine Braham's proposed Container Deposit Legislation and that the NT will wait for at least three years to see if a National Scheme is enacted. This is further evidence that the Labor Government has backflipped on its position on this issue under pressure from the beverage industry.

## Plastics Project

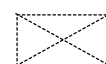
Enclosed is a leaflet for a Poster Competition aimed at cleaning up plastic waste at Mindil Markets. The project, which is sponsored by Mindil Beach Markets and the Environment Centre, is for all age groups, but we'd especially like children to be involved. If you know any school teachers, please pass the information to them as well as any others you think may be interested

## June Appeal – it's a great deal!

Everyone at ECNT would love to say a very big thank you to all of you who responded to our June appeal. Between you you've raised the whopping sum of \$8,700. This money is an enormous boost to our campaigns and will help to protect those areas of the NT which need our support right now.

## Proposed Green Building

A group of interested individuals from ECNT is investigating the feasibility of a Green Building development with a group of like-minded groups/businesses. This would involve developing an office building with the highest possible environmental standards in Darwin. We would like to hear from interested potential tenants or anyone who wants to help with the project. Please email us at [ecnt@octa4.net.au](mailto:ecnt@octa4.net.au)



## DATES TO KEEP IN AUGUST

**Sunday 3 August** from 2 – 6pm and **Monday 4 August** from 7 – 10.30pm Museum Theatrette. Wild Spaces Film Festival. For information ring David on 8985 1295 or check the Web on: [www.wildspaces.foe.org.au](http://www.wildspaces.foe.org.au)

**Tuesday 5th August**– Daly River public meeting, Museum Theatrette, Conacher St Fannie Bay, 7-9pm.

**Wednesday August 6<sup>th</sup>** – Hiroshima Day

**August 9<sup>th</sup>** – Hiroshima and Nagasaki Days event at Parap markets from 10am

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