

ENVIRONMENT

The Newsletter of the Environment Centre NT
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March 2003

Website- <http://www.ecnt.org>

Daly Sold up the River?

NT Government approves 8000 ha of clearing in the Daly

The NT Government has approved the clearing of over 8000 hectares in the Daly bio-region 150 km south of Darwin under the NT's new clearing permits system. Following the introduction of the new permits system in December 2002, farmers in the Daly region applied to clear over 8000 hectares of native vegetation in January 2003. ECNT understands that the Minister has approved the applications with some modifications. Minister Vatskalis has made no public announcement about the approvals, nor has ECNT been formally advised of the decision despite the fact that we made a submission and are supposed to receive a copy of the decision as soon as it is made.

In further news the NT Government also provided land for the establishment of the town of 'Fleming' in the Daly this month further committing themselves to the previous CLP Government's development plans for the Daly.

In a 3rd March 2003 ECNT media release on the decision ECNT Coordinator Kirsten Blair said:

"This is a very disappointing decision which demonstrates that the NT Government is repeating

the land management mistakes made in southern Australia. In one fell swoop the NT Government has approved as much land-clearing in the Daly as has happened in the Litchfield Shire in the past 15 years. The NT Government has approved the clearing of over 1.6 million trees - this area is home to around 350,000 animals, many of whom will die as a result of the clearing."

"This decision will increase the pressures on the Daly river- a river prized for its biodiversity values and recreational fishing. The government is promoting development in the Daly while refusing to release important environmental studies that outline that there are strict limits to the amount of land-clearing and water extraction that can occur in the catchment without seriously impacting upon the health of the river. These reports were to have been released some months ago, but have been withheld by government."

"The NT Government continues to support the subdivision of more land in the Daly with the proposed subdivision of 110,000 hectares of Douglas station identified as a priority in their economic development strategy. The Daly area is not a magic pudding- we can't keep clearing huge chunks of the area and expect it to grow back or continue to function. "

"The Daly is one of the Northern Territory's best-loved and most important rivers environmentally. Broadscale landclearing in the catchment and extraction of huge quantities of groundwater for irrigation will destroy the area's fragile balance. The Northern Territory Government should be looking at options for protecting the area's biodiversity through a system of national parks and off-reserve management for conservation rather than pushing intensive agriculture" concluded Ms Blair.

-Mark Wakeham and Kirsten Blair

For ECNT latest briefing on the Daly campaign please visit: http://www.ecnt.org/land_clearing/daly.htm

Invitation to ECNT members to become a Cool Household see page 2

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Invitation to ECNT members to become a Cool Household

After a successful trial of the top end Cool Community project in Parap, Ludmilla, Fannie Bay and The Narrows, the Community Steering Committee is inviting all Darwin and Palmerston residents to participate in this exciting new initiative to reduce household greenhouse gas emissions. ECNT members are particularly encouraged to join up.

Darwin and Palmerston Cool Households are offered:

- A start-up kit full of money- and environment-saving ideas
- a fridge chart to track monthly savings
- a home audit (only \$25 or free to concession card holders) to highlight savings opportuni-

ties

- the opportunity to apply for \$200-\$300 financial assistance to make changes to their homes
- discounts on greenhouse gas saving products

If you would like to take advantage of this opportunity, please fill in the sign up form (inserted with this newsletter) and return to Cool Communities, PO Box 2120, Darwin NT 0801. It is best to be quick as we currently have a limit on the number of households we can recruit into the project.

For more information, please contact Gary Scott on 8981 2532 from Wednesdays to Fridays or email ecntgary@octa4.net.au.

Greenhouse Strategy a welcome first step..

.but no excuse to stick with dirty industries

Mid February saw the NT Environment Minister, Chris Burns release a discussion paper as the first step towards developing a Greenhouse Strategy for the NT. The Environment Centre welcomed the release of this paper, as such a strategy is long overdue for the Territory. We are concerned however that the Minister coupled his announcement with a reassurance to old-style polluting industries. The Minister claimed that the Territory needs to be given the option to 'catch up' with the southern states in terms of Greenhouse emissions and that this strategy will be about finding a balance between maintaining our current path of development and reducing the Territory's emissions. ECNT believes that if this strategy is to be of any value it must look at moving the NT away from polluting industries and setting up a truly ecologically sustainable economy.

The difficulty the Government faces at present is that on the one hand it is trying to commit to greenhouse action and on the other is solidly

supportive of several projects that would see NT emissions skyrocket. These two positions are incompatible and it is time for the Government to come clean about its priorities. ECNT is suggesting that the NT can leapfrog the entire stage of old-style polluting developments, avoid entrenching a dependence on fossil fuels and position the Territory at the front of the energy game by pursuing innovative new technologies.

This strategy presents an opportunity to think about the long-term future of the NT and we hope the final document will reflect this. Submissions to the discussion paper are due on April 11 and we will be putting considerable effort into contributing to the development of this strategy. Some of the key outcomes we hope to see include:

- a mandatory renewable energy target across the Territory, giving households in major centres the option to purchase Green Power through the grid,
- replacing off-grid diesel and oil electricity generation with renew-

able energy infrastructure eg replacing diesel generators with solar or wind power.

- commitment to maximum energy efficiency in all new buildings,
- a meaningful commitment to fostering truly sustainable industries and
- removal of subsidies to polluters.

If you would like to make a submission to this Strategy, the discussion paper is available from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment website. Go to www.ipe.nt.gov.au and follow the links to the Greenhouse action discussion paper.

We will publish more detail about our submission in the next newsletter but if you would like to discuss your own submission, please feel free to contact us in the ECNT office.

-Kirsten Blair and Mark Wakeham



Massive mine expansions proposed for the NT.

February brought news of 2 massive proposed mine expansions, with MIM and Alcan announcing that they want to expand their Macarthur River and Gove mines.

Macarthur River Mine expansion- Firstly, on the 11th February 2003 MIM Holdings announced their intention to expand their Macarthur River Mine lead/zinc operations. Already one of the largest lead/zinc mines in the world, MIM plan to quadruple the amount of material processed each year. The mine is currently an underground operation with the orebody directly underneath the Macarthur River. If the expansion proceeds MIM plan to dig an open cut pit in the current location of the Macarthur River, and re-route the river over a section of about 10 kilometres. This would require constructing a huge channel, building an 18 metre high wall around the open cut pit, and building a weir on one of the rivers that flows into the Macarthur River (the Glyde River).

Located in the Gulf Country near the Queensland border, the Macarthur River floods every year. Two years ago, when ECNT revealed that the mine was dumping dirty

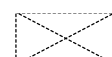
water into the Macarthur River, our concerns were dismissed by claims that the river was 35 kilometres wide and therefore that any pollution would be diluted. It is unclear whether their proposed construction will be capable of excluding a 35 kilometre wide river from an open-cut pit in the current location of the river-bed. It is also unclear at this stage what the likely impacts will be on river and the downstream seagrass beds that sustain local dugong populations.

MIM also intend to build a leaching plant on site to process the ore rather than export bulk concentrate. To do this they would need a new very large source of energy. They are investigating the possibilities of using LNG from the proposed PNG pipeline, but given the likelihood that this gas will not come on-shore in the near term, they are also looking at building a large-scale coal-fired power-station on site. To give you some idea of how much energy they need, they are proposing to build a 350 Mw power station on site. The Power and Water Corporation produce less than 330 Mw of electricity at their Channel Island (Darwin), Katherine and Alice Springs power stations combined.

The NT Government's response to the announcement has been both predictable and disappointing. While the NT Government has determined that the company will have to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment (the correct level of assessment for a project of this magnitude), the Government has undermined the EIA process by welcoming the project (as well as the Alcan expansion) as a panacea for the NT's struggling economy and setting up a committee to fast-track the project. Currently the draft Environmental Impact Study (EIS) guidelines are on display and available at <http://www.lpe.nt.gov.au/enviro/EIAREG/McArthur/>. Submissions to this process are due by the **14th March 2003**. ECNT will be preparing a detailed submission to ensure that all aspects of the project are investigated in the EIS. Please let us know if you would like to make a submission and we can help you with it if necessary. Also let us know if you would to get involved in our work more generally around this issue.

2) Alcan Gove Bauxite (formerly Nabalco) mine expansion- Two days after MIM announced its proposed expansion Alcan announced that it is commencing a feasibility study into expanding its alumina refinery from 2 million to 3.5 million tonnes annually. The Gove mine is the single largest electricity user in the NT by a huge factor (1.3 MT of CO2 emissions per year) and currently runs an oil and diesel fuelled power-station. It is attempting to secure LNG to fuel the expanded refinery, but if LNG doesn't come on shore in the near term Alcan will probably continue to use oil and diesel. Ironically Alcan recently received \$7m from the Australian Greenhouse Office's Greenhouse Gas Abatement Program, though now looks likely to greatly increase greenhouse gas emissions. ECNT will be tracking this issue closely.

-Mark Wakeham and Kirsten Blair



Good news! Darwin Harbour mangroves to be rezoned.

The NT Government has moved towards meeting another of its promises made in response to the Environment Centre's pre-election survey. It was announced late last month that the Government plans to zone all mangroves in the recently expanded Darwin Harbour area as 'conservation'. The Environment Centre welcomed this news and hopes to see support for the proposal as it goes through the Development Consent Authority process. The proposal, as illustrated here, would see 26 000 hectares of mangroves protected. The zoning area excludes mangroves where approvals for clearing or development have already been granted and effectively means that 96% of the mangrove area of the 'new and expanded' Darwin Harbour will now be zoned as conservation. What this will mean in practice it is that any proposals to clear or to develop aquaculture within the conservation zoned area will have to be approved by the Development Consent Authority. The zoning proposal is on display at the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment on Cavenagh Street and on the DIPE website: <http://www.ipe.nt.gov.au> **Public comment can be made up until March 14th.**

Planning for the marine and coastal environments – all the go this year!

The start of 2003 has seen us here at ECNT heavily involved in marine and coastal planning at all levels. The following is an update of the three processes we are currently participating in.

Darwin Harbour Plan of Management

This month, people taking an interest in the development of this plan have been very busy with weekly information sessions and workshops for three weeks in a row. The sessions included presentations from scientists, researchers, indigenous representatives, government staff, community groups, industry and others. The presenters put forward information and opinions about current and future use, management and planning for Darwin Harbour, providing a useful background of information for the workshops, which identified key issues affecting the Harbour and began to develop some possible ways to manage competing priorities in this key area.

The next stage is a series of public forums, which will be another chance for members of the public to make your thoughts known about the future you want for Darwin Harbour. Details of where and when these sessions are on the back of this newsletter. Please do come along and make your thoughts known.

Written public submissions to this process are also welcome and will be accepted up until the end of March. At this stage, submissions can be very broad, the committee is seeking people's views about what they want the Plan to be like. Further comments will be sought when the first

draft is completed. The key points the Environment Centre encourages people to include in their submissions are that the Plan must:

- incorporate a long term commitment to planning for the entire Harbour (ie: must address the potential cumulative impacts of multiple developments over time and space)
- prioritise community needs and values over short term profit
- be supported by a regulatory framework that ensures the plan will be implemented and can be enforced

You can send your submission by email to: DarwinHarbourAdvisoryCommittee@nt.gov.au or post to Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee, C/O Goyder Centre, PO Box 30, Palmerston NT 0831. Please contact us at the Centre if you want help with your submission.

NT Marine and Coastal Policy development underway

The Environment Centre has also been invited to participate in the development of the new NT Marine and Coastal policy. This process is projected to take most of the year and is expected to result in an agreed strategic direction for the development of Marine and Coastal Management Plans for regions of the NT coast and out to sea to the three nautical mile limit. The Darwin Harbour Plan of Management will, in effect, be the first of these plans developed. If you have any ideas you'd like represented through this process, please let us know.

National Oceans Policy comes to the North

The final salty story for this month is that the National Oceans Office (NOO) is in the early stages of developing a Regional Marine Plan for the 'Northern Region' which includes much of the

NT coast and into Queensland as far as the tip of the Cape. ECNT recently convened a meeting between NOO staff and representatives from the environment groups working in the planning area – under the banner of the North Australian Environment Alliance, which was formed after the meeting held here in Darwin last May. This is our first formal engagement in this process and we will continue to participate as it progresses. Again, if you have views, thoughts or ideas about this process or would like to discuss it further, give us a call.

- Kirsten Blair and Mark Wakeham





Breaking News...

Stop the Solar Eclipse!

As if to prove the point that the Federal government is making no long-term commitments to the renewable energy industry it was announced in mid February that the Commonwealth solar rebate program (PVRP) has effectively ended. The Commonwealth has imposed caps on the number of rebates that the state based agencies delivering this program can approve each month and the result is that existing commitments will see the program out – with an expected wind up by the end of the 2003-4 financial year. The industry was given one day's notice of this and understandably they are upset. There will be a significant loss of capacity in Australia's photovoltaic (PV) solar power manufacturing and installing sector as a result.

To date Australia has been a world leader in solar PV technology, accounting for 7% of world production in 1997. In 2003 this figure has slumped to 3%. This is largely because we have been overtaken by countries such as Germany and Japan, with better,

more long-term policies. Australian scientists working on PV are regarded as among the world's best. Professors Martin Green and Stuart Wenham of the University of New South Wales's Photovoltaics Special Research Centre were last year awarded a Right Livelihood Award, known as the alternative Nobel Prize, for their work on solar technology. Because PV is a relatively new technology, it is still significantly more expensive than Australia's cheap, conventional electricity supply. In particular, the high initial expenditure puts it out of reach of most Australians. However, as with SWH, these costs reduce dramatically as production increases. If Australia is to regain its position, we would require a sustained policy of support for the growing industry which is certainly not what current Federal policy will deliver.

Thanks to ACF's Climate Change campaigner Sarojini Krishnapillai for assistance with the content of this story.

Attack of killer ants

Yellow crazy ants discovered in Arnhem Land could spread across Australia, devastating Aboriginal communities, agriculture, forests and native wildlife, the CSIRO warned yesterday.

The ants, which swarm over animals, sending them blind by spraying formic acid into their eyes, have been blamed for killing up to 20million red crabs on Christmas Island.

Now researchers have found the ants at 63 sites within 90 kilometres of the mining town Nhulunbuy, in Arnhem Land.

The ants, which build "supercolonies" housing thousands of queens, are believed to reach populations of up to 79million per hectare.

"This is an ecological disaster of the highest degree," Ben Hoffmann, a Darwin ecologist with the CSIRO's Division of Sustainable Ecocystems, said yesterday.

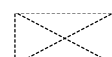
"This ant is one of the most invasive and aggressive in the world. They can kill absolutely anything. When they find something they swarm all over it. They don't bite but they spray formic acid which burns the eyes and the animal goes blind and dies of starvation.

"If left unchecked, the ants will spread right through northern Australia, as far down as Brisbane. They will consume everything. On Christmas Island they eliminated one third of the red crabs."

The biggest supercolony, one kilometre long, was found at Mt Dundas, an American military base during World War II, suggesting they were accidentally brought to Australia from South-East Asia on warships. They had remained isolated in Arnhem Land because they naturally spread at no more than a few metres a year. However, they were easily transported by human activity.

At a seminar in Darwin today, Dr Hoffman will begin forming an eradication plan to be put to the Federal Government. The government conservator at Christmas Island National Park, David Slip, said a \$1.5million Federal Government program which saw bait dropped by helicopter appeared to be a spectacular success.

By Richard Macey
February 28 2003



Managing Activism:

Advice for Neutralizing Democracy

The following is an edited version of this book review by John Stauber

When I first picked up Denise Deegan's book, *Managing Activism: A Guide to Dealing with Activists and Pressure Groups*, I imagined a roomful of uniformed pest applicators at the Orkin company, sitting on benches like military aviators before a bombing mission, being briefed on the best tools available for eradicating cockroaches. I was a spy for the roaches-the pesky "activists" that Deegan works to "manage." Roaches don't generally read the "how to" manuals written by their would-be exterminators, but activists certainly should.

As someone who has spent the last decade investigating the seamy side of the "perceptions management" industry, I wish I could tell you that this book is a gold mine of revelation, but for me it is not. Still, I recommend that my fellow citizens read this book. It is written in classroom text-like fashion, and the author is careful to put the best face on her profession and not include advice that might offend the atypical reader. Nevertheless, it can help people working for democratic social change to understand the often successful ways in which we are targeted for defeat, especially the "good cop/bad cop" tactic for dividing and conquering activists through "partnering" and cooptation by industry.

For activists, Deegan's book provides a primer on how to recognise these traps and hopefully avoid them. *Managing Activism* is written for PR practitioners whose clients engage in risky businesses (fossil fuels, pesticides, genetically engineered foods, nuclear waste, toxic dumps, animal testing) and who therefore become the targets of "activist groups" including "environmentalists, workers' rights activists, animal rights groups and human rights campaigners." Don't expect much sympathy for the activists- Deegan is a battle-hardened PR veteran and a committed soldier in the war against activists who "in an increasingly pluralistic society" present what she calls "a growing threat to organisations of all shapes and sizes. And because activists employ a wide range of aggressive tactics such as generating bad publicity, seeking government and legislative intervention, encouraging boycotts, etc., they can cause severe disruption, including damage to reputation, sales, profitability, employee satisfaction and, of course, share price."

Deegan's recommendations are similar to the advice which comes from Peter Sandman, E. Bruce Harrison, James Lukaszewski, Paul Gilding and other "crisis management" experts whom Sheldon Rampton and I cover in our work for PR Watch. Unfortunately, this entire area of PR -how to defeat activism- is insufficiently scrutinised by the citizens who need most to be aware of it, the activists themselves. Until we "cockroaches" understand the strategies of the "exterminators," the PR roach hotels built by corporate crisis management practitioners will continue to entrap movements for democracy, ecological sustainabil-

ity, fair trade, human rights, social justice, and all those other extreme threats to the corporate bottom-line. Social activists like to believe that we are too committed to our causes, too worldly and aware to be sweet-talked into unwitting submission by sitting down and partnering with the enemy. As Deegan reiterates, however, industry continues to regard this sort of "dialogue" as its most effective method for managing activists.

Their favourite method is a "divide and conquer" strategy heavily dependent on cooptation: First identify the "radicals" who are unwilling to compromise and who are demanding fundamental changes to redress the problem at hand. Then, identify the "realists"--typically, organisations with significant budgets and staffs working in the same relative area of public concern as the radicals. Then, approach these realists, often through a friendly third party, start a dialogue and eventually cut a deal, a "win win" solution that marginalises and excludes the radicals and their demands. Next, go with the realists to the "idealists" who have learned about the problem through the work of the radicals. Convince the idealists that a "win-win" solution endorsed by the realists is best for the community as a whole. Once this has been accomplished, the "radicals" can be shut out as extremists, the PR fix is in, and the deal can be touted in the media to make the corporation and its "moderate" non-profit partners look heroic for solving the problem. **Result: industry may have to make some small or temporary concessions, but the fundamental concerns raised by the "radicals" are swept aside.**

This, in a nutshell, is the strategy that Deegan recommends in what she calls "one of the first books to offer a 'how to' format to help people cope with the threat of activism." I especially recommend her chapters on "relationship building, negotiation and conflict resolution" and "media relations." Reading these chapters should help drive home the realisation that activist efforts are being deliberately targeted for defeat by corporate funding, partnership and cooptation. These may seem like unusual weapons, but PR crisis managers have taken to heart the advice of military strategist Carl Von Clausewitz: "We see then that there are many ways to one's object in War; that the complete subjugation of the enemy is not essential in every case."

Activist readers should remember that Deegan's book only offers part of the story, the sanitised version. It does not go into all the real-world ways in which nasty, smear attacks against activists are waged and funded by the same corporations and industries offering the outstretched hand of partnership. For the "rest of the story," also read *Secrets and Lies: The Anatomy of an Anti-Environmental PR Campaign*, by Nicky Hager and Bob Burton. *Secrets and Lies* is included in Deegan's "recommended reading" list. Based on a mother lode of leaked documents, its revelations of anti-environmental dirty tricks in New Zealand proved so shocking to citizens there that its publication contributed to the political downfall of the head of state.



Bits and Pieces

Phillips Settle Right-To-Know Case For \$150,975

Some interesting news about the company planning to set up an LNG processing facility here in Darwin:
Conoco

SAN FRANCISCO - As a result of a recent settlement with the US Environmental Protection Agency, the Conoco Phillips Company will pay \$150,975 for federal community right-to-know violations at its petrochemical refinery in Wilmington, California. The US EPA alleged that the facility failed to file timely or accurate estimates of releases of six toxic chemicals perchloroethylene, ammonia, MTBE, trimethylbenzene, toluene and sulphuric acid to the environment in 1997 and/or 1998. In the settlement, Conoco Phillips Company admitted liability for the violations. Conoco Phillips is the successor corporation to the Tosco Corporation, the prior owner of the Wilmington facility. "Companies who handle hazardous chemicals owe it to their employees and the surrounding community to report how those materials are being used, stored and disposed of," said Enrique Manzanilla, director of the EPA's Cross Media Division in San Francisco.

US Government Agencies Charged With Illegally Funding Fossil Fuel Projects

WASHINGTON - In a unanimous vote by the city council in closed session late last year, the City of

Oakland, California announced it had approved a motion to join a lawsuit brought by Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and the City of Boulder, Colorado on behalf of their members and citizens against two U.S. government agencies - the Export Import Bank (Ex-Im) and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). Charged with illegally funding fossil fuel projects, Ex-Im and OPIC are taxpayer-funded agencies that provide financing and loans to US corporations for overseas projects commercial banks deem too risky. "The threat of global warming can no longer be ignored," said Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown. This legal action - the first of its kind - alleges that OPIC and Ex-Im illegally provided over \$32 billion in financing and insurance for oil fields, pipelines, and coal-fired power plants over the past 10 years without assessing their contribution to global warming, or their impact on the US environment as required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). For more information, including a complete list of plain-

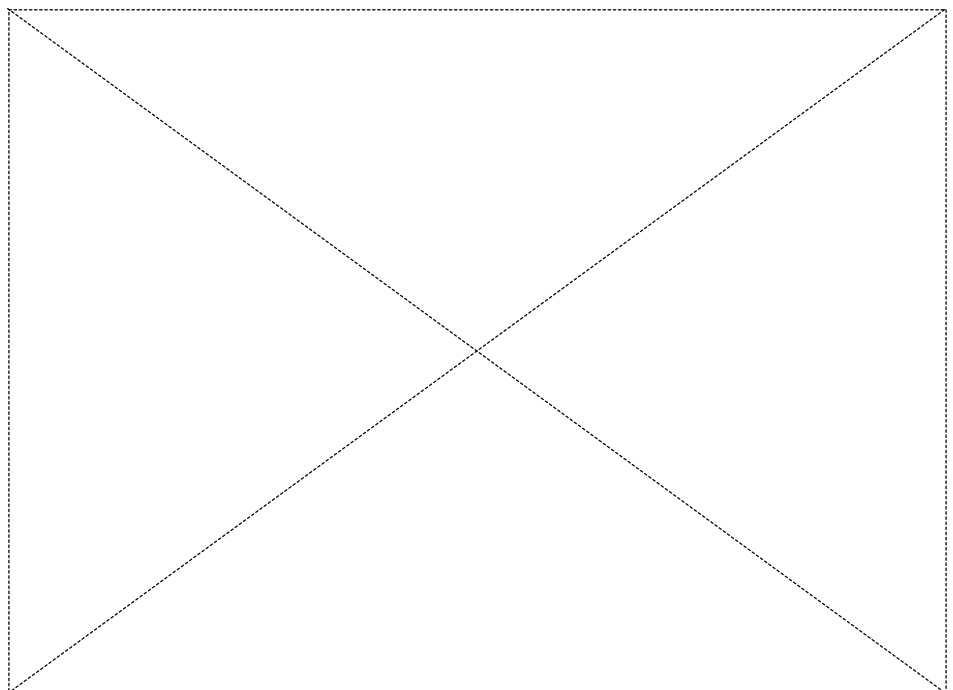
tiffs, visit www.climatelawsuit.org See also: <http://www.foei.org/climate/index.html>

Public Forums on Darwin Harbour will be held as noted below.

Darwin 4th March, 5.30pm - 7.30pm, Casuarina Library.
Palmerston 6th March, 5.30pm - 7.30pm, Palmerston Council Chambers.
Litchfield 11th March, 6.30pm - 8.30pm, Freds Pass Reserve.
Cox Peninsula, 13th March, 6.30pm - 8.30pm, Mandorah Hotel.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!!

ECNT's first fundraiser for the year will be a screening of **Bowling for Columbine** at the new Deckchair in May (date and further details to be advised in next newsletter). We plan to serve home made food as well so will be asking for volunteers to help us soon.



DATES FOR March 2003

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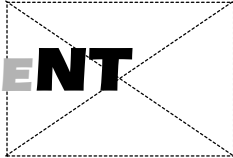
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